

The official journal of the NSW SES Volunteers Association

the

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# Volunteer





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# the Volunteer

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I would like to say a special thank you to our SES Volunteers who give so tirelessly to my electorate and throughout NSW in times of disasters.

We are always guaranteed the presence of our NSW SES volunteers to keep us safe and my community is grateful for your selfless contributions, especially during our most trying times. Thank you.



**The Hon. Jihad Dib MP**

Member for Bankstown  
Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government  
Minster for Emergency Services  
Minister for Youth Justice

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**One of the best experiences I have is visiting SES units, where I can personally meet you and get to know you better.**  
 ”



**JIHAD DIB MP**  
**MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES**

It's great to contribute to the first Volunteer Magazine of 2024, I hope you all had a safe and enjoyable summer, and you are in good spirits and health.

You may remember, the weather was quite unpredictable in late December, and the hot, dry Christmas we were expecting didn't eventuate. SES crews were out in force to help communities impacted by storms and even hail in what was a surprising "white Christmas" for some, with about 1,000 SES volunteers responding to 1,200 incidents from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day.

I couldn't be prouder of all the volunteers who rescued people from floods, restored roofs, and generally helped during what is typically a period spent with family and loved ones. On behalf of the NSW Government, thank you for your service and commitment.

There are about 10,500 SES volunteers across the state, but there is always room for more. That's why Commissioner York and I were very happy to head to Wagga Wagga in early March to launch the 2024 SES Recruitment Campaign, which focuses on regional areas and particularly those impacted by storms and floods over recent years.

During major events like the Eugowra floods of 2022, people see just how important our SES volunteers are to local communities. It's telling that applications to become a SES volunteer increase directly after major events.

2024 is also off to a strong start when it comes to recognising the work of SES volunteers and executives for their leadership and service. The accomplishments of many women



in the SES were acknowledged on International Women's Day, including Commissioner Carlene York APM, who was a finalist in the Woman of Excellence category in the Premier's Women of the Year Awards.

Two NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) volunteers with decades of service under their belts were awarded Emergency Service Medals (ESMs) in this year's Australia Day Honours List, while volunteers from

the Central Coast, Lake Macquarie, Coastal and Hunter, North Coast and Metro zones have also been recognised for their outstanding service in recent award ceremonies.

One of the best experiences I have is visiting SES units, where I can personally meet you and get to know you better. As always, thank you for all you do to support our communities across the state and hopefully I will see you soon.

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## Our annual celebration of volunteers, “Wear Orange Wednesday” is fast approaching and we are also busy preparing for the upcoming State Road Crash Rescue Challenge.

”



**CARLENE YORK APM**  
NSW SES COMMISSIONER

It's been a busy few months at the NSW SES packed with the celebration of anniversaries and awards, exciting milestones for some of our projects and continued participation in exercises and training. All the while our members continue to serve and protect their communities throughout the state, assisting in operational responses far and wide.

Since my last message, we have celebrated the one-year anniversaries of our new North Western and North Eastern Zones. This has been an incredible improvement in protecting our communities, providing more localised resources, and harnessing the knowledge of local members. Meanwhile, members across all zones have been recognised for significant service and contributions, including two members who have received Emergency Service Medals - Geoff Hanson from Tamworth and John Gonzalez from Sutherland. The inaugural Women in NSW SES Awards were also held, highlighting the exceptional accomplishments of women across all areas of the service.

We have also seen some of our units marking major milestones, with our Coffs Harbour Unit celebrating their 60th anniversary and Dorrigo Unit celebrating 40 years of service. Both units also welcomed new vehicles to honour these significant dates.

The results of our Volunteer Voice Survey are now available

and I am pleased to report that we had the highest response rate yet. The feedback we hear from members through this survey is incredibly valuable and will remain at the forefront of our minds as we develop and roll out future initiatives. On the topic of improvements and developments we have seen significant upgrades to boost our capability in recent months. This includes construction commencing in Goulburn of a new Unit and Incident Control Centre, the rollout and ongoing refinements of our myAvailability app, and storms being included as part of the Hazards Near Me warning system. Similarly, to boost capacity in regional areas we have launched our brand-new volunteer recruitment campaign. Members had fun lending their hand as extras and I look forward to spotting some familiar faces when the advertisements air.

Members have also come together recently to compete in exercises such as Who Let the Boats Out, and for various development opportunities, including the Emerging Leaders' Summit held in Sydney held in January. Together we also celebrated community events including International Women's Day and Mardi Gras, both of which I was thrilled to participate in.

NSW SES continues to work with the NSW Government in relation to funding for the service beyond the financial year. I will endeavour to keep

you updated on how this support will continue and what it may look like into the future.

Lastly, and possibly most importantly, I'd like to draw special attention to the efforts of our volunteers operationally. Once again you have responded to numerous incidents in your own communities, and many have lent their skills in interstate operations, including storm support in Queensland and the Victorian bushfires. Your generosity and commitment are commendable.

I am looking forward to the exciting opportunities and challenges the rest of 2024 will bring. Our annual celebration of volunteers, “Wear Orange Wednesday” is fast approaching and we are also busy preparing for the upcoming State Road Crash Rescue Challenge. We are also thrilled to be hosting this year's National Disaster Rescue Challenge in June. As always, I am continuously impressed by the sense of community I see at these events, among Units, Zones, throughout the agency, and with our partner emergency service agencies.

I look forward to sharing more on these events in the next edition and to continuing to report on the good news and impressive developments of our members, who are committed to serving and supporting their communities across the state.

Stay safe.



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**W**elcome to the first edition of 2024!

We extend a warm greeting to all the new members who have recently joined the Association. Your presence enriches our community, and we're thrilled to have you on board.

To keep up to date on our latest news, training events & sales please visit our website and Facebook page NSW SES Volunteers Association.

First and foremost, a heartfelt thank you to all contributors to this edition of The Volunteer Magazine. Your dedication and insights are invaluable in shaping this publication, which serves as more than just a collection of articles—it's a testament to the remarkable efforts within our units, a tribute to exceptional volunteers, and a reservoir of knowledge and experiences shared among peers.

The Volunteer Magazine isn't just a platform for showcasing achievements; it's a conduit for empowerment and connection. It's where we celebrate victories, shine a light on extraordinary individuals, and foster a community built on resilience and camaraderie.

