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THE HON STEPH COOKE MP MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES AND RESILIENCE

It's wonderful to write to you for the first time in 2023 with our final flood warning in western NSW having recently been lifted, bringing to an end an historic emergency.

We now know the flood event that began on 14 September 2022, widely impacting southern and western NSW, is the State's largest flood on record. Over 177 days the SES responded to almost 27,000 requests for assistance, carried out more than 960 flood rescues, conducted more than 1,000 resupply missions and delivered more than two million sandbags. It was an unprecedented emergency response operation on an enormous scale.

To the thousands of volunteers who worked non-stop and at various stages throughout, I want to thank you for your dedication and sacrifice in service of the people you worked so hard to protect and assist. Communities were hit incredibly hard by this flood event, which saw 2,816 homes deemed uninhabitable in its immediate aftermath. The NSW Government moved quickly to support the recovery, with grants for farmers, families, businesses and individuals.

As I write to you, it is just past one year since the catastrophic flooding in our State's Northern Rivers. It was a solemn day in Lismore as we marked the 28th of February anniversary. I had the privilege of attending many community events that paid tribute to the remarkable resilience shown that day. It was wonderful to reunite with the Woodburn and Lismore SES units and to spend time with volunteers who were instrumental in the initial emergency response, and have been pillars of strength in the year of recovery since. There is still a long way to go for the Northern Rivers, as there is for all communities impacted

I want to say thank you again to all volunteers who continue to give up their time to help others.



by the flooding. And as storm season continues we know the threat is not entirely over.

At time of writing this, Cootamundra (in my own electorate) is experiencing flash flooding following a severe deluge. But from what I have witnessed firsthand in my time as Emergency Services, Resilience and Flood Recovery Minister is that our communities have the strength and determination to bounce back from these disastrous weather events.

As we recover, we rebuild stronger than before. There have been significant developments for the SES. While in the Northern Rivers, I announced the establishment of the North Eastern Zone of operations will be based in Lismore. It joins the new North Western Zone, which I announced in Tamworth in February. Combined they'll see approximately 70 new full-time jobs in the SES, focused on directly supporting volunteers across the two regions, which will ensure we

have a more targeted and efficient emergency response.

Towards the end of last year as part of our initial response to the independent Flood Inquiry, I was also proud to announce \$159 million to enhance NSW's flood rescue capability, with more than half of that funding going to the SES. It's been an extremely challenging 12+ months. But we are focused on learning the lessons of the difficulties we've faced and putting in place the systems, facilities, resources and training that will make us better prepared for the challenges of the future.

Having endured a period of great turmoil, I am incredibly optimistic at what the future holds for the SES and the people of our State.

I want to say thank you again to all volunteers who continue to give up their time to help others. Your service is the backbone of our emergency response to storms and floods and I know the people of NSW will always be better off thanks to your tireless efforts.





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DAMIEN JOHNSTON
ACTING COMMISSIONER
NSW SES

While Commissioner Carlene York takes some time off for a well-deserved holiday break, I have been the Acting Commissioner for the month of March. There have been a few changes within our Service since the last 2022 magazine edition, with more funding, resources, training and upgrades just to name a few.

Firstly, as part of the increased investment in the SES, we officially established an additional two zones – North Eastern and North Western. This will result in more localised resources and staff to support our volunteers and harness local knowledge. It has been a privilege to spend time with members in these zones recently. During the one-year commemoration of the Northern Rivers flood event, I joined members of the SES and the community to remember the loss, courage and strength that came to light during the disaster, and I'd like to thank you for sharing your stories. Our recovery project team has been working hard to remediate SES facilities and equipment that were lost or damaged during the floods, and you can read the latest update in the latest mySES news stories.

In an exciting development for the way we warn communities about floods, this year we launched the phone app, Hazards Near Me NSW. Combining flood and fire warnings into one app, this is an exciting development that we hope will encourage members of the public to make safer decisions during severe weather.

As we continually evolve to improve our agency, we also announced the end of our partnership with NRMA Insurance. There are some changes members need to be aware

We are privileged at SES to have many wonderful female leaders and role models



of regarding branding and you can find a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document in the mySES news section.

Operationally, our members have returned from assisting with flood operations in South Australia and Western Australia, and we recently closed the Incident Control Centre in Far West NSW. After a gruelling 177 days – the longest flooding in our organisation's history - we finally lifted the final flood warning for our State, and we will continue to see these floodwaters exit along the river system. Although storm season is officially coming to an end soon, we are still seeing regular storms keeping members busy.

There have been some great events happening this year already. At the start of the year, members took to waterways right across the state to participate in 'Who Let The Boats Out' flood rescue exercise. Not long after that, many of our members were awarded for their community efforts in Australia Day ceremonies. Recently, it was a pleasure to walk alongside our PRIDE crew and Commissioner York in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Our Service's participation in the

parade celebrates and supports the wonderful diversity of people and the inclusive culture within the SES.

Last month, we marked International Women's Day, where we recognised women for their achievements, but also the barriers in the way of gender equity. We are privileged at SES to have many wonderful female leaders and role models and we need to continue to promote female leadership within our units. There is still more we can do to support gender diversity at all ranks at the NSW SES, and I'd like to thank members for their supportive posts shared online during this day, which helped spread the word about the incredible female members we have at NSW SES.

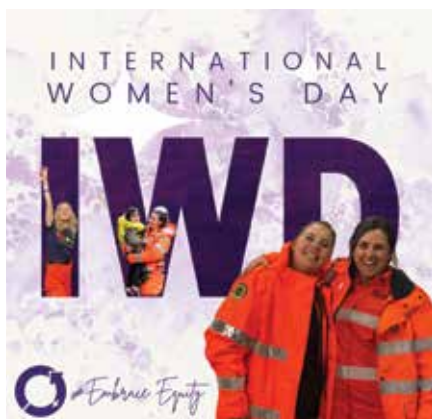
Lastly, I'd just like to thank members for having your say in the Volunteer Voice Survey, of which we reached record participation numbers. There has been a lot of positive feedback received, but there are also areas that have been identified as needing improvement. There is a lot of change planned this year, and these improvements are all focused on increasing our support of volunteers and NSW communities.

We have started the new year off running and are excited about all the new projects we have in the works and also the rollout of our First Resilience program which kicked off in March. You will read further down about the FRRP which is open to all first responders and community leaders to attend. To register for an upcoming event, please visit our events website www.sesvaevents.com

The VA rural property located at Windellama is coming along nicely & we were happy to welcome a number of volunteers who came and visited over the Christmas & new year period. If you are a VA member and would like to book a trip to the property, please email office@nswsesva.org.au with your preferred dates & contact details. The property is free for all members and their families to enjoy.

On the 8th of March we celebrated International Women's Day which was a great opportunity to highlight the inspiring & incredible women in the NSW SES and acknowledge & celebrate their selfless contribution to our community.

I am fortunate to work side by side with women who I am inspired by everyday here at the Volunteers Association!



FEEDBACK

We appreciate your feedback and suggestions and are always looking at ways we can improve and develop the VA for our members. If you have any suggestions, please feel free to let us know!

If you have had a positive experience with the SESVA, we would appreciate if you left a review on our Facebook page or google review so others can hear about the great things we do for our members

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To celebrate Autumn and the end of La Niña, we have taken 25% off all merchandise and apparel

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ROTARY EMERGENCY SERVICE COMMUNITY AWARDS – NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards (RESCA) are seeking nominations from the community to help them recognise outstanding Community Service performed by paid and volunteer members of Emergency Service Agencies through the Rotary Emergency Services Community Awards (RESCA)

Rotary is seeking the unsung heroes in your communities that are often the quiet achievers, never asking for recognition but making a significant difference in your community. If you know an outstanding volunteer / employee that deserves to be recognised for their achievements, then nominate them for an award. Nominations can be made at <https://rotarydistrict9675.org/sitepage/resca>



We are delighted to let you know that we have commenced the rollout of our ground-breaking new *First Responder Resilience Program* (FRRP). Our first two training events were held at Batemans Bay and Queanbeyan over the weekend of the 25th & 26th March 2023 and were a great success, with attendees from a variety of emergency service and community organisations in attendance.

The program recognises the psychological toll that the past four years of bushfires and floods have taken on our emergency workers and

2023 CALENDAR

Calendars were distributed to members who had placed orders over the Dec 22 /Jan 23 period. If you missed out and would like a calendar, please email office@nswsesva.org.au with your name, SES unit and postal address. They are FREE for VA members



A big thankyou to all that contributed to this edition of The Volunteer Magazine. We are all about acknowledging and promoting the amazing efforts of our fellow volunteers and encourage your input in our quarterly magazines. If you would like to feature in our June edition, please send content to editor@nswsesva.org.au by the 13th May 2023. Stay safe in your Volunteering!

Carlee Maccoll

their communities. Funded by a Federal Government Black Summer Bushfire Grant, FRRP training is free, with lunch and refreshments provided. It aims to give back to those who have given so much, with a vision that no first responder suffers, often in silence, from mental ill-health in the future.

To realise that vision, FRRP offers a new and very different approach to mental health training, built on the cornerstones of:

- » Empowered frontline and community leadership

- » Prevention, rather than treatment, of psychological injury
- » Customised training, developed specifically for emergency scenarios
- » Co-facilitation, NSW SES Volunteers Association (SESVA) in partnership with leading mental health workplace consultancy Ordinary Courage, which is headed by AFSM recipients Jim Smith and Mark Dobson.

FRRP is tailored by frontline leaders, for frontline leaders, to fill an important gap in first response safety - the provision of 'psychological armoury' to emergency responders. It is an evidence-based program, grounded in leading Australian and international research, and developed from programs that are proven to significantly reduce the incidence of mental ill-health, and change the 'culture of stigma', in emergency response organisations.

Finally, FRRP is practical, with workshops that mimic real life scenarios. And, inclusive. All current and emerging leaders, both volunteers and service employees, are welcome to attend. FRRP is not about training people to be 'amateur psychologists', rather to impart new skills to current leaders and to nurture our frontline and community leaders of the future.

Our trainers are experts with decades of leadership experience in front line response, mental health and volunteering.

We've also designed the training to be a bit of fun and a rare opportunity to connect with fellow emergency responders away the stresses of the frontline. We know time is precious so we want attendees to enjoy their FRRP training as they glean valuable skills and insights, which will positively impact all facets of their lives - personal and professional, as well as their contribution to community.

FRRP will give leaders simple yet effective tools to 'reach in' when their people are not 'reaching out'. It will empower leaders to connect with their



teams, to recognise if someone is not travelling well and to initiate the often hard 'are you ok' conversation so they can manage psychological injury and guide anyone, who opts to seek professional help, to the appropriate clinicians.