Submission Details: » Deadline: May 20th, 2024 » Submit to: [editor@nswsesva.org.au](mailto:editor@nswsesva.org.au)

We are always on the lookout for images to showcase in our magazine and annual calendar. If you have a high-quality photograph you'd love to see featured, please don't hesitate to send it our way at [editor@nswsesva.org.au](mailto:editor@nswsesva.org.au).

Whether you have questions about the magazine or need assistance with editing etc, we're here to help. Feel free to reach out.

Our commitment to empowerment and resilience extends beyond the pages of our magazine. We're excited to share that we're nearing completion of the First Responder Resilience Program rollout, with the final sessions scheduled in Sutherland and Tamworth later this month.

Registration for these sessions is open at [www.sesvaevents.com](http://www.sesvaevents.com), and we encourage you to spread the word among your peers and community members. These training events are not only free but also provide a nurturing environment for growth and development.

As we approach the conclusion of this phase, we're looking for passionate individuals within your units to carry forward the legacy of the First Responder Resilience Program. If you're interested in becoming a facilitator, we invite you to join us for a train-the-trainer weekend in

mid-May at our Rockdale training facility. It's an excellent opportunity to learn more about the program, connect with like minded individuals, and play a vital role in sustaining this initiative.

For further details, please reach out to Gary Emmerton at [gary@ordinarycourage.com.au](mailto:gary@ordinarycourage.com.au).

On another note, we're thrilled to unveil new designs for our ESR brand, with a particular focus on Flood Rescue. Stay tuned for the launch of our latest apparel, designed with functionality, durability, and style in mind. Visit our online store at [www.nswsesva.org.au](http://www.nswsesva.org.au) to explore our range of high-quality gear at unbeatable prices.

Grant program - Do you have a new initiative that can be supported by an SESVA Grant? Why not apply? We can even assist you with your application. Grants are available for individual volunteers, groups of volunteers & NSW SES Units. For more information visit Grants Program ([nswsesva.org.au](http://nswsesva.org.au))

Thank you for your unwavering dedication and commitment to our community. Your contributions make a difference, and together, we'll continue to make strides in our shared mission.

Stay safe, stay inspired, and keep volunteering!

**Carlee Maccoll**

## THE VOLUNTEER MAGAZINE

### 2024 Schedule

We love to promote the great work & achievements of our fellow volunteers & encourage your input in our quarterly magazine - *The Volunteer*

#### Closing dates for submissions:

June Edition - 20th May 2024  
September Edition - 12th August 2024  
December Edition - 11th November 2024

To feature in an edition of *The Volunteer Magazine*, please send content to [editor@nswsesva.org.au](mailto:editor@nswsesva.org.au) by the closing dates listed above.







# Emerging Leaders Summit

Coen Acret from the Ballina Unit participated in the Emerging Leaders Summit Program in Sydney at the beginning of the year.

Coen flew to Sydney and stayed in dorm accommodation, and was joined by other SES members aged between 16-24 who participated in the three day intensive program.

Some activities included St John's First Aid Training, boat rescues, land searches and leadership development.

Coen thought the course was an excellent collection of activities, fostering teamwork and leadership exercises.

Particularly enjoyed the guest note speaker Superintendent Stephen Leahy & it was also great to gain a better understanding of the link between field and IMT communication and how it all works.

Coen is keen to achieve further qualifications, and learn new skills in all areas - super keen for Flood Rescue accreditation. Coen has gained lots of additional skills in the SES to use in other areas of general life, including confidence in talking to community members of all ages.

This year is currently studying Bachelor of Nursing, and continues to volunteer with the SES.

Coen is always eager to put his hand up for job call outs, and is a pleasure to have in any team.

**Karen**  
Ballina unit







# The Pack Test

**A group of around 60 dedicated emergency volunteers from the Bankstown unit and from units across Metro Zone recently gathered at a local oval at Bass Hill, not for a typical leisurely walk in the park, but for a unique fitness challenge - the 'Pack Test' aimed at assessing their fitness level for an emergency response.**

**W**ith heavy backpacks strapped to their shoulders, some weighing in at 20.4kg, NSW SES volunteers embarked on a rigorous test of physical endurance, blending the natural beauty of the reserve with an essential assessment for emergency situations.

The scenario unfolded as volunteers laced up their running shoes, adjusting their backpacks loaded with weights simulating emergency gear. The anticipation was palpable as the group prepared to navigate the oval's twists and turns. Some participants had to complete the 4.83 km distance in 45 minutes.

The fitness challenge served multiple purposes. Firstly, it emphasized the importance of physical fitness in emergency response. In crisis situations, emergency volunteers often find themselves navigating challenging environments, requiring strength, agility, and stamina. Running with loaded backpacks not only tested their cardiovascular endurance

but also mimicked the physical demands they might encounter during rescue operations.

Secondly, the event fostered a sense of camaraderie among the volunteers from Bankstown and other Metro Zone units. As they circled the course at dusk, the shared experience of overcoming physical challenges created a bond that is crucial for effective teamwork during emergencies. Building trust and cohesion within the volunteer group is essential for swift and efficient response when every second counts.

The local reserve provided an ideal backdrop for the Pack Test, offering a few natural obstacles (and snakes). Negotiating the course while carrying weighted backpacks mirrored the unpredictable nature of emergency situations, where adaptability and resilience are paramount.

The event also served as a public awareness initiative,

drawing attention to the vital role emergency volunteers play in our community. Spectators watched with admiration as these dedicated individuals pushed their physical limits for the greater good. It highlighted the commitment of NSW State Emergency volunteers who willingly invest time and effort to ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

The Pack Test was not just a physical challenge but a symbolic representation of the preparedness and dedication of emergency volunteers. As they ran with determination, carrying heavy backpacks through the reserve's scenic paths, they reinforced the importance of physical fitness, teamwork, and adaptability in their noble mission to safeguard the community in times of crisis.

#### **Tony Harb**

Deputy Unit Commander  
Bankstown Unit.





# Canada Bay SES Clean Up Australia Day

It was a chance remark by Canada Bay SES Volunteer Martino at the Rhodes Lunar Dragon Event that led to our Canada Bay SES Unit doing its bit to save our waterways from the droppings of others.





**A**fter some discussion at the Unit and necessary permissions obtained, Martino followed it through and recruited me, and two others (Brian and Andre) to the cause. On Clean-up Day Andre even brought along his daughter Sophia to lend a hand.

Our choice was to piggy-back on a Council venue at Rhodes or Rodd Park (bags, gloves and free sausage sizzle) or register our own site (with BYO). No brainer to choose the free BBQ offer – and we had been at a Rhodes event one week earlier.

And so we gathered at 0730-ish on the shores of Iron Cove on the Parramatta River, at Rodd Park in Canada Bay, signed in with Canada Bay Council, grabbed a large garbage sack (for groups) and some small garbage sacks (for loners), and then started our scavenger hunt. Cigarette butts, plastic bits, broken glass, a very large plastic bottle, bottle tops, and miscellaneous items, were picked up from the shoreline, pathways, and picnic areas - while a piece of broken wooden furniture was retrieved from the mangroves.

And all of the while, local residents were in full flow – literally hundreds of walkers, joggers, runners, dogs, and cyclists thronging the popular “Bay Run”; paddle borders, kayakers, and ball-chasing dogs on and in the river; and even the odd fisherperson optimistically casting a line. If our aim was to be visible in orange, then we certainly had a captive audience. The icing on the cake was when our local City of Canada Bay mayor Michael Megna came over to thank us and have a group photo taken. (I had previously noticed that his name was on a plaque nearby – laid at the time when he was

the mayor of Drummoyne – which was before Drummoyne merged with Concord to form the City of Canada Bay).

Following a cool start, it became hot, humid, and thirsty work – to say nothing of the hunger pangs that physical exertion can produce. Fortunately, Five Dock Rotary Club members were on hand with a timely sausage sizzle - and one of them even remembered my having previously spoken at their club years earlier in another life, and so another group photo with the Rotarians followed. Having more or less picked Rodd Park clean, we briefly moved on to nearby Nield Park but there were slim pickings – being a venue that is regularly cleaned up by locals. However, the pathways and shoreline en route were more productive - including a very large “cannibal cooking size” iron pot retrieved from the mangroves that took two to carry.

We left Rodd Park a cleaner place – befitting the historical significance of the site. Named after the once prominent Brent Clement Rodd (1809-1898), the Park contains a memorial that was previously the family mausoleum carved into the rock with a massive stone cross crowning the site. (The bodies were moved to Rookwood Cemetery in 1903). Many of the surrounding streets are named after family members including Rodd’s 12 children. Opposite Rodd Park is Rodd Island – which was once used by scientists sent by Louis Pasteur to investigate ways of eradicating rabbits. (Source: Wikipedia).

**Bill Hoyles**  
Canada Bay SES Volunteer.





# i98fm Illawarra Convoy

**On Sunday 19th November, 2023, teams from NSW SES Shellharbour City Unit, Wollongong Unit, Dapto Unit and Wollondilly unit took part in the i98 FM Illawarra Convoy.**

**S**tarting in 2005, the i98fm Illawarra Convoy is today the largest truck and motorbike Convoy in the southern hemisphere, with some 850+ trucks and 600+ motorbikes taking part. It was started by i98fm breakfast announcer Marty Haynes, who still leads up this event today. This community event takes place on the third Sunday in November and raises a huge amount of money via donations made by organisations big and small across the Illawarra and south coast region of NSW. Money raised is given to the Illawarra Community Foundation, which distributes funds to local Illawarra charities and families who are facing life threatening & life limiting illness. The two highlights in the lead up to the big day are the lead motorbike and lead truck auctions, which see groups and organisations bid their donations for the lead spots in the Convoy. These funds are generated by teams and organisations who spend much of the year in the lead up to the event raising money to be able to contribute significantly to Convoy. This year, almost \$2 million was

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**Since its inception in 2005, Convoy has raised a total of just over \$25M which is a staggering amount of money.**  
 ”

raised before an engine even started and the final tally for the 2023 event was \$2.85M raised! INCREDIBLE!! Since its inception in 2005, Convoy has raised a total of just over \$25M which is a staggering amount of money.

The Convoy starts at Appin Colliery/ Maddens Plains and heads down Mt Ousley, through Wollongong, Port Kembla, Warrawong, Warilla, Shellharbour and into Albion Park Airport. There is a Family Fun Day at the airport which sees food vans, rides, car groups, and entertainment galore. This year saw two big musical acts perform: Ricki-Lee

and Thirsty Merc, both of which were amazing. We had a large community stand set up at the airport, with members from all four units involved in engaging with the community. This was really well received, and our “Kids” truck SHE01 was a HUGE hit with the little ones. It is incredible to see the community come together every year for this event.

The NSW SES has been involved with Convoy since its inception in 2005, where the Shellharbour City unit was involved in the original organising committee. With our volunteer Edy Bianco from Dapto having personally been supported





by charities including Convoy, we have always shown our support to him and his wife Kathy by taking part in this event every year. Sadly, Edy & Kathy lost their daughter Tamara to illness in 2009 and it was through charities like Convoy that Tamara and the Bianco family were able to navigate through the journey that lay before them when she became incredibly unwell. One of Tamara's dreams was to be able to swim with the dolphins and it was through the direct support of Convoy that this wish was able to be granted to Tamara in 2007. We remember Tamara and support the Bianco family by ensuring we have a photo of Tamara in the windscreen of every one of our vehicles on the day.

The units involved in Convoy enter trucks and vehicles to take part in the drive down the mountain, with members personally contributing to the fundraising to do so. This year we had 11 vehicles take part, including a Unimog and a collection of light storm and medium storm vehicles. A special shout out to State HQ and Fleet for supplying additional vehicles for our

teams to use on the day. The community really appreciate our involvement and the reception we receive as we roll down the mountain and along the Convoy route gives us all goosebumps, every single year!

It's an early start, with teams meeting at the top of Mt Ousley at around 0400hrs on the morning of the Convoy. From there we travel in our own convoy along to the marshalling point some 25 minutes further up the highway where we wait for five or so hours before we start rolling back down, once the lead trucks have started to make their way down the mountain. These few hours are great! They allow us all to catch up with our mates, we take BBQs to cook breakfast and we spend time decorating our vehicles with Convoy merchandise that we have collected year on year. We also mingle with other drivers and organisations who are waiting alongside us who are just as excited as we are. Our tradition now is a large group photo, with our SES oranges and our Convoy shirts, which are a different colour every year.

This year we had a special guest tag along for the ride. Deputy Commissioner Debbie Platz was keen to experience her first Convoy and got to do so in the Unimog. It was fantastic to have Deputy Commissioner Platz along for the day and by all accounts, she really enjoyed the day. Paddy also made an appearance at the Family Fun Day and managed to get up on stage at one point! We were made to feel very special by the 198 crew and Paddy and our members were given a rousing reception.