To borrow Ordinary Courage's tagline, FRRP attendees will walk away from the day's training with the 'strength to connect'. This notion guides all Ordinary Courage leadership training and we feel incredibly fortunate to be able to offer it free-of-charge to communities throughout NSW.

We do hope you can join us and ask if you could please spread the word among other current and emerging leaders in your community. I invite you to register for our upcoming training events via the QR code below or at sesvaevents.com/book-online



Month	Location & Date
March	25th Batemans Bay 26th Queanbeyan
April	29th Blue Mountains 29th Port Macquarie
May	6th Bega 13th Bombala 13th Casino 13th Hawkesbury 20th Tenterfield
June	10th Wagga Wagga 17th Balina 17th Nambucca 24th Shoalhaven 24th Narrabri
July	22nd Taree 29th Newcastle 29th Shell Harbour
August	6th Mudgee 6th Kempsey 13th Wollondilly
September	2nd Glen Innes 9th Coffs Harbour 9th Sutherland Shire 16th Braidwood 16th Armidale
October	14th Lithgow



Respond or Proceed:

Some things to think about

In this article I discuss various factors to consider when deciding whether to drive to a job using red/blue warning beacons and/or a siren ('respond') or without those warning devices and in accordance with the normal road rules ('proceed').

The first thing to identify is the terms 'respond' or 'proceed' are not terms used in the relevant legislation. They are terms that have been adopted by the emergency services to distinguish between emergency driving and normal driving. We can understand what they mean but drivers should be aware that they are not legal terms. If you're talking to someone outside the emergency services (eg your solicitor) you may need to explain what the terms mean. In this article though I use the terms as they are understood in the emergency services – response is to drive with the emergency warning devices (red and/or blue flashing lights and/or the siren); proceed is to drive without those devices and at all times to comply with the Road Rules as they apply to any driver.

EMERGENCY WARNING DEVICES

The use of emergency warning devices means activating either the red and blue warning lights, or the siren, or both. It may be unlikely that people would use the siren and not the beacons, but the provisions in the *Road Rules*, discussed below, are activated when either or both of these warning devices are used.

THE ROAD RULES 2014 (NSW)

Using the emergency warning devices triggers three important provisions of the *Road Rules 2014* (NSW). Rule 78 says that another driver must not 'move into the path' of an emergency vehicle using its emergency warning devices and, if they are in that vehicle's path, they are required to move out of the way. The *Road Rules* (r 78(3)) say that this obligation '... applies to the driver

despite any other rule ...' so the driver not only may, but in theory must, move out of the way even if they are breaking other rules to do so, for example by moving through a red light. Drivers may be unwilling to do that because it is dangerous or out of fear that they will get a ticket eg from a red light camera. If they did get a ticket, it would be necessary for them to convince police they were moving out of the way of an emergency vehicle which may take considerable effort.

Rule 79 says that another driver must give way to an emergency vehicle using its emergency warning devices. That means a driver who is entering an intersection where he or she would normally have 'right of way' must, nonetheless, give way or allow the emergency vehicle to continue on its way.

Rule 306 says the driver of an emergency vehicle that is using its emergency warning devices is exempt from the provisions of the *Road Rules* provided that 1) the driver is taking reasonable care and 2) it is reasonable that they driver contrary to the particular Road Rule.

AN EXAMPLE

We can demonstrate the application of those road rules with an example. Assume an SES vehicle is responding to a report of a motor vehicle accident with persons trapped. The vehicle is on a two-lane road. The SES vehicle is in the right-hand lane. The vehicle in front of the SES vehicle wants to turn right so is also in the right-hand lane. Notwithstanding that the driver of that other vehicle wants to turn right, they are required by r 78 to move out of the way of the responding SES vehicle. The SES driver also wants to turn right. There is oncoming traffic. Normally the SES driver would be required to give way to the vehicles coming towards them but in this case those vehicles must give way to the SES vehicle (r 79).

The SES driver can, turn right, even against a red arrow, but only after the driver has taken reasonable care to ensure all the oncoming drivers are in fact stopping to and giving way to allow the driver to continue (r 306).

LIMITATIONS OF R 306

Rule 306 is not an exemption from all the rules that apply to drivers and driving. It is an exemption from the rules set out in the *Road Rules 2014* (NSW). The *Road Rules* deal with matters such as speed limits, making turns, giving signals, complying with traffic lights, giving way, traffic signs and road markings, keeping left and overtaking and stopping and parking. A good way to think about it is that the *Road Rules* deal with the sort of offences you would get a traffic ticket for if you were driving your own car.

There are however many rules of the road. The *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) deals with offences such as manslaughter, dangerous driving occasioning death or grievous bodily harm and causing injury by 'wanton or furious riding, or driving, or racing, or other misconduct, or by wilful neglect'. The *Road Transport Act 2013* (NSW) deals with matters such as the

need to be licensed, driving with the 'Prescribed Concentration of Alcohol' (PCA), driving with detectable drugs in your saliva, driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, negligent, furious or reckless driving or driving 'at a speed or in a manner dangerous to the public'. Think of these as the sort of offences where you are likely to be arrested for if you committed them in your own car. There is no exemption for the driver of an emergency vehicle from these more serious offences.

RESPOND OR PROCEED?

With that background we can identify factors relevant to the decision to respond or proceed.

Response driving is one of the most dangerous things you can do in the emergency services. The emergency devices may confuse other drivers who have to make decisions how to get out of your way. They have to identify where you are coming from, and I'm sure we've all had experience where it can be difficult to identify where an emergency vehicle is even though you can hear it. Moving out of the emergency vehicle's way may conflict with the drivers' own plans: think of the driver in the example above, who is meant to move out of the right lane to let an emergency vehicle pass, but they want to turn right at the next intersection. We may hope that he or she will move to the left even if they then have to travel through the intersection and find another route to their destination, but we are all goal focused and they have to work out their options very quickly and when they already had in their mind 'I'm turning right at this intersection'. Drivers may feel pressured to put themselves in danger to get out of the way; or alternatively may not get out of the way if they think that is too dangerous (again think of the example of a driver who might have to travel past a stop sign or red traffic light).

The driver of an emergency vehicle may not take due care. The pressure of 'goal seduction' that is focussing on the goal of getting to and responding to the emergency can lead to bad decisions by the driver of the emergency vehicle (Christopher Bearman and Peter A Bremner,

'A day in the life of a volunteer incident commander: Errors, pressures and mitigating strategies' (2013) 44 *Applied Ergonomics* 488-495).

An incident controller, unit commander and the driver all have to think carefully about whether it is appropriate to 'respond' or 'proceed'.

THE FIRST QUESTION – IS IT AN EMERGENCY?

Rules 78, 79 and 306 apply drivers near to, and drivers of, an emergency vehicle. In NSW law an emergency vehicle is a vehicle driven by an emergency worker. An emergency worker includes 'a member of the State Emergency Service ... providing transport in the course of an emergency'.

The words 'providing transport in the course of an emergency' are important. They mean the status of an SES vehicle (or a fire appliance, or an ambulance) changes. They are not an emergency vehicle when there is no emergency; they become an emergency vehicle when there is an emergency.

This was a lesson that was brought to the attention of the NSW Rural Fire Service after a fatal collision involving a fire appliance (*Wells v R* [2017] NSWCCA 242 (13 October 2017)). The driver of the appliance, Mr Wells, was making a U-turn at a break in the traffic island. There was a sign that said 'No U-turn; Police, RTA, NRMA and emergency vehicles excepted'. At the time Mr Wells was returning to the scene of an earlier emergency, to collect the crew. The concept of 'emergency' is not defined in the *Road Rules*. The lawyer for the RFS driver argued that even though Mr Wells was returning to a scene to collect the crew, it was still, relevantly, an emergency. Justice Button, in the Court of Criminal Appeal, rejected that argument. He said:

... I do not accept that "an emergency" can be an event that does not have at least some aspect of urgency to it. I say that not only as a matter of ordinary English usage. I say that also because ... the interpretation for which the appellant contends would lead to absurdities; for

» continued on page 12

example, a tanker being driven to an event that was patently not urgent – such as a routine meeting of volunteer firefighters – could nevertheless be judged as travelling to an emergency, with consequent modification to the operation of the Road Rules. In short ... his return to the weighbridge was not, in truth, an emergency as defined by statute.

The first thing that the driver must do is identify whether the task is an 'emergency' that is does it have 'at least some aspect of urgency to it'? The SES should have standards that help define when a job is classed as an emergency. It may be that any activation to rescue a person is considered urgent. But is a call to tarp a roof urgent? What of a call to rescue a domestic animal? Even if the job is a response to a life-threatening emergency, it may not be urgent if you are not the first responders – driving to the scene of a car accident may be urgent for the first crew, but it may not be for a second crew that is going out to relieve the first crew or deliver food.

IS RESPONDING REASONABLE?

The driver must make constant decisions about their driving and the use of emergency warning devices. Remember r 306 only allows an exemption when the driver is taking reasonable care and where it is reasonable that any particular rule is not applied.

Imagine, for example, responding to an urgent job. The route requires the driver to drive down a busy road that is marked as a 'shared pedestrian zone' with a speed limit of 20km/h. The driver, by virtue of r 306, is exempt the speed limit but only if it is reasonable. Is it reasonable to travel more than 20km/h in a busy pedestrian thoroughfare? If not, then the driver may still get a traffic infringement notice even though they had their lights and sirens activated and even if no-one is injured. There are other rules that maybe should be complied with at all times – giving way to children on pedestrian crossings, giving way to trams etc.

If it is not reasonable to ask drivers to get out of the way, or it is unreasonable not to comply

with a particular road rule in the circumstances, then r 306 won't apply and the driver should consider turning off the warning devices, and proceed instead of respond.

TAKE REASONABLE CARE

The other and most important rule is the obligation on the driver of an emergency vehicle to take reasonable care. Remember r 306 only applies if the driver is taking reasonable care. Further r 306 provides no defence for the more serious offences. In short – if you crash, all bets are off.

In Victoria a firefighter was convicted of dangerous driving causing death when the fire appliance he was driving rolled and crushed another vehicle. The appliance was being driven at the speed limit but, as the driver knew the vehicle was 'top heavy'.

In the circumstances the judge said the driving was "just too fast". (Steve Butcher, 'Suspended sentence for Black Saturday firefighter who killed teen in smash' *The Age* (Online), October 23, 2009 <<https://www.theage.com.au/national/suspended-sentence-for-black-saturday-firefighter-who-killed-teen-in-smash-20091023-hcdn.html>>).

Mr Wells, the NSW RFS firefighter discussed above, was convicted of negligent driving causing death. In that case he failed to give way to a vehicle on the motorway and instead pulled into the car's path. He was travelling at a 'walking pace' whilst the oncoming car was doing up to 110km/h. In the Court of Criminal Appeal Justice Button said:

To be clear, it was not the Crown case that the appellant was driving negligently in the sense of driving too fast, swerving from side to side, failing to keep a proper lookout, or any other negative attribute of his mode of driving itself. Rather, it was the act of commencing and continuing the U-turn of the tanker, in all of the surrounding circumstances, that was said to be sufficiently negligent ...