We look forward to doing it all again in 2024. Next year will be the 20th year for Convoy which is pretty special, and we are sure our involvement will be bigger and better again. Total funds raised for the Illawarra Community Foundation through Convoy is just over \$25 million which is a staggering amount of money.

**Tim Lashbrook**  
NSW SES Shellharbour City



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2024

# Australia Day Honours

A huge congratulations to the following volunteers who were recognise and received awards at the 2024 Australia Day Honours. A truly great honour for their commitment & inspirational contributions to our communities

**GEOFFREY HANSON**  
Emergency Services Medal  
Bingara & Tamworth SES Units

**JOHN GONZALEZ**  
Emergency Services Medal  
Sutherland SES Unit

**NICHOLAS WELLER**  
Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to the NSW Police Force, in particular, the delivery of COVID-19 work, health and safety policies  
SHQ

**BENJAMIN TORY**  
Order of the Medal of Australia  
Manly SES Unit

**KYLE COLLINS**  
Cootamundra Gundagai Regional Council '2024 Young Citizen of the Year Award'  
Cootamundra SES Unit

**REBECCA TRINDALL**  
Walgett Shire Council 'Walgett Volunteer of the Year Award'  
Walgett SES Unit

**TRACEY FARRAR**  
Parkes Shire Council 'Trundle Citizen of the Year Award'  
Trundle SES Unit

**JUNEE SES UNIT**  
Junee City Council Team of the Year Award  
Junee SES Unit

**IAN SHEPHERD**  
Campbelltown City Council '2024 Senior Citizen of the Year Award'  
Campbelltown SES Uniot

**JAMES COOK**  
Kyogle Council '2024 Woodenbong Citizen of the Year Award'  
Kyogle & Urbenville SES Units

**SIMON LLOYD**  
Albury City Council '2024 Citizen of the Year Award'  
Albury SES Unit

**ELIZABETH GAULT**  
Temora Shire Council '2024 Citizen of the Year Award'  
Temora SES Unit



# John Farley Celebrates 25 Years of Service to the Byron Shire Community

**In 25 years as a volunteer with the Mullumbimby SES Unit in northern NSW, John Farley has experienced the best and worst of life and found an island of support and community spirit.**

**V**olunteering has filled the gaping void left by the tragic loss of his family.

"I had two little boys and my wife died when she was 32 from kidney and liver failure. It was a hereditary thing. The whole family has a problem," John says.

His son David died from kidney failure at 52 and his other son Michael from a cerebral haemorrhage at 47.

"I've had a terrible time," says John, "but I reckon the SES has been incredible therapy."

John has filled his life by becoming involved in almost every rescue organisation in Byron Shire and can proudly claim 48 years of service as a volunteer in emergency services and rescue during his 84 years.

Along the way, he has been awarded the National Medal, the Hunter Storm Medallion (2007) and SES 5, 10, 15 and 20-year Long Service Awards.

In 1974, following his wife's death and with two little boys to care for, John was enticed north by friends who had moved into the area.

He had previously been a member of Avalon Surf Lifesaving Club and was around when rubber duckies first came on the scene.

"I had a really good job and I had to throw that in and just get out of town, so to speak, so I moved up here. I didn't have a lot of money but a man was not recognised as a single parent in the 1970s so it was a bit of a battle," he explains.

John began his new life with the Brunswick Valley Rescue Squad and Marine Rescue NSW where he became a captain. But with the demands of work and his young sons, he couldn't commit to all the training and meetings.

By 1998, he was working with TAFE and had the opportunity to get his Train the Trainer certificate which came at about the same time he joined Mullumbimby SES (then called Byron Shire SES) and it cascaded from there. John gained more and more training qualifications and soon became the most qualified SES trainer in the Northern Rivers, able to train or assess in every core subject.

"So, I was in great demand because this is a registered training organisation but I couldn't tell you how many people I've actually trained or been involved with training regimes. It must be hundreds now," says John.

Chief Inspector Peter Mair, Local Commander of Tweed Byron cluster remembers the work John did alongside then-deputy division controller Greg Murphy to present the Workplace Trainer Category One course (Prepare, Deliver and Review Training) from the BSZ98 Training Package.

"My earliest memory of John goes back to 1998 when he was the only member within the then Richmond-Tweed SES Division with the 'new' competency-based Trainer/Assessor qualification," says Peter.

"He's the local 'brains trust' in regards flood history and flood intelligence, and it's heartening to see how the SES has supported John following the 2022 flooding when almost a metre of water went through his home – the first time it's ever been flood-affected."





An only child, John was born in Paddington and lived in Woolloomooloo with his mum, a cook who was essentially a single parent. His dad managed sheep stations and little John would spend half his life in the country and half in the city, which explains the 16 different schools he attended!

After school became apprentice toolmaker/journeyman but took seven years to get through the training. From there he had a variety of occupations, mostly in water treatment until he moved north and discovered his skill as a trainer.

For John, being part of Mullumbimby SES for 25 years has brought infinite satisfaction and fulfilment and it has helped him through some of his darkest moments.

"I love the adrenaline rush you get from assisting people with problems and I find the companionship with other members that you initiate very rewarding," says John.

"I really have been dedicated to the cause, done a lot of travel with the SES and for that I'm fortunate – major floods in Maitland and Raymond

Terrace, been at Broken Hill, Cobar, every unit in the Northern Rivers plus Coffs and these have all been for training or weather incidents."

Not every highlight has been a great one and John recounts an incident in which he attended the recovery of his former next-door neighbour who was washed off a causeway.

"It was a bit traumatic, and it worked on my mind. We had mentors and people like that in our Unit, but I said 'no, I don't want to do that' and I started to write a poem about it. I ended up writing about 30 poems in about four months. That was my therapy. I got it out of my system, but I never got it out of my head because it was tragic – and I've seen quite a few in the SES. More than my share I'd say because of the length of time I've been in the SES," says John.

A more gratifying memory was sandbagging Belongil Beach in 1999 secondary to coastal erosion. The team set up a command post, had a sandbagging machine and laid about 30,000 sandbags over 10 days.

And what advice does John have for anyone thinking of joining the SES?

"I'd tell them to expect the good, the bad and the ugly," he says. In his roles as two-time Deputy Unit Controller and then Local Controller, there was quite a bit of getting up in the middle of the night during storm season which, while enjoyable, John admits was "not fun".

"I felt there was a challenge there and I answered that challenge and I'm pretty proud of that, without saying too much about ego," he says.