In my opinion, ... all of the circumstances – the road in question being a freeway, on which the speed limit was 110 km/h, and on which motor vehicles travel at that speed, and often higher;

the crucial events taking place at night; the freeway being unlit; the fact that the vehicle of [the deceased] was approaching from the south; the fact that the tanker was performing a U-turn into lane three northbound, a lane reserved for overtaking vehicles travelling at speed; the fact that the appellant needed only to wait a matter of seconds until the Corolla had driven past, and the northbound lanes had cleared – that the decision of the appellant to commence the U-turn proceed into lane three northbound was negligent.

It was not an emergency so the exception for emergency vehicles did not apply. But even it was an emergency, he did not take reasonable care so r 306 would not apply. But most importantly his actions were negligent and caused the death of another road user and there is no exemption from the offence of 'negligent driving causing death', an offence under the *Crimes Act 1900*, not the *Road Rules 2014*.

A SUMMARY

It's impossible to devise a checklist but this may be a start:

1. Before turning out, ask 'is this an emergency?' The first step is to ask whether it fits the definition of emergency in the service's standard operating procedures or policies. If you decide that something is an emergency, but your service does not define the job as an emergency then it will be hard to argue that an exemption from the road rules is 'reasonable'. But if you are tasked to a job and the dispatcher or the SOPs define it as an emergency (eg a road crash rescue call out) then you can answer this first question 'yes'.
2. Is responding reasonable? This is a dynamic question that should be asked throughout the journey considering all the circumstances including the traffic, time of day, weather, condition of the road, condition of the vehicle and any other relevant circumstances. If in doubt you can always turn the sirens and lights off until it is reasonable to reactivate them.

3. Take reasonable care. Apart from ruining your response time, a crash suggests that you were not taking reasonable care. Make sure other drivers have seen you and have given way before continuing. Drive taking into account the condition of the road and the condition of the vehicle. Remember there is no exemption from offences such as driving in a manner dangerous to the public, or dangerous or negligent driving causing death.

The person ultimately responsible for the decision to proceed or respond is always the driver.

MAKING A U-TURN

I mentioned Mr Wells making a U-turn at a break in the traffic island that said 'no U-turn; Police, RTA, NRMA and emergency vehicles excepted'. The court found that the vehicle, at the time, was not an emergency vehicle because it was not being driven by an emergency worker 'providing transport in the course of an emergency' because at that time, there was no emergency.

In September 2022 there was a joint announcement by the Commissioners of the SES and the RFS and various Ministers that there would be an amendment to the *Road Rules* 'which will allow all emergency service vehicles, including those driven by volunteers, to legally and safely use U-turn bays. The announcement (available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/road-rule-change>) quotes a number of people. RFS Association President Scott Campbell who is quoted as saying:

"This rule change is what our volunteers needed to ensure that they are legally permitted to use U-turn bays when responding to fires and car crashes, cutting down on response times and potentially saving lives".

The problem is that the volunteers were permitted to use the U-turn bays when responding to an emergency. But Mr Wells was not responding to an emergency.

The Rules have now been changed. A new rule 317(1-1) says

A reference, on or with a traffic control device, to emergency vehicles is taken to be a reference to the following vehicles—

- a. an ambulance being driven by a member of the Ambulance Service, or the ambulance service of another State or a Territory, in the course of the member's duties,
- b. a fire fighting vehicle being driven by a member of any of the following services in the course of the member's duties—
 - (i.) a fire brigade, within the meaning of the *Fire and Rescue NSW Act 1989*
 - (ii.) the NSW Rural Fire Service or a rural fire brigade, within the meaning of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*
 - (iii.) a rescue service,
- c. a State Emergency Service vehicle being driven by a member of the State Emergency Service in the course of the member's duties,
- d. a vehicle used by an accredited rescue unit, within the meaning of the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*, being driven by a member of the unit,
- e. an Airservices Australia vehicle, within the meaning of the *Road Transport (Vehicle Registration) Regulation 2017*,
- f. a police vehicle,
- g. a vehicle used by Transport for NSW being driven by a Transport Commander or Traffic Emergency Patroller, appointed or employed by Transport for NSW, in the course of the Commander's or Patroller's duties.

A traffic control device includes a sign. So now if there is a sign that says "no U-turn; emergency vehicles excepted" then the driver of any of the vehicles listed above can make a U-turn whether or not there is an emergency.

There is no exemption from the other rules, so the driver making a U-turn must still give way to other drivers. If it is an emergency (as discussed above) they still need to activate their lights or sirens to compel other drivers to give way to them. Today if a driver did what Mr Wells did, they would still be guilty of the same offences. He was convicted of 'making a U turn without giving way to a vehicle' and the obligation to give way still applies. Then as now, there is no exemption from driving without due care and that is what he did when he

pulled out into the path of oncoming traffic. Mr Wells' negligence was not making a U-turn contrary to a 'no U-turn sign'. It was '... the act of commencing and continuing the U-turn of the tanker, in all of the surrounding circumstances...' ([2017] NSWCCA 242, [74]).

The biggest problem with r 317(1-1) is that it adds a new definition of emergency vehicle. It means that there are now two definitions in the Road Rules. One that applies when the words 'emergency vehicle' are printed on a sign or traffic control device, and the other that applies in all other circumstances. It is bizarre to have multiple definitions of the term 'emergency vehicle' in the one instrument. It is still the case that for every rule, other than r 317(1), a reference to an emergency vehicle requires that the vehicle is being driven or used as part of an emergency response.

The varying definitions are likely to lead to confusion.

The effect of the new r 317(1-1) is that the driver of an SES appliance (or other emergency vehicle) may now make a U-turn if there is a sign that says 'no U-turn: emergency vehicles excepted' whether there is or is not an emergency. The new rule would make no difference if circumstances such as those in *Wells v R* were to arise again. If you want to read more about Mr Wells' case, see <https://australianemergencylaw.com/2017/10/13/court-of-appeal-dismisses-appeal-by-rfs-tanker-driver-involved-in-fatal-collision/>

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My dark secret PTSD

Some 25 years ago, as part of a team of five involved in an SES response to a significant event.

This event had an emotional impact on the team members. Within 12 months

- » one suicide
- » three members had left the service.

In those days dealing with traumatic events was a cup of tea, a slap on the shoulder, and “You’ll be right, mate” these were different times.

Some 19 years later, while attending a compulsory debriefing for a work-related significant event, I was told that I had PTSD. I said OKAY and did nothing else about it.

PTSD had become my dark little secret. I told nobody and just hid it from the world, and with some self-

medication, with alcohol, I kept going.

PTSD dictated the TV shows I watched, the conversations that I had, situations I avoided, emotional attachment et cetera

End of 2021, the dark secret of my PTSD started to escape, and the darker moment were more often and greatly impacting my life.

I got to the stage where I needed to do something. I was drowning in the darkness.

December 2021 I reach out for help. Truly one of the hardest things I have done in my life. To ask for help was to accept that I had a problem and had lost control of the darkness. I felt weak

So after a process, I got the help I needed, and within 9 months, I am the best I have ever been.

The freedom from the PTSD-crippling darkness is amazing.

Why am I writing this? Just to say

Asking for help is the hard part. It is never too early or too late to ask for help.

Being impacted by an event is not a thing to be embarrassed by. When your emotional bucket is full, it is full.

Peer support services work effectively. They are private and can make an amazing difference. Ask your local peer support person for help and/or call safehold on 1800737647

My name is being withheld from this document, and this is not about me.

It is about saying

It is OK, to not be OK



What is a microburst?

On Thursday 2 February there was a nice little red batch on the BOM Radar suggesting we might get some much needed rain in Port Macquarie and our members started placing bets on how many leaking roof's we would get as a result. The numbers ranged from two to six however the official count was three – right in the middle however the rain was only of short duration and intensity and an enjoyable evening was had by all.

Friday 3 February there was an identical looking patch on the BOM Radar, our members commenting "Looks very similar to yesterday at this time..." and "six jobs..." when just before 3pm it hit. Hail, heavy rain and high winds in the Port Macquarie CBD and immediate surrounding areas (this was also a short duration event (15-30mins) however a high

intensity – unfortunately there were no official rain gauges in the footprint of the storm so we don't know the actual Annual Exceedance Probability. By 15:30 the storm was over and the sunshine was back – apart from the damage you wouldn't have know what had just occurred.

The Unit mobilised, the jobs started rolling in and didn't stop. We were operationally active for the next two weeks without a break with over 300 jobs ranging from large trees down blocking access to buildings where the entire roof had blown off and everything in between.

Given the event occurred late afternoon on a Friday the majority of our members were available including our incident management team. I headed into HQ and arrived at approximately the same time as Michael Brumby (Deputy Unit

Commander Rescue) – I started the conversation with a choice – one of us needed to front the media (Prime 7 Film Crew) within the next 15 mins and the other had to take on the Incident Commander Role – I gave Brum the choice and he told me to have fun with the media!

After a quick drive through the CBD of Port Macquarie and an interview with Prime 7 I returned to HQ to advise the size and scope we were likely to expect. We quickly established contact with Robert Fish (LEMO from Port Macquarie Hastings Council PMHC) and representatives from our emergency services partners. It was determined that whilst it wasn't large enough to require activation of the EOC we requested the attendance of Liaison Offices from the different organisations so we could have a coordinated approach during the



response phase. We also put the call out for a strike team from Fire Rescue for the remainder of Friday and then into Saturday and Sunday (if needed), likewise Rural Fire Service for Friday and Sunday (they had a memorial service for one of their well respected members of Saturday and we didn't want to disturb that). We also called for Out of Area Assistance (OOAA) crews from within the SES to commence on Saturday Morning.

We stood down the teams around 21:00 on Friday, by that stage the majority of the roads were clear and it was determined that there was no benefit to working into the night. We planned to recommence at 08:00 Saturday Morning. Saturday morning started with 120 outstanding RFA's and by lunch time we still had 120 outstanding RFA's – this was with 15+ crews in the field – as quick as they

were completing the tasks more were being called in. Brum put the call out for additional resources for Sunday and I worked with Envirofrontier to streamline the process and get additional arborists in town for Sunday.

We pushed hard on Sunday – thanks again to a significant number of OOAA Teams, our emergency service partners, Council and arborists we completed the majority of the tasks by Sunday evening however the jobs continued to roll in over the next few weeks.

Over the weekend of the 4-5th we had over 100 emergency service personnel on the ground working each day through the overwhelming number of requests for assistance.