John strongly believes that being in the SES has been one of the best choices he has ever made and admits that without it, he doesn't know what he would be doing now.

"I have given a lot, but I have gotten a lot out of it, a lot of good memories and skills," he says.

"I've been terribly pleased and proud to have instilled skills into my peers and knowledge and brought them up to speed. It's a good feeling."

Congratulations John Farley for all your work and your contribution to the SES!

**Jennifer King**

SES volunteer Mullumbimby Unit

# A busy start to the year

In our latest edition, we extend recognition to the selfless heroes of the NSW SES, whose tireless dedication and unwavering commitment safeguard our communities year-round. Their remarkable efforts, often carried out in the face of adversity, exemplify the spirit of service and resilience. We've curated a collection of photographs showcasing the diverse activities and endeavours of SES units across NSW over the past few months.



















## Learnings and Insights from the Women in Leadership Summit in Sydney 28-29 FEB

**Wow what an opportunity!!! Spending 48 hours surrounded by forward thinkers, learning from many interesting female speakers and specialists in their chosen profession.**

**D**iscussions involved leadership ideas and techniques, breaking down barriers, improving diversity and inclusivity, and starting conversations about health issues. We were also provided many opportunities to network with a host of amazing women from the public sector and I also met 9 other emerging female leaders from within the NSW SES who were selected to attend this summit with me. It was an honour and privilege to have attended the Public Sector Women in Leadership Summit in Sydney. I have already shared some of the key ideas with my own local unit at our International Women's Day event. I would also like to share with you some of the learnings and insights I gained from my experience at the Summit through this article, so we can all learn and grow and be inspired together.

It is hard to choose just a few key themes and leadership qualities to share with you for this article after being inspired for two full days with lots of personal growth and development. There were 17 different and interesting sessions and 24 guest speakers. However there were a few common themes and messages from

all the speakers. "Be Kind, Be Honest, Be Yourself, Be Accountable for your actions, Be Sincere and Genuine, Build Relationships, and Support Others". These are all really quite simple concepts and easy to apply, but they can have a huge impact - especially when we do these simple things every day.

Leigh Sales (Journalist and former host 7.30 Report) spoke about many different people she had interviewed, and interestingly the people that had the biggest impact for her were not the rich and famous or politically powerful people, it was the ordinary people who found themselves in extra ordinary situations and demonstrated leadership qualities to help others during terrible disasters. As NSW SES Members we often find ourselves helping others when they are having a really bad day, a tree has fallen onto their house, their roof has sprung a massive leak during a storm, we are pulling people out of flood waters, or we are cutting casualties out of a car after a major accident. We all have the capacity to 'do good' by being kind, having empathy, having integrity, and using our skills to help others. Leigh Sales' parting comments were

'What you do every day has an impact! Ask yourself what type of difference do you want to make?'

Ruth Owen from the NSW Premier's department had a very powerful leadership message: True and authentic leadership is not attached to a role, rank or position, leadership is about the behaviours, attitudes, and actions that you demonstrate. People have a choice, and normally we will choose to follow someone that demonstrates these leadership qualities. This could be a revolutionary concept that might really help us empower and encourage some of our true leaders to emerge. Have courage, demonstrate integrity and be the best that you can be, bring the best version of yourself to the SES and your peers will support and encourage you to succeed. Authentic leaders will empower those who demonstrate these leadership qualities and follow the values of their organisation. What a positive and powerful idea!

The much anticipated 'conversation with Hillary Rodham Clinton' was fabulous with lots of relatable anecdotes and fantastic leadership insights, a few laughs and many 'wow' moments. A few quotes that I have





reflected on from her discussion and gained some useful leadership insight include: If you can't make big changes, start small and make lots of little changes; find ways to maximise opportunities for those in your team; find people who know something that you don't know and listen; support each other inside and outside of work; lift others up and give credit to others for what they have contributed; be honest when you have made a mistake; hope for the best but prepare for the worst; Build relationships – find ways to connect and get to know the other person. For each of these insights Hillary Clinton provided a little story or experience that helped us understand the importance of her ideas.

I think we can all reflect and find ways that we can implement these strategies, ideas and concepts and demonstrate our own positive leadership qualities within the SES and within our wider communities. And remember to Be Kind, Be Honest, Be Yourself, Be Accountable for your actions, Be Sincere and Genuine, Build Relationships, and Support Others.

**Katie Blake**  
Port Macquarie SES





# CHECKING IN ON OUR ORANGE FAMILY

**Ashleigh, a volunteer crew member, and training officer with the State Emergency Services (SES), has shared her story to normalise R U OK? conversations among emergency services workers and volunteers nationwide.**

Ashleigh (she/they) first put on her SES uniform at 18 years old, immediately feeling part of the orange family. Eleven years on, she's responded to some of our country's major floods and fires, and at times felt the brunt of natural disasters on their mental wellbeing.

"When you respond to a natural disaster you're running on adrenaline, the devastation is in front of you, emotions are high within the community, but you're razor focused on getting people the help they need. When you return home, and take the uniform off, it can be quite lonely and isolating trying to process and understand what just happened."



Left: Luke (Ashleigh's Unit Controller)  
Right: Ashleigh





"After a deployment in 2022, I hit a wall and began to fear putting my uniform back on. I was so anxious about getting paged to another job. I was struggling to cope but was too scared to admit it to anyone, so I faced it alone for months."

Ashleigh says she internalised how she was feeling because she believed that to do her job, she had to remain strong. "I was worried I had failed as an emergency services volunteer because I'd reached a point where I couldn't do it on my own. I couldn't keep everything in and deal with it."

A colleague of Ashleigh's noticed she seemed different and took the time to check in.

"One day my controller approached me to ask if I was OK. He said 'I don't know you as well as other people in your life probably do, but I have noticed you've been different. You don't have the same enthusiasm as usual, so I wanted to check in and see how you are doing.'"

"Him starting that conversation gave me the permission I wasn't giving myself to open-up. Feeling heard and understood took the weight off my shoulders and made me realise I wasn't failing as an emergency services volunteer, I just needed a bit of support, and that's perfectly OK."



Ashleigh and her crew

Ashleigh wants everyone to understand the power of having an R U OK? conversation.

"Without that conversation I wouldn't be in my uniform anymore, I wouldn't be where I am today. I now know I don't have to go it alone and I can bounce back stronger."

"If you notice someone isn't themselves, trust your gut and check in. Most importantly, make sure you have enough time to really hear their concerns if they say they aren't OK. It changed my life, and it could change theirs."



**Ashleigh's story can be found at [ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au) along with the free 'Are They Triple OK?' resources for police and emergency services workers and volunteers, as well as their family and friends. These include a conversation guide, a podcast and other personal stories.**



If you're worried about someone, encourage them to contact their Employee Assistance Program (EAP), agency support service or connect with their GP.

For 24/7 for crisis support call Lifeline on 13 11 14. Text support is also available: 0477 13 11 14.

# Warnings Capability team

As we all know, severe weather can threaten lives and cause significant damage and destruction.



As we all know, severe weather can threaten lives and cause significant damage and destruction. Storms can bring hazardous weather conditions, such as lightning, giant hail, tornadoes, intense rainfall that may lead to flash flooding, damaging winds, storm surge, and it's essential to be prepared. Warnings play an important role in community safety by empowering people to make informed decisions and take protective action.

On February 15, Emergency Services Minister Jihad Dib and NSW SES Commissioner Carlene York announced the exciting new launch of NSW SES severe weather warnings as part of the Hazards Near Me NSW mobile app and the HazardWatch website.

Along with the current flood and tsunami warnings, the addition of severe weather warnings now allows Hazards Near Me users to be notified before and during a severe weather event, providing information and advice, in line with the recently implemented, nationally recognised, multi hazard Australian Warning System (AWS).

As per AWS guidelines and along with the current warnings for flood and tsunami, severe weather warnings consist of three warning levels – Advice



(Yellow); Watch and Act (Orange); and Emergency Warning (Red), along with associated action statements for each of the warning levels.

Further information relating to AWS icons and their associated action statements can be found online via the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience at <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/australian-warning-system/>

Following the receipt of a Severe Weather Warning, Severe Thunderstorm Warning or Detailed Severe Thunderstorm Warning issued by the Bureau, as well as predictions or observations from the ground, the NSW SES Information and Warnings

Unit will determine the need to warn or inform the community. Whilst

NSW SES warnings will incorporate information provided in the Bureau warnings, they are based on the expected level of impact on the community. Once published the warnings will be distributed to both Hazards Near Me and the HazardWatch website.

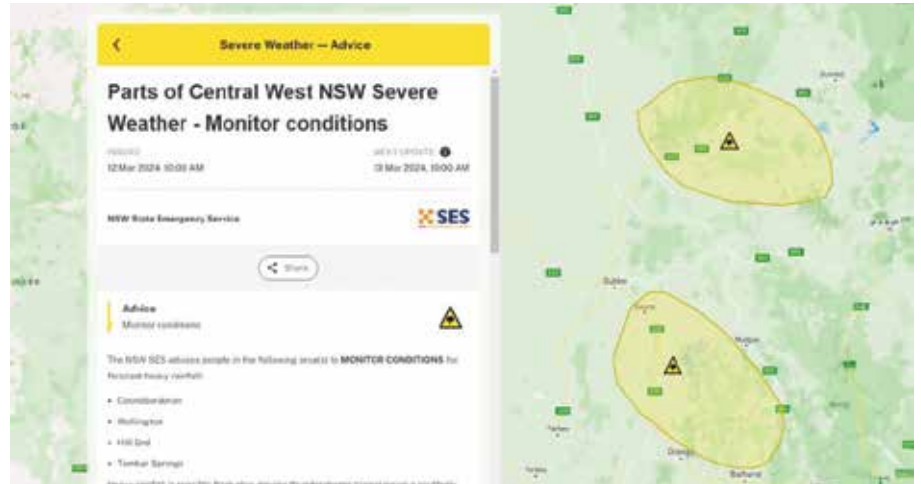
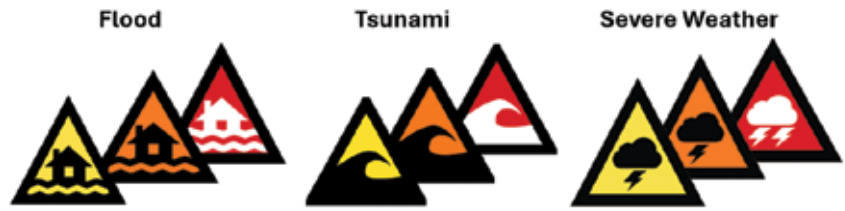
After severe storms with significant impacts, the NSW SES will also issue updated severe weather warnings to inform communities what places have been reported as damaged, where roads might be blocked by fallen trees and powerlines, and where people can go for support if needed.



The NSW SES Warnings team has been working tirelessly behind the scenes with the Department of Customer Service (DCS) to develop this latest warning product, resulting in the receiving of a Secretary's Award for Excellence, and this partnership will continue with warnings for snow, cyclones, coastal erosion, and flash flood currently in development.

For all current warnings, visit HazardWatch at <https://hazardwatch.gov.au/> and download the Hazards Near Me app via <https://www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/hazards-near-me-app> and set your watch zones to ensure you receive push notifications advising you of new incidents or when a situation changes.

Remember that staying informed and taking appropriate precautions can significantly reduce the impact of severe weather on you, your family, home, and business.



# Collaborative training session involving RFS and SES LMU

**The Lake Macquarie Unit had the fortunate opportunity to receive training from the Wakefield Rural Fire Brigade.**

**T**he purpose of the combined training was to enhance skills and awareness in providing assistance to Rural Fire Brigades during bushfire season when needed.

During the training session, a range of topics were covered including support techniques, how to operate RFS hoses and gaining general vehicle knowledge, both for field and incident management vehicles.

The unit wholeheartedly appreciate the efforts and time of our fellow RFS crews and are grateful that support can be provided to them when needed.

## A SPECIAL MENTION

Congratulations to Local Commander of the NSW SES Lake Macquarie Unit, Christine Speer, who received lifetime membership of the NSW SES, in recognition of her marvellous contribution over a prolonged period.





# When is an SES volunteer a ‘worker’?

In my last article for *The Volunteer*, I discussed the significant pitfalls and difficulties SES volunteers face trying to challenge decisions either in court or in the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

Many will have heard that volunteers are ‘workers’ under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) (the *WHS Act*) and hope that the expanded definition can be applied in other contexts. If volunteers are ‘workers’, so the argument goes, they should benefit from stronger protections, in particular they may be able to rely on the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission and enjoy protection from ‘unfair dismissal’. Unfortunately, as this article will explore, the definition of ‘worker’ in the *WHS Act* applies only in that Act and cannot be relied upon in other contexts.

## WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

The *WHS Act* replaced the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* (NSW) (the *OHS Act*). The *OHS Act* was very much about employment and governed the relationship between employees and employers. Modern work arrangements are much more complex, so the *WHS Act* takes an expanded view on who is covered. Rather than employer it refers to a ‘person conducting a business or undertaking’ (a PCBU) and rather than employee it refers to a ‘worker’.<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the Act a worker

includes a volunteer.<sup>2</sup> For the NSW SES, the Crown in Right of NSW is the PCBU, and the volunteer members and staff are workers.

The *WHS Act* provides that the PCBU has duties to protect the health and safety of the workers.<sup>3</sup> Workers, including volunteers, also have duties to take care for their own safety, take care for the safety of others likely to be affected by their work and to follow the policies and directions of the PCBU related to work safety.<sup>4</sup> They also have a right to be consulted when the PCBU is identifying risks and implementing risk management strategies.<sup>5</sup> Failure to meet the duties set out in the Act may be a criminal offence.<sup>6</sup>

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Because the NSW SES is operated by the Crown in Right of NSW, the industrial arrangements are governed by NSW law, not Commonwealth law. An employee’s right to an unfair dismissal remedy is therefore governed by the *Industrial Relations Act 1996* (NSW) (the *IR Act*) not the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).<sup>7</sup>

The *IR Act* provides a remedy for an employee who has been unfairly dismissed.<sup>8</sup> The Act uses the term

‘employee’ and ‘employer’ not PCBU or worker. An employee is ‘a person employed in any industry, whether on salary or wages or piece-work rates’.<sup>9</sup> A volunteer is by definition, not an employee and is certainly not on ‘salary or wages or piece-work rates’.

SES volunteer maybe workers for the purposes of the *WHS Act* but that does not make them employees for the purposes of the *IR Act*. Non-employees, i.e. volunteers, cannot seek a remedy for unfair dismissal.<sup>10</sup>

## WORKERS COMPENSATION

### First of all, a digression

This section is off the topic of this paper but is worth drawing to the attention of SES volunteers. The Workers Compensation scheme in NSW is ridiculously complex with amendments over the years intended to restrict benefits but with carve outs for volunteers, paramedics, fire fighters and police.<sup>11</sup> To add to the complexity where recent changes have been made to be more generous they have also, often, excluded paramedics, fire fighters and police presumably because the legislature has amended the law is it is rather than the law as it was but as it still applies to firefighters, paramedics and police.<sup>12</sup>



It is easy to know who is a paramedic,<sup>13</sup> and who is a police officer.<sup>14</sup> The definition of firefighter is not so clear. Members of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Fire and Rescue NSW may be identified as firefighters but others, including members of the SES involved in operations to support the RFS may, at the time, be classed as firefighters.

A person is a firefighter if they are engaged in firefighting duties. Relevant to the SES those duties may include:

- » Control or suppression of a fire including;
  - Travelling to or from the scene of the fire;
  - logistical support, e.g., meal delivery, fuel delivery, field based repairs on plant and equipment in an active fire ground;
  - office duty performed directly in connection with the organisation and direction of the firefighting effort [eg being part of the incident control team].
- » Hazard reduction including;
  - felling trees;<sup>15</sup>

SES volunteers who are injured whilst performing 'fire fighting' duties may find that there is a benefit, or a

detriment, in being classed as a 'fire fighter' and should take specific, expert advice before finalising any compensation claim.

### Volunteer not an employee

To return to the theme of the article, there is an argument goes something like this:

1. Only a worker is entitled to workers compensation;
2. The WHS Act says worker includes 'volunteer';
3. I am entitled to workers compensation;
4. Therefore, the WHS Act definition must apply for compensation purposes too.

That argument misses the fact that it is not the definition of 'worker' in the WHS Act that opens the door to compensation. SES and RFS volunteers are brought into the workers compensation scheme via the Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987 (NSW). This Act means a modified workers compensation scheme applies to them even though they are not workers or employees.

The Act extends the workers compensation scheme to volunteers, it does not deem the volunteers to be employees or 'workers' for the SES or RFS.

### CONCLUSION

For the purposes of the WHS Act a volunteer is a worker. They are owed the same duty of care by the PCBU as an employee, they have the same duties to comply with WHS policies and they have a right to be consulted as part of the PCBU's risk management processes.

The fact that they are a worker for the purposes of the WHS Act does not mean they are a worker or an employee for other purposes including industrial law and workers compensation law. A volunteer cannot rely on unfair dismissal proceedings to protect their position in an organisation. An SES volunteer is entitled to workers compensation because the Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987 (NSW) says they are; not because of some extended definition of worker or as a logical or necessary implication of the use of the term 'worker' in the WHS Act.

The extended definition of worker in the WHS Act applies only to the WHS Act.

### Dr Michael Eburn

Australian Emergency Law  
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### REFERENCES

1. *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) s 5 (definition of 'person conducting a business or undertaking') and s 7 (definition of 'worker').
2. *Ibid* s 7(h).
3. *Ibid* ss 13-26; 47-49.
4. *Ibid* s 28.
5. *NSW Rural Fire Service v SafeWork NSW* [2016] NSWIRComm 4.
6. *Ibid* ss 31-33; 245.
7. *Grafton v NSW State Emergency Service* [2017] FWC 4057, [12].
8. *Industrial Relations Act 1996* (NSW) s 84.
9. There are 'deemed employee' provisions in Schedule 1 of the IR Act deal with various contractors and piece workers and who is their deemed employer. They have no bearing on SES volunteers.
10. *Williams v Sydney Gay & Lesbian Business Association* [2019] FWC 4399; *Grinholz v Football Federation Victoria Inc* [2016] FWC 7976.
11. *See Workers Compensation Act 1987* (NSW) Sch 6.
12. For a discussion see Australian Emergency Law, 'RFS Operational officer deemed firefighter v2' (September 25, 2023) available at <https://australianemergencylaw.com/2023/09/25/rfs-operational-officer-deemed-firefighter-v2/>.
13. *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* (NSW) s 113 – only a person registered as a paramedic under the law is entitled to use the title 'paramedic' but see *New South Wales v Stockwell* [2015] NSWSC 9 for a discussion of who was a 'paramedic' before registration in 2018.
14. *Police Act 1990* (NSW) s 3 definition of 'police officer'.
15. *Australian Workers' Union v Office of Environment and Heritage* [2012] NSWIRComm 133; see also *Ware v NSW Rural Fire Service* [2014] NSWSC 33; *Birkinhead v NSW Rural Fire Service* [2023] NSWSC 419.