We had a hot debrief on the Wednesday and the tally at that stage was:

- » 285 jobs and counting
- » 40+ referend to arborists

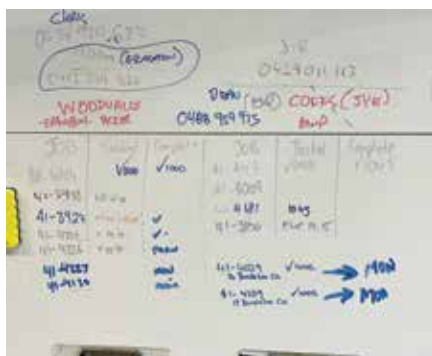
- » Out of Areas Crews attended from the Central Coast to Coffs Harbour and everywhere in between.
- » Strike Force from FRNSW and RFS
- » Council resources mobilised for trees on roads
- » Community members helping themselves and their neighbours.

A few of our learning outcomes are worth sharing – we quickly identified that we needed to undertake some additional Beacon training so people had the required access and reinforce that jobs are not closed until they have positive confirmation no further action required by any organisation.

What we found worked well was Brum determined and communicated the IC's intent early and a consistent message was relayed to ensure everyone was working

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towards this goal. The priority was to clear roads and provide access for residents, followed by clearing and securing residents dwellings before moving on the commercial premises and outstanding trees down on properties.

We arranged with Envirofrontier that we would task the arborists directly, record which RFA's we had sent them on and provide a summary and combined emergency orders at the end of the event. Whilst this is outside their normal activation process it facilitated the timely response to trees that exceeded the capacity of our field crews and by knowing what resources each arborist crew had ensured they were working constantly throughout the event.

As Unit Commander I am fortunate in that the Unit and Cluster has people that can undertake the

various roles within an IMT structure as this allowed me to maintain the media role (with countless interviews including two television news crews, three radio stations and three newspapers along with regular Facebook updates) and assist with problem resolution as required. We were able to draw on cluster resources to step into IMT roles especially as the operation continued into the following week.

Back to the start – what is a microburst – I had a radio interview where the representative from the BOM was asked this question – I am still not sure of their response however I was able to inform their listeners as to the effect that a microburst had on the Port Macquarie CBD and know now that the effects last for a extended time as we are still recovering from the impact – people are still waiting

on roofs being repaired and trees removed.

I subsequently found out that a microburst is an intense thunderstorm downdraft concentrated over a small area. However for Port Macquarie SES it represented twelve months of work in two weeks.

I was fortunate to be able to partner with Fortem Australian and Rapid Relief Team to organise a thank you function for people involved with the microburst which was held Wednesday 15 March.

It is crazy to realise we have completed our average yearly workload and March isn't even over. My thanks to everyone that assisted the Port Macquarie during this difficult time.

Michael Ward

Code Red: Liverpool Under Water

The thunderclaps and the wind roars as residents feel little reprieve from the series of storms that have recently battered the Liverpool area.

Several SES members can be found furiously typing warnings on social media and responding to information requests from the local news, buried deep in the almost insurmountable task of keeping residents safe from the emergency unfolding around them. Suddenly a voice crackles over the radio: "Radio, Radio... This is Liverpool 33..." the voice trails off before quickly picking up again with a dire warning one never hopes to hear "Emergency message." The operations centre freezes, time seems to stand still, and a knot wells up in everyone's throat. The voice bellows to life once again "we have 9, no 10... about a dozen cars trapped, all with people in them, we need everyone down here... send EVERYONE..." The next few minutes feel like a blur, a flurry of calls, directions, tasking, and mapping ensue. During this time the Beacon register was recording jobs without any end in sight and flood rescues were coming in at a lightning pace. Commotion can be heard in the background amongst the steady sound of sirens and the flash of emergency lights as Flood Rescue Operators rush to the nearest vehicle to respond to our resident's cries for help. One of these operators was Scott Marler.

ONE BIG BLUR – SCOTT'S STORY

I joined SES in 2016 and have enjoyed my time doing everything from storm jobs, IMT work and Flood Rescue and currently serve as the Flood Rescue Coordinator at the Liverpool Unit.

The one moment that stands out for me was the big bang night (July 4). I remember quite vividly sitting in IMT around 5pm watching the radar and seeing and hearing from teams in the field about the sheer amount of water that was dumping on our area, our Incident Controller fiercely trying to get teams in the field to look at flood gauges to see how bad things were getting. Upon hearing these reports, I remember changing



into my wetsuit with a sinking feeling in my stomach that this was going to get bad, and quick. Within minutes our police liaison was frantically trying to tell us that 3-4 rescue jobs had come through to them and were not logged in our system yet and I immediately left with James, another one of our Flood Rescue Operators. While out responding to several of the dozens of rescue jobs that had come in by that point, I could hear the radio and knew it was bad form what I heard but didn't really know the extent. It wasn't until I responded to assisting a rescue in Canley Vale, that I found out that most of Chipping Norton was under evacuation orders, including my own house at 2130 at night I knew that it was going to be a long night ahead of us but there was nothing else for me to do but press on and try to help as many people out as I could. To be honest that whole week just blended into one big blur.

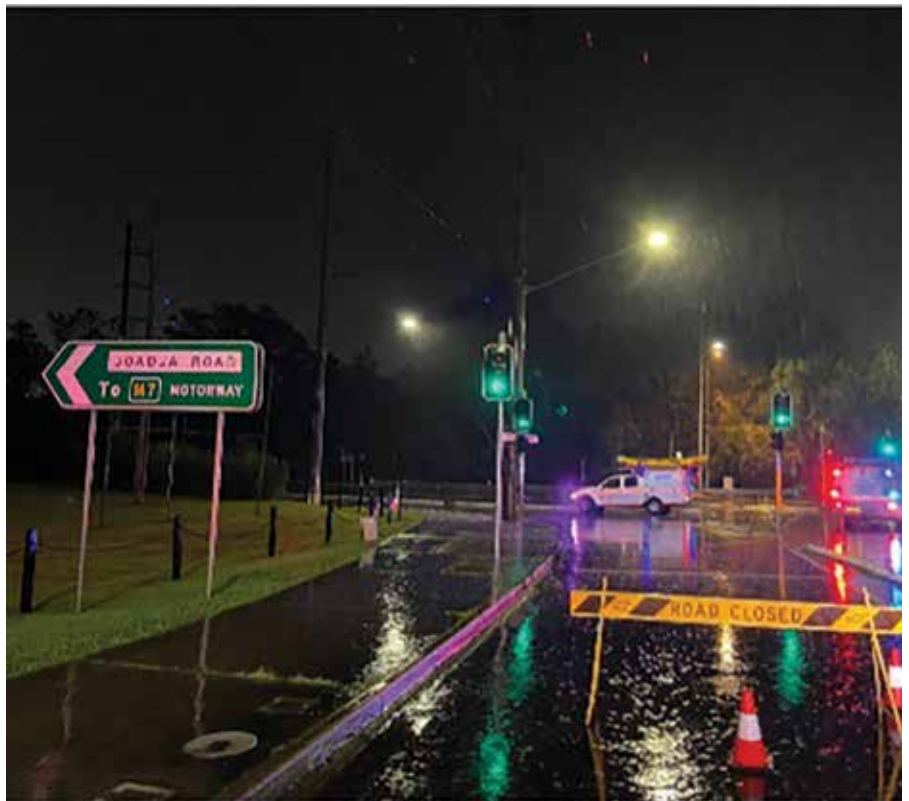
Scott wasn't the only Liverpool member to vividly remember the floods. Liverpool Unit's Senior Coordinator for Planning and Community Chris Hack could also be found right in the middle of the rescue and recovery efforts.

COMPLETELY NEW EXPERIENCE – CHRIS'S STORY

Contrary to my title within the unit, I enjoy getting my hands dirty during an operation and was acting as land-based Flood Rescue Operator during the floods. I was out in a field team with 3 others. We'd been driving around most of the day, reconning some of our frequent flooding hotspots and closing a couple of walkways including a spot where a high-profile flood rescue had occurred 2 days prior. We were having a look at a roof job for an elderly couple when we got our first radio call. The instruction from our local Incident Controller was to load up immediately and respond to a rescue in progress a short distance away. By the time we got to the vehicle, the already steady rain had gotten heavier. I was driving the vehicle at the time, and responded out to the site, another of our frequent flooding hotspots. Police were already onsite, and the individuals had already managed to self-extricate from the floodwater, though you could tell that the combination of freezing cold water from the river and the July rain had already taken a toll on them. While we kept them in the cab for a few minutes to warm up a touch,

we worked with the police to get them all to a safe location; just from the number of pings coming from beacon messages let alone the radio chatter, we knew that we needed to get back on the road as soon as possible. Right as we transferred the people to a police vehicle, we received another radio call, this time to a vehicle trapped in water a few blocks away. At this stage we swapped drivers to our Team Leader Declan; this way we'd have both myself and our other Land Based Operator Joanne ready to jump straight out as needed and still keep the vehicle running, while our final team member, Lilly, who'd only been with us for a few months was running Beacon and Comms.

What we arrived at was a completely new experience. This is a t-intersection - the south side goes to two driveways then goes offroad for a bit before you hit the Maxwells Creek. Said creek had burst its bank and was pouring into the intersection, with at least 4 cars stuck in the middle and more cars trying to get through. We tried calling into the Metro Zone Flood Cell to get more resources, though everyone was already engaged and we didn't get a response. Thankfully the water was just under knee deep, so Joanne and I jumped out of the vehicle and threw on our Personal Floatation Devices, then started going car-to-car working to get people out. One of the first vehicles was a father and daughter, couldn't have been any older than my own daughter, and was scared as anything. I lifted her out of the passenger seat and handed her off to Lilly in our vehicle then started helping the father out through the passenger door; the water pressure on the other side made it hard to even open the door. From there we cleared the existing vehicles on the road. While this was happening there was constant calls from those in our vehicle for people to stop entering the flood water. We spent probably the next 30 minutes (though it felt like hours) turning people around, stopping them from entering, and moving back and forth to the three sides of the intersection getting people out of danger where possible before they got into it. We had some help, a couple of truck drivers knew they were stuck and weren't



going anywhere turned side on to block a road, this at least stopped a few people getting through. While this was happening the water level kept rising, and eventually the amount of traffic coming through slowed to a stop.

We knew there was little more we could do there, and that there was a potential for the whole area to be cut off further down.

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We called in by phone to the unit and were directed to another large flood rescue on the Hume Highway.

The trip to that spot takes normally 10 minutes regular driving - this time it took almost 30. The roads were in chaos - Hoxton Park Road at Cartwright was flooded and the Unimog was performing dozens of rescues, local roads left, and right were underwater, and everyone was using every road possible to try and get around it. At one stage we had to get out and direct people to go an alternative way because they were waiting for right turn signals at a road that was no right turn. Eventually we arrived at the next rescue, where 3 different teams were already in attendance. We ended up transporting a woman to Liverpool Hospital so she could wait for a family member to pick her up and have a medical condition monitored.

By this time things were going up another level in Fairfield. The Flood Rescue channel was congested with the sheer number of teams trying to call through. We returned to unit, picked up a boat and swapped out 2 of our team for On Water Operators, and responded towards Fairfield to assist some in-water operators. While enroute we were redirected to a potential rescue in our area, with 2 vehicles in water though with no idea if anyone was in them. We arrived and I entered the water with one of the On Water Operators. The water was just below the limit of what we could enter and was absolutely freezing.

After this final rescue, the cadence of the operation started to slow down. We returned to the unit, tried to decontaminate and warm up a bit, then went on standby for any further rescue or recon work in our area. Our day ended with reconning flooding in the east of Liverpool.

COMMUNITY UNDER WATER

The weekend of July 3 - 4, 2022 is a time that is engrained in the minds of all members of the Liverpool Unit and the wider community. With torrential rain, and extreme flash flooding, the Liverpool Unit was right in the middle a perfect storm which saw dozens of people rescued from floodwaters in the Liverpool Local Government Area, intertwined with the added stress of effectuating evacuation orders for the entire population of around 10,000 from the suburb of Chipping Norton and its



surrounding areas. With so much fear and heartbreak of we as a community lost during those days, What was realised, was an Orange Army and a community under water (literally) coming together to protect, serve, and care for those in the community, and now, nearly a year on, we still see the connections and effects this

terrible flood has had on this community, but in true Liverpool fashion, we have remained resolute and continue to stand united and ready to face.

Gunnar Hardy

Public Information Coordinator
NSW SES Liverpool Unit

Community Engagement – IWD

Coinciding with International Women's Week, Charmayne (Shellharbour City) and Nikki (Shellharbour City & Operational Support Unit) attended an event held at Lake Illawarra High School, to talk to young women from various schools around the Illawarra. The aim was for students to gain inspiration and have a much better understanding about different careers and what they need to do to build their skills and knowledge to make successful entry into a career.

The 'Industry Conversation Space' was set up in the school gym, in here is where multiple schools joined in conversations with various industries. The female students from years 9 to 12, were given the opportunity to ask questions around future female career opportunities, and how volunteering fits in with their potential careers.

As a bonus, their daughters came along from their schools and sat in with their Mums and hear about volunteering and how it fits in with their family & careers.

This Industry Conversation Space is an initiative of the Regional Industry Education Partnership (RIEP)

Nikki Ristoski

Shellharbour City Unit | Public Information Officer



Congratulations Mr & Mrs Priester

Ballina SES unit is quite happy to present to you - Chris and Madi Priester.

Chris and Madi were married at Lennox Head in November 2022. Both met at the NSW SES Ballina unit. Chris has been a member for 7 years, and has the title of Deputy Unit Commander, as well as being trained as an In Water Flood Rescue Operator, and a GLR member.

Madi has been a member for 3 years, and is a Flood Rescue Coordinator, is Road Crash Rescue certified, and is currently training towards being GLR accredited.

Ballina Unit sincerely wishes them the best in their future together.





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A Transition to Orange

We all know that the SES changes lives, but sometimes it doesn't happen exactly the way you think. If you know a veteran who has recently left the Australian Defence Force, ask them about joining the SES. It could make a world of difference.

Since December 2022, I have been a member of Sutton SES, just northeast of Canberra. And while I haven't been in long, it's safe to say it's already changed my life.

I have a story many will know all too well. I'm a veteran, and I concluded my service in the ADF a few years ago. I left after an operational deployment overseas best described as traumatic. It was tough afterwards, and despite the wealth of skills and experience I had, I felt at a loss for what to do next.

I applied for a few jobs but soon discovered that none of my military training nor skills seemed to "count" in the civilian world. I had no formal certificates issued by an RTO, only lists of courses few outside the ADF would recognise. Even my White Card wasn't recognised!

At this point, I felt pretty low. It looked like all the effort and sweat

put into my training wasn't going to count for anything, so I tried to put the experience behind me and start over. This is an experience all too common for Aussie veterans, and it can be disastrous for mental health.

But in November last year, things turned around. I ran into a fellow named Andrew on a chainsaw course. He'd been sent on it to upskill by the commander of Sutton SES and was modelling a new set of SES chaps. We got on well, and when he found out I had a few valuable skills, he suggested I join. At first, I wasn't sure, but he soon convinced me that the things I'd learnt in the military would be a boon for the small unit.

A couple of weeks later I finished Job Ready and got my orange helmet. Rhian, the commander, asked me to send him any extra qualifications or certificates I had to add to my file. I told him about some parts of my job in the ADF but mentioned I didn't have certificates from an RTO. "That's not a problem," he said. "If you're competent we can sign you off." Before long, we converted several of my military skills across into SES units of competency.

Suddenly, I began to see what I could actually do with all that military training. I realised that with it I could provide a range of capabilities to the team—in an environment where we could do some real good. It was like night and day.

In showing me how my military service, skills, and training could be made to genuinely "count" for something. And by giving me an environment where I could put it to use for the good of the community, just like that the SES changed my life.

Those in the veteran community often talk about a loss of purpose. Many are also understandably frustrated that their hard-won skills are seemingly of no "real" use. But this isn't the way it has to be. In the SES the skills and training our veterans have is useful, and there is just as much, if not more, purpose in serving your local community during an emergency.

So please remember this: if you know someone who has recently, or maybe even not so recently, left the ADF, ask them if they'd be interested in volunteering with the SES. You never know, it might just change their life.

Brad Dare

Congratulations! Menai Baby

The next generation of SES Volunteers Congratulations to Peter Robinson (Menai Unit) & family on the new edition. Certainly, Alyssia will be an SES volunteer in 16 years time.



Shout Out to Barry Wademan

Barry Wademan has had an exciting & rewarding 12 months.

During the recent flood events, Barry lead the Blacktown Incident Management Team with members assisting throughout Sydney's western suburbs.

In his work role, Barry has recently been awarded a Sheriff's Commendation for Service in relation to COVID-19 and the NSW Sheriff's Exemplary Conduct Medal. This was followed last year when Barry was awarded the Rotary Club's highest honour – he was made a Paul Harris Fellow (not often awarded to people who are not Rotarians) by the Blacktown City Rotary Club.

This was followed by being awarded an Emergency Services Medal in the Australia Day Honours List. There are quite stringent rules associated with being awarded this.

On Saturday, 18 March 2023 Barry will be made a Life Member of the NSW State Emergency Service at the Metro Zine Awards Ceremonies,

Appropriate recognition for a person who has put so much into serving the community in employment roles and as a volunteer!

BARRY WADEMAN & NSW SES

Currently: Unit Commander, Blacktown Unit of the SES

Barry:

- » Joined the SES as a cadet in November 1977
- » Moved to Senior Rescue Team in 1980



Barry's Work Uniform Ribbons – Right Hand Side

- » Competed in numerous Rescue competitions - winning team in 1981
- » Moved through the ranks Deputy Party Leader, Party Leader, Team Leader, Rescue Officer, Deputy Controller (field), and currently Unit Commander
- » Pioneered swift water rescue in the mid 1990's with other members from Blacktown SES Unit
- » Qualified as a Flood Rescue Technician but has since retired from that role
- » Participated in significant SES deployments 'locally' as well as 'Out of Area Assistance' including responses to:
 - » Dubbo, Broken Hill, Newcastle (earthquake), Thredbo (Landslip), Eastern suburbs Hail Storm, Blacktown Hail Storm, Singleton Hail Storm amongst other regional and metro based deployments

- » Is an SES-endorsed Trainer in: storm damage, rescue, chainsaw operation, 4WD
- » Assisted with 25-30 years of BTN festivals
- » Participated in Flood Rescues both Locally and Out Of Area
- » Assisted and Lead design teams for truck fit-outs for Blacktown Unit
- » Developed many local unit Standing Operating Procedures
- » Attended many RFS fire support operations including fires in 1994,1996, 1997, 2001,2004
- » Acted as Recovery Centre Manager Ulladulla and Narooma 2019/2020 bush fires
- » Surge Team Member for Department of Justice
- » Assisted in many evacuations of communities during fire support operations
- » Assisted in training RFS team to help with major storm responses – 'citrus teams'
- » (composite teams comprising 'orange' SES members and 'lemon' RFS personnel)

Congratulations, Barry!

Peter Lalor ESM MAIES

Commander, Metro Awards & Ceremonial Unit, Emeritus Unit Commander, Mt Druitt Unit



NSW Sheriff's Exemplary Conduct Medal



NSW Sheriff's Commendation for Service



Emergency Services Medal



NSW SES Life Member Badge



Rotary Club Paul Harris Fellow





Shout Out to The Hills Unit

Congratulations to The Hills SES unit who received the award for Community Group of the Year at the 2023 Hills Shire Council Australia Day Award Winners.

Three outstanding volunteers were also recognised individually for their outstanding efforts:

Congratulations to volunteer Ryan Barton for receiving the Young Citizen of the Year – Ryan is one of the youngest volunteers at the unit to hold the rank of Leading Senior Operator. He has put in nearly 1400 volunteering hours since joining the unit less than 4 years ago! Ryan also volunteers with the RFS.

Congratulations also go to husband and wife team, John and Nicola Hill who were both finalists in the Senior Citizen of the Year.

Well done!



Multi-agency Collaboration

Multi-agency collaboration at rescue incidents is critical to providing a casualty centric response.

As an example - in March, SES Port Stephens were responded to 2 car accident with persons trapped on Lemon Tree Passage Road, SALT ASH.

Upon arrival, crews found two vehicles, one of which was on its side in a storm drain with significant damage and the driver trapped inside.

NSW SES Rescue Operators stabilised the vehicle and worked to release the trapped driver.

NSW Ambulance Paramedics worked to treat the injured casualties on scene, including the driver.

NSW Police Officers managed the scene, local traffic and bystanders.

NSW RFS Firefighters managed a fuel leak and provided fire protection.

With the vehicle on its side and the driver trapped by both injury and confinement, rescue operators cut along the roof of the vehicle and folded it down (known as a "roof fold"). This was so as to create sufficient access to the casualty to get them out as carefully as possible.

Once extricated from the vehicle, the driver was then taken to John Hunter Hospital for further treatment by medical staff.

This inter-agency team work lead to greater safety management, faster extrication and greater casualty support.

ANIMAL RESCUE

NSW SES Port Stephens was responded to a horse that had become trapped in a drain at HEATHERBRAE.

After heavy rains caused significant amounts of water in the area, the escaped young mare (who was likely frightened by the storm) had become stuck in a nearby drain.

Crews attended to find the trapped horse completely exhausted and unable to exit the drain due to the steep sides.

Our SES Rescue Operators worked alongside our In-Water Flood Technician to calm the horse and position lifting straps around her. This was particularly challenging due to the thick mud.



The lifting straps were put in place and the veterinarian administered some sedation to calm the horse and stop any struggling and movement during the extrication.

The horse was then lifted onto plastic slides and up the bank onto the grassed embankment.

Within a few minutes, the beautiful horse was back up on her feet.

Alysha Springett
Port Stephens Unit





Two Days in February

Experiences in the SES can vary across a year, with each season or event bringing its own challenges.

Typically, we would only be required to use a few of our skills at any time. But, sometimes a broad range of our skills are tested all at once. Two days in February hit the Illawarra Region with a one-two punch of extremes. Forcing us to draw on our local knowledge and skills, and to really lean on our ability and resilience to deal with water, mud, sweat, strain, and fatigue. But we've got this, let's go!

On the 9th of February the Wollongong region experienced over 100mm of rain in under an hour. Whilst rain had been forecast for the day, no one, including the BoM, could predict the deluge that hit us.

A smattering of calls had come in for the area in the morning, mostly for leaks in roofs, and a few reports of a small amount of water over the roads. As the hour clicked over to 11am,

things started changing rapidly. The sky darkened and decided to unload its fury from the Escarpment to the Sea. The Illawarra became a lot more than the understated prediction of "a little damp".

By 1pm, the Illawarra Region received eighteen calls for flood rescues, and by late afternoon over two hundred further requests for flood and storm assistance. We had to deal with a flooded Sea Cliff Bridge, land-slides up and down the coast, evacuation of school children from a flooded Unanderra area, and many other tasks. We looked to our colleagues from other units to do what we all as a service do best, help our mates and our communities. Units such as Sutherland and Yass gave us a welcome hand. The Unimog from Kiama arrived to give us assistance as well.

A number of our members had recently completed land based and in-water flood rescue training through the accelerated programs. After also spending some recent time out of area,

» continued on page 30



they're newly acquired skills were invaluable in getting through the tasks that we faced.

Our IMT team triaged efficiently and effectively, whilst the storm teams knocked off one job after another. The IMT ran until 11 pm that evening. By lunchtime the following day, the storm crews did a tremendous job of closing out the remaining jobs. Come lunch time we took in a big breath, it had escalated quickly, but we responded with professionalism, and lessons from 2022 under our belt's, things had settled down almost as swiftly as they started.

Someone must have spoken too soon.

Just after midday, a Vertical Search and Rescue call came into the Kiama unit with reports of a 21 year old male with his leg trapped under a rock in Macquarie Pass National Park.

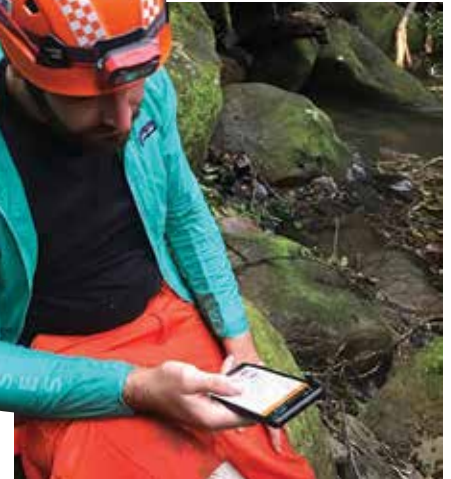
Members from the Kiama, Shellharbour, Wollongong, and Bush Search and Rescue (BSAR) units travelled from all over the Illawarra and Southern Highlands to assist.

Initially, a team of BSAR / Kiama members alongside Police Rescue Squad (PRS) and NSW Ambulance located the casualty. Patient stabilisation and first aid treatment was commenced whilst a rescue plan was being formulated. The plan determined that more resources would be required. A team from Wollongong, Kiama, and a SOTTY (Special Operations Team Ambulance) were informed that they were in for a rough tasking, potentially overnight, with an arduous hike in, and a patient who at this point had already been trapped for four hours. Our members checked gear, borrowed supplies from those staying behind, cinched up their backpacks, and got to it.

Tapping into the familiarity our units have with the Macquarie Pass area from past rescues and the provided grid reference, our BSAR members guided the team to the casualty in less than an hour.

When members arrived the extrication plan was pretty much ready to go. With RCR spreaders in position, the casualty sedated and secured with a harness and with safety lines held tight, the 1.8T sandstone block was levered off the patient, with members guiding him safely into a stretcher. He was then passed up the creek to a clearing, ready to be winched out by the Toll helicopter.

But just when the dark threat of an all-nighter had been banished to the back of the minds of those in the isolated gully, the skies threatened an encore. The first few drops of rain filtered down onto the party with ominous rumblings echoing



off The Escarpment. Hunkering down and, in one circumstance, squeezing into undersized borrowed gear for optimal comedic effect. The team waited to see if a reprieve was on the table.

Luckily, this time the storm was more bark than bite and passed quickly. Picking up the gear used for the extraction the first team left for the forward staging area, in a surprise to no one, members can confirm that a multi kilometre hike with RCR Spreaders is...sub-optimal. An overnigher was still on the cards at this stage. As the first group made the slow journey out, a new sound drew attention, a Helo! The patient was being winched out.

As crews returned to the staging area around 8 pm, sweaty, muddy, and with unwanted travelling companions (Leeches) exhaustion was tempered with relief, satisfaction, and a well consumed Subway cookie or two.

Thanks to the Shellharbour Unit having deployed a trailer with communications repeater at the base of The Pass earlier, communication between the staging areas, crews on scene, and Helo was near perfect. Besides the sometimes itchy reminder of a leech, there were no injuries to any of the rescue personnel.

Both events highlighted how important it is for all agencies to work together to achieve a positive outcome. PRS thanked everyone involved for working as a team, and for the skills, attitude, and experience they brought to the task.

The "Two Days" that the Illawarra experienced showcased the value that the community derives from all the training that SES gives its members, and the fantastic contribution that our volunteers make to the community. The skills required over the two days

included: vertical rescue, remote land search, map reading and navigation, land based and in water flood rescue, USAR, DOV, OCE, First Aid, 4WD, IMT, AIMS, DO, storm, storm heights, communications (COW), HCV, media liaison, and team work.

Particularly over the past year we have learnt as members of the SES to adapt to rapidly changing conditions, endure prolonged activity, and use every event we come across to build our knowledge, our skills, and our resilience.

We're ready for the next day, and whatever it brings.

Rhiannon McKeon

Deputy Team Leader - Delta | Wollongong
NSW State Emergency Service - South Eastern Zone

Contributions: Wil Alards, Andrew McKenzie, Tom Begic, Jake Cleal-Cook, Nikki Ristoski and Andrew Short.



Women Veterans Network Australia (WVNA)

The origins of WVNA began with a community Facebook page sharing posts of general interest to women veterans.

In July 2015, the RSL QLD funded Women Veterans Symposium in Brisbane which prompted pivotal conversations between ex-servicewomen, who then established the Women Veterans Network Australia (WVNA) on 25 July 2015 as a network of closed Facebook groups for women veterans. WVNA grew from a desire to provide a safe, cohesive and engaging environment for current and ex-servicewomen, to connect and share information and resources via social media. The similar or shared experiences, regardless of type, locality or number of years of service,

create a fundamental bond that begged to be encouraged and cultivated.

Incorporated in August 2016, the WVNA is a modern network breaking down barriers and connecting women who have served to help progress the conversation of female veteran issues. Women have served in all the major conflicts and today's female veterans and serving members deserve recognition and a support network committed to their specific health and wellbeing needs.

WVNA is exclusively for women and inclusive of all ranks who are currently serving or have served in the Navy, Army or Air Force, either in a full time or

Reserve capacity, regardless of whether they have been deployed or not.

There are now several established groups around Australia providing a forum to share local information and come together for activities to foster a social connection of understanding and support with other local women veterans.

As the number of women and their roles in the ADF evolve and increase, so does the number who will experience transition in the future, increasing the need to provide assistance to ease transition, assist with readjustment and reduce the risk of social isolation.



All women who have served are encouraged to join WVNA groups to connect in both local and national forums, for networking and support. We have all served equally, however our needs are our own, as only other women know.

The findings from the Royal Commission into Veteran suicide cited that ex-Serving women are 107% more likely to die by suicide than the general population of women. (AIHW Serving and ex-serving ADF members who have served since 1985: suicide monitoring 1997 – 2020). While the actual numbers are much lower than male suicides, they are significant and may be an emerging issue as the numbers of women slowly increase in the Services.

Building connections within the WVNA community is about listening and supporting women when someone reaches out. It is important for them to know that they are not alone and that we are there for each other.

One of the ways the Western Sydney WVNA group has come together is by commemorating a

Women Veterans ANZAC Day Service. The group who meet on the last Sunday of the month decided early in 2021 that they would like to hold an ANZAC Day service for women veterans. To say it 'grew legs' was an understatement; with Senator, the Hon Marise Payne giving the main address. There was not a dry eye in the house. From the catafalque party, chaplain and MC all being current serving women.

In 2022, invitations were distributed and incredibly everyone accepted to attend.

Attendees included, Senator, the Hon Marise Payne, Susan Templeman, President of RSL NSW, Mr Ray James OAM, Federal, senior ADF representatives, state and local members, mayors, and many more dignitaries were very keen to attend. The main address in 2022 was given by a young corporal female dog handler who talked about coming to Australia as a back packer, becoming an Australian citizen and joining the ADF. CPL Hancock talked about her

deployments and the highs and lows of being a woman in the ADF, and what it meant to her.

In 2023 we will again be holding a Women Veterans ANZAC Day Service on 22 April 2023 at Memory Park, Penrith NSW starting at 1030 am. We will have female MC, Catafalque Party, Chaplain, Indigenous acknowledgement of country, and all spoken parts of the service. We are sincerely grateful for the support of the City of Penrith RSL sub-branch and Penrith RSL Club. Bankstown, Blaxland/Glenbrook, and St Marys sub-Branches have also contributed to our WVNA Sydney to ensure we can continue to hold the ANZAC Day ceremonies.

We are a group of current and ex-serving women, who come together in friendship, support and understanding. If you are an ex-serving or current serving woman and want to connect with others please contact sydney@wvna.org.au. We are proud to wear our medals on the left and very proud to have served in the Australian Defence Force.



Thank you

for protecting our community

MELISSA McINTOSH MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR LINDSAY



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THE NATIONALS for Regional Australia

Mark COULTON

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR PARKES

Thank you to all past and current serving SES volunteers in the Parkes electorate who have gone above and beyond to assist our community during trying times



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Murray Capability Unit Member Seeking Help

Brian Weir, a member of the Murray Capability Unit based in Albury is taking on the MS Mega Challenge!

He is taking on this epic team relay challenge to support people living with multiple sclerosis. MS strikes young people in the prime of their lives, the average age of diagnosis is only 30 and there is no known cure.

This event is part of the MS Mega Challenge and every year over 3,000 people from Victoria, Tasmania,

New South Wales and ACT come together, to swim or rally for 12 or 24 mega hours! It's pretty incredible event and Brian will be taking part with his team, ASRA Heavy Hitters in the 2023 Wodonga MS Mega Squash on the weekend 29/30 April. The poster attached contains a QR code linked to Brian's fund raising page and all donations \$2:00 and over are tax deductible.

Please scan the QR code to Donate and Help Make a Difference. Thanking You In Advance.

MS MEGA CHALLENGE
CELEBRATING 11 YEARS

Are you with me?

Make a MEGA difference for people with MS

NAME:

TEAM:

WHERE:

WHEN:

Donate : msmegachallenge.org.au/fundraisers/brianweir



Bankstown Unit – Mayor Thankyou BBQ

At the held on 26 July 2022, Canterbury-Bankstown Council resolved that Council:

1. Host a "Mayor's Thank You BBQ" for our local Bankstown and Canterbury State Emergency Services units in recognition of their dedication and outstanding efforts following several major storm related events in recent months, and for their ongoing work in our community.
2. Write to the NSW Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, The Hon. Steph Cooke MP to initiate a recruitment campaign for more State Emergency Services personnel, and to ensure they are properly funded and resourced. This call to action is to bolster low numbers and to address the impacts of climate change both now and into the future

As a result, two BBQs were organised with the Bankstown unit having their BBQ on Tuesday 7th March 2023 and Canterbury having theirs on Tuesday 14th March. The catering was provided by council staff who set up the BBQs and did all the preparation, cooking and clean-up leaving the members with many expressions of thanks from the Mayor and councillors that attended.

The Mayor also presented awards to some Bankstown members.





Neurofibromatosis

On 4th January 2023 I took a road trip with my wife, driving from Sydney, (via Gundagai, Mildura and the Barossa Valley) to the Flinders' Ranges – returning on 17th January 2023 (via Mount Remarkable and Junee's Liquorice and Chocolate Factory) to Sydney.

The trip lasted just 14 days – during which time statistics would suggest that up to 5 children in Australia would have been born with “NF”.

As you will no doubt know....
Neurofibromatosis (NF) is a set of three complex genetic conditions (NF Type 1, NF Type 2 and Schwannomatosis) that cause tumours to form on nerve cells throughout the body and affects more than 10,000 people in Australia. The signs, symptoms, and management of each condition are different, as is the treatment for every individual. Every three days a child is born with NF in Australia.

Two days after my return (19th January 2023), I received an email from Canada Bay Council's Events and Tourism Coordinator – asking if, on 25th January 2023, Canada Bay SES Unit could assist a local charity (the Children's Tumour Foundation) with a Colour Fun Run from 4pm to 8pm. The event was being organised in conjunction with Canada Bay Council's re-opening of the newly refurbished Concord Oval and Sporting Complex.

In addition to the short timeframe, planning was going to be problematic as our Unit Commander was deployed to Wentworth for flood response; our Unit was otherwise “closed” except for emergency response; and the chosen event day was a working day immediately prior to a public holiday.

Anyway, by Friday afternoon of 20th January 2023 I had received the necessary Unit Commander's permission, entered the event on the State SES Calendar, received Zone permission, and could commence sourcing Canada Bay SES Volunteers.

I was fortunate to get two who were free to join me from 4pm (Unit Training Coordinator “Inky” and L3 Tech “Alex”) and another three more that could join us after work (L3 Tech “Martino”, and Volunteers “Pete” and “Silvia”). On the downside one



of our usually reliable community engagement volunteers gave the excuse that she would still be overseas on 25th January 2023 (a fair enough excuse, I guess, given the short notice).

I believe that the quick positive response was partly due to the charitable cause that we would be supporting, a Colour Fun Run organised by the Children's Tumour Foundation, a charity which supports those afflicted by NF.

(On a personal note - the reference to children was particularly apposite for me, because during our road trip, we were blessed with the arrival of a little grand-daughter named Abigail).

But I digress – the challenge was on to support a “colour fun run” - being an event, in which people donate to have fun by getting covered in coloured powder while running.

(This immediately brought back memories of my studies in India in the early 1980's at which time I experienced my first “Holi” festival of colour while riding on the back of an elephant!) But I digress....

I decided that I was now too old to actively participate in the current antics (turning 75 this year) and so planned that I would take a back-seat supervisory/mentoring role and let the young-ones

get themselves plastered. The best laid plans of mice and old men....

Anyway, more about NF:
Neurofibromatosis (NF) can affect anyone regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or family history and causes tumours (known as neurofibromas) to grow around the body's nerve cells, including the spine and brain, under the surface of the skin or deep in the body. It is impossible to predict how mildly or severely someone with NF will be affected and roughly half of all cases arise in families with no history of NF.

Back to the “fun run” and we began with obligatory “before” photos – one taken by the charity organisers of all volunteers, and another taken by Inky of myself with Alex and the charity's penguin mascot – and then the first wave of fun-runners lined up.

Three things became quickly apparent:

1. There was no “sitting-this-one-out” option for this elderly SES Volunteer.

2. If you do get a choice of where to stand do not choose the place where you are throwing your coloured powder into a prevailing wind.

3. Large, slow moving, old people make the best targets.

Each group of volunteers was allocated a stand and given a copious



supply of green or blue powder (Green and Blue being the Foundation's chosen colours) in squeeze bottles to squirt onto the runners. We were told that the custom was to target the lower torso. However, it quickly became apparent that this was a custom "more honoured in the breach than in the observance" as Shakespeare noted in Hamlet Act 1 Scene 4).

Everyone donned their protective eyewear and then it was game on for young and the very old! We were facing into a strong headwind and so we literally "got our own back" as we sprayed the runners!

So, what is the impact of NF..... *Neurofibromatosis (NF) can lead to a range of significant health issues including deafness, blindness, paralysis, physical differences, bone abnormalities, cancer, learning difficulties and chronic pain. There is no known cure, and treatment options are limited, but significant research is happening globally providing hope for people impacted by NF.* Back to the "fun" run – and I must say that NF was far from my thoughts as I literally turned from orange to green before my protected eyes. I was a mess! The "powder" was a dry mixture of corn-starch and coloured dye that

we were assured was safe, ethically sourced, and would wash out with water! However, it was a hot day, and we were in full sun in field orange – and so what resulted was actually a mixture of green coloured oily sunscreen and green sweat all over our field uniform and in every external orifice!

The runners enjoyed the action and, I must confess, so did we – and then after a couple of hours of "green and blue powder-squirting" we got to assist with the pack-up and bump-out.

So, was it worth it.....

I spoke to the charity's green and blue powdered Head of Marketing and Fundraising after the event, and she said that it had been a success for them. Not only had the charity gotten its name out there in the public arena, and been supported by Canada Bay Council, and raised some funds – but they had also gained the contact details of all the registered runners, which could prove useful down the track. She was obviously appreciative of our involvement and our enthusiasm in getting truly colourful for a good cause.

And the cause again – lest we forget....

Formally known as the Neurofibromatosis Association of Australia (NFAA),

the Children's Tumour Foundation was established in 2010 and has grown from a volunteer-based support service to become the peak body in Australia for those impacted by Neurofibromatosis (NF).

They advocate for change, advancing research and empowering the community with knowledge, connections and support at every stage of their journey.

But was it worth it from an SES perspective?

I have no doubt that our Unit's Volunteers enjoyed not only the colourful fun, but also felt that we were supporting a meaningful cause! It was a feel-good experience all round. Furthermore, I am sure that Council will have appreciated our willingness and capacity to assist at short notice. Finally, it was quite evident that the attending public was also appreciative of an SES presence.

As I took a "senior's-moment drinks-break", sitting on a wall covered from hat to toe in green and blue powder, I heard a passing couple say: "what good sports you are".

Bill Hoyles

Volunteer: Canada Bay SES Unit.



From left to right: Alison Neale, Brendon Feild, David Hickey, Tim Cady, Scott Witchard, Michael and Sereena Ward, Alfred Portenschlager.

SES Kids

Port Macquarie Hastings unit is a busy unit, especially after the recent storm event in early March where a microburst hit part of the town hard.

Resulting in over 300 requests for assistance. Many hours went into helping our community repair and recover after the short but fierce storm event. Many thanks from the community were received for the members who put in tireless hours to help those in need. A big thank you should also be credited to the families who support the volunteers heading out to help those in need. The husbands, wives, partners, kids, grandparents, babysitters, and more, are just as deserving.

Personally, I am very grateful that I am in a position to be able to balance mum life and continue with SES volunteering at the same time. Being a SES volunteer with two little boys (aged 1 and 3) looks a lot different now, than it did before I had children. Without the support of family, friends, unit members and especially my husband, I, and many other parents I'm sure, would not be able to do what we do.

I am not alone when it comes to parenting and volunteering. In the last few years, the number of volunteers with young families in the Port

Macquarie unit has increased. On count there are about 15 families with 20 plus children between them. In 2021 along, five babies were born to our SES families.

Given the number of children in the unit, the idea of starting a creche has come up several times. A place where kids can play and have fun while their parents are training or responding to call outs. Just last weekend Michael and I were both on a first aid course and Elaine (our lovely and caring unit mum) stepped in to help look after our boys while we were busy refreshing our skills. I wonder if there are other unities that do something similar. Maybe that is something we can look into.

I could not be more grateful for the amazing group of people I work along side (with or without kids), for the friendships I've made, the support they give, which allows many of us to balance family life with SES and all the other things that everyday life gives us. For me looking after my family while taking part in looking after our community had been a great experience.



Sereena and Michael Ward, Scott Witchard, Tim Cady and Christopher Dowse.



Support for children missing time with parents who are often working away

We are sharing an article by Dr Marg Rogers, UNE Early Childhood Education, with information about some great books and resources for children with parents who work away for a variety of reasons, including emergency workers and volunteers.

We are sharing an article by Dr Marg Rogers, UNE Early Childhood Education, with information about some great books and resources for children with parents who work away for a variety of reasons, including emergency workers and volunteers.

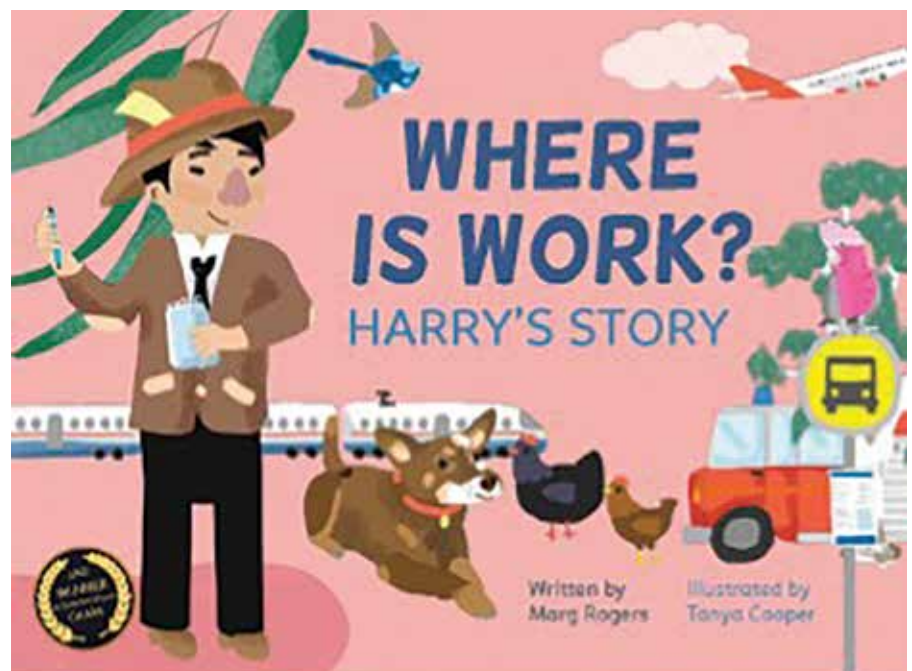
They are research-based, a first in Australia, and award-winning, and free for families and their support network.

New, free, award-winning books are available to support young children (2-8 years) who are missing their parents. They have been co-created by researchers and stakeholders as part of the funded Early Childhood Defence Programs project.



Figure 1: This book explores the responses of children to parents working away

The books help children understand their own responses to parents working away, which can be physical, emotional, social and cognitive.



Children also witness their siblings' and the at-home parents' responses and learn models of resilience. Many of the books are designed for any family that experience a parent working away in various industries.

Figure 2: Children's potential responses to parents working away

The books have won the Council of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences 'Distinctive Work' award. The Council said: 'The jury commended the work for its significant contribution to supporting children and their families and your innovative, creative methods used in doing so'.

The books are written from a strengths-based, resilience-based perspective and are unique because they feature narratives from children with first hand experience. The books were co-created with those with lived experience and many professionals

who support children from families who experience parents working away.

Figure 1: A book that explores practical ways children can connect with their absent parent

Accompanying each book are free, downloadable educational activities to support children's understanding of the concepts in the book. These contain puzzles, puppets, board games, card games, sequencing activities, storytelling games, and activities to improve literacy and numeracy.

Most of the books have interactive versions to deepen the learning. These have been created by experts in early childhood technology, such as Dr Jo Bird. Additionally, UNE's Education Futures Media Team were instrumental in creating most of these interactives.

Figure 4: The books encourage ongoing projects for the parent and child to do together

To improve access, six of the books have Key Word Sign read-along videos that were created by Massiel Barros-Torning. These are useful for those with hearing impairment or those who have language or learning delays.

Additionally, the research team and stakeholders have created four suites of resources to support children and their **parents, educators and family/ social workers** to build young children's understanding and resilience. They cover many topics including parents working away, relocations, transitions, parents with work related injuries and mental health conditions.

All resources can be accessed at <https://ecdefenceprograms.com/>. Royalty-free printed copies of the books are available at the Australian War Memorial Shop.

AUTHOR BIO

Dr Marg Rogers is a Senior Lecturer in the Early Childhood Education team within the School of Education at the University of New England. Marg researches military families and professionalism in early childhood education and care. She is a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Commonwealth funded Manna Institute. marg.rogers@une.edu.au



Young Citizen of the Year

Armidale Unit Deputy Commander Named Young Citizen of the Year at January Australia Day Awards Celebrations.

As Deputy Unit Commander of the Armidale Dumaesq Unit of the NSW State Emergency Service, Jock has dedicated several years to the organisation and has been rising through the ranks. Jock as outstanding as the spokesperson for the SES in Armidale during the recovery process from the 2021 tornado. In addition to aiding the local community in times of need and ensuring volunteers are prepared for future events, Jock also deploys to other areas of the state to help those communities. Jock stands out as a true leader. The nominee said, "Jock wishes to help the community in whatever way he can, but what makes him stand out is that he draws out the

best in the volunteers so they can work well as a team. He has demonstrated his problem-solving techniques to aid the community and always displays and promotes a professional, kind, caring and compassionate approach to whatever he does".

(<https://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/news/news-2023/armidale-s-local-australia-day-awards>)

Jock has also received many awards during his time in service including:

- » Commissioners Certificate of Appreciation for services rendered during the 2019/20 bushfires (2021)
- » Premiers Bushfire Citation (2021)
- » Long Service Award – 5 years (2022)





The Difference Four Little Paws can Make

A little over a year ago, I decided to volunteer for another agency and took on the role of Puppy Raiser with Guide Dogs Australia.

Not long after, I received a little furry bundle of energy and her arrival could not have come at a better time.

Within days of her arrival Hallie became a temporary member of the orange family and attended her first training night with Wollongong Unit. Members were coming to terms with the sudden and unexpected passing of a much loved member and it was felt across the whole unit. Watching members faces light up when they saw her and then enjoying cuddles was just what was needed. Over the following weeks, members would keep an eye out for Hallie's arrival and queue up for pats or to take her for a "toilet break" while I ran training.

Hallie's infectious charm continued to spread as I continued to train with my dual units, Wollondilly and the Multicultural Liaison Unit, where she became an honorary member. Wherever I went, Hallie was not far behind....even travelling to Jindabyne one weekend as I assisted with training.

Hallie's biggest impact was seen during operational activities. Her first introduction was at an Illawarra Division IMT where members were able to forget about everything for a few minutes as the excitement of a puppy being onsite kicked in. Watching flood technicians enter the WOL IMT collapse on the floor and cuddle up to her or members exiting the vehicle with a look of defeat on

their face and when seeing her, their faces light up as they got kisses and cuddles.

As the months passed, Hallie gained trainers across the units as members picked up on her training queues and tricks and learnt the difference between her work and non-working mode (when Hallie's jacket was on). Sometimes I think Hallie taught us as much as we taught her.

The true impact this special girl has had on two units was felt this week (6th and 7th March) and Hallie attended Wollongong and Wollondilly training for the last time as Hallie will return to Guide Dogs Australia where she will begin her assessment to choose her career pathway.



While many members who have crossed her path hope she will stay with me as they will miss seeing her around, I know they also wish her all the luck in her future endeavours.

As Hallie has found a special place in the hearts of many, she has also had a massive impact on my life. In working through my own traumas, Hallie has helped me find the confidence I was lacking and helped me make social connections which at one stage was a daily struggle. Throughout the last 15 months I always spoke of how Hallie had a higher purpose and was going on to bigger and greater things, little did I realise, that purpose started the moment she was placed in my arms.





Vertical Rescue Skills to the Test

Every so often we put our vertical rescue skills to the test. On Tuesday March 7, 2023, vertical rescue and GLR qualified members from the Port Macquarie Hasting Unit headed out to one of our regular training locations.

Every so often we put our vertical rescue skills to the test. On Tuesday March 7, 2023, vertical rescue and GLR qualified members from the Port Macquarie Hasting Unit headed out to one of our regular training locations. A scenario had been set up for us and we were eager to get started. The situation was a dog and a small child had disappeared off the side of a small but steep embankment at one of the local headlands. The dog, Mac, was last seen to go over in one location, while the child, who had gone after the dog had fallen off a little further up.

A storm was coming so the mission was to locate, access, stabilise and

transport the child and dog back safely to the top. We had all the gear prepped and a team leader had been appointed. I was tasked as first responder to locate Mac. A few other team members helped me set up the ropes and did an on-rope gear check and I was ready to go. I had a radio for communication if needed. The storm was rolling in quickly and we did not have much time.

I was halfway down the descent when the wind picked up. There were a few flashes of light and thunder rolled overhead. The team leader made the decision to call the exercise off as the weather was getting a little wild. Unable to locate the dog quickly, I made my way back up the embankment leaving the poor

dog behind. Meanwhile a second first responder had located the child and was on his way back up with the child.

Several storm jobs had come in. Given real jobs take priority over training, we packed up the gear and headed out to complete the storm jobs.

The next day a few of us went back to the location to retrieve our faithful friend. It did not take us long to locate the missing pup and we had him back up the top in no time. Mac was a little wet and dirty but none the worse for his trip over the headland. As far as we can tell Mac has no hard feelings towards us for leaving him out there. And for the record no dog or children were harmed in the process of this exercise!



Bob White

Robert Allan White, aged 79 years, died peacefully at Bellingen Hospital on the 19th January 2023.


Bob White was the Local Controller at Coffs Harbour for many years as well as being on the VA Executive. Our thoughts are with Bob's family
Regards

Bill Roffey

DEATH NOTICE

Robert (Bob) Allan White


19th January 2023



Peacefully at Bellingen Hospital. Late of Marian Grove. Beloved husband of Nola.
Loved father of Nicole and Craig. Proud Pop of Alexandra, Macondo, Riley and Darcy.

Aged 79 Years
Forever in our hearts.

Bob was privately cremated as per his wishes.



VICTOR RULLIS
FAMILY FUNERALS

132 West High Street, Coffs Harbour
Phone: 02 6651 5007

Lenore Nelson

3.03.1958 – 23.11. 2022

Lenore was a member of the Canterbury SES Unit for 38 years and 8 months.

She held the position of Deputy Unit Controller for many years and became the Acting Controller from late 2009. She was appointed Controller (Commander) in 2011, a position she held until 2022.

Lenore was an amazing ambassador of everything great within the New South Wales State Emergency Service. She was a dedicated and passionate member and worked tirelessly within the community. Apart from her operational role during storm and flood events, she supported the Canterbury Council with many local events.

As part of her support to Council, Lenore also worked closely with the local NSW Police Force. One of her much loved support projects was assisting Campsie Police with their 'Wise-Up' Program, helping the youth in the area.

Lenore took part in many multiple large-scale operations both locally and within the Metro Zone. She was always ready to assist any other units requiring reinforcements during large scale events like the Sydney Hail Storm (1999).



She also travelled to Regional NSW to assist with storm and flood events, most notably the Western NSW Floods

Lenore led her Volunteers with humility, compassion and dedication, always ensuring the residents of Canterbury got the help they needed, and that her Volunteers were looked after.



Lenore will be sadly missed by the many people whose lives she touched during her lifetime. This was expressed by the large attendance at her farewell, with SES members past and present, dignitaries from State and local Politicians, Council, Police, RFS and many members of the Canterbury/Bankstown Community.



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