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# NSW SES Sexual Harassment Prevention and Management Policy and Procedure

**WARNING: THIS TOPIC MAY BE DISTRESSING TO SOME PEOPLE. IF YOU NEED SUPPORT, GET HELP HERE OR CONTACT NSW SES SUPPORT SERVICES.**

**NSW SES is committed to ensuring our members work and volunteer in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment, free from sexual harassment.**

Recent legislative changes now impose greater obligations on NSW SES and its members to ensure no one experiences sexual harassment in our organisation. The new positive duty means NSW SES is required to not only respond to sexual harassment that has already occurred, but also proactively take steps to prevent such conduct from occurring in the first place.

NSW SES wants to help support all members and leaders understand what it means to have a positive duty to prevent and eliminate harm caused by sexual harassment and hostility at the NSW SES.

Following consultation with all members, NSW SES has introduced a stand-alone Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy and supporting Procedure.

The Policy and Procedure seeks to ensure members:

- » Understand that sexual harassment is a risk to members' health and safety,
- » Understand our obligations to prevent sexual harassment and hostility from occurring,
- » Are able to identify risk factors that contribute to environments where sexual harassment occurs,
- » Recognise the complexity and varying levels of seriousness of sexual harassment,
- » Understand their obligations to contribute to a positive culture,
- » Know how to be an active bystander,
- » Recognise early intervention is preferable,
- » Know how to report instances of alleged sexual harassment,
- » Understand what a trauma-informed person-centred approach means for members impacted by sexual harassment, and

Service	Support Available	Number
Trauma Care	Emergency services for immediate danger	000
1-Relief	24/7 Counselling	13 11 14
Member Help	24/7 Phone and Online Support	1300 361 008
Member Aid	Support, information and referrals for staff	1300 789 676
SEDF (Support)	national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service	1800 737 732
QPR	1800/24/7 peer support and referrals	1800 344 337
24/7 RACV	24/7 crisis support for Indigenous Australians	13 11 76
SAFE Australia	information, advice and referrals for people suffering mental distress or injury	1800 387 233

- » Understand the potential consequences of substantiated reports of sexual harassment. To support all members to understand their roles and responsibilities in this regard, the NSW SES has developed a suite of training materials. Further details including registration for training can be found on mySES.

## NSW SES COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The NSW SES is delighted to announce that the new Complaints Management Policy and Procedure is in the final stages of being approved for release to all members. The introduction of the new policy and procedure will encourage a 'speak-up' culture and empower volunteers, commanders and managers to resolve complaints at the lowest effective level through defined procedures and various resources.

The NSW SES would like to take this opportunity to thank all members who provided valuable feedback during

the consultation period. The feedback received has assisted the NSW SES in drafting the policy and procedure, to standardise and clarify the process for managing complaints.

The new Complaints Management Policy and Procedure is based on fundamental principles derived from the NSW SES Values.

Significant changes being introduced in the new policy and procedure include:

Defined roles and responsibilities for members, managers, supervisors, volunteer commanders, professional standards and senior leadership in the complaints management process,

Support for complainants and respondents and clarity around the role of a support person,

A clear triage process embedded with the principles of procedural fairness,

A complaints management procedure based on 5 steps, with specified timeframes and responsibilities under each step,

Appropriate process controls to maintain confidentiality of complaints,

A simplified flowchart detailing the steps involved as a quick reference for members,

A number of tools for persons managing complaints such as a complaint form, factsheet and case management templates.

The Complaints Management Policy, Procedure and Guideline will be supported by a range of general and targeted training opportunities, as well as templates and flowcharts contained in the Guideline, designed to empower members in managing complaints at the lowest effective level.

The release of the new documents will be published in Member Connect, so please keep an eye out.



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# Volunteer Voice Results 2023

Having your say provides NSW SES with valuable insights into what is working well and where there are opportunities to improve our member experience.

This year we had the highest participation rate of any Volunteer Voice survey, with 2778 responses (28%).

## ZONE RESULTS

The 2023 survey results saw a strong improvement in our overall Zone results from previous years. Last year we grew from five Zones to seven, and we further resourced Zone management teams to provide members with on-the-ground support from staff, to enhance engagement between Zone teams and Units.

The questions of 'Zone team members communicate effectively with unit members' increased by 6% and 'Zone team members attend our Unit Headquarters to meet with members face-to-face' increased by 14%.

## SURVEY ACTION AND IMPROVEMENT

Last year we focussed on two key areas as an agency:

1. Our safety culture – which increased by 5%, and;
2. Response, action, and communication to members about the Volunteer Voice Survey outcomes which has improved by 10 %.

Survey results also indicate that more of our members trust that NSW SES are making the necessary improvements to meet our future challenges (+8 %).



These results are positive and show that we are on the right track. NSW SES will continue to focus on enhancing our safety and wellbeing culture and improving the overall experience for members across the Service.

Other wonderful results worth celebrating include:

- » 83% of members feel that your team genuinely cares about your health, safety, and well-being. This is an increase of 5% from last year.
- » 84% said you are proud to tell others you're an NSW SES member.
- » 81% said personal diversity is not a barrier for your participation with NSW SES.
- » 80% said you have a clear understanding of your role.
- » 78% said you would recommend NSW SES as a great place to volunteer.

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

This year we also asked members to tell us about their overall experience

with services provided by NSW SES directorates and functions for the first time. This has given us important feedback for directorates to consider and work on improving over the next 12 months.

## SO WHERE TO NEXT?

Zone Commanders will share Zone Volunteer Voice Survey reports with members – volunteer working groups will continue to meet and everyone is encouraged to get involved. These groups will work closely with Zone leadership to identify specific areas from the survey results that your Zone will focus on enhancing or improving.

We still have work to do to build your confidence that action will be taken in response to the survey results. While the response rate to this question increased by 10 %, only 47% of you indicated a level of confidence. We all need to work together to take action to address the areas for improvement that have been raised in the survey, and to celebrate those areas that are going well.

Thank you for all your dedication in keeping your communities and fellow members safe.

If you have any questions about the survey results, please contact the Volunteer Experience team at [experience@ses.nsw.gov.au](mailto:experience@ses.nsw.gov.au)



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PROUDLY SUPPORTING OUR SES VOLUNTEERS

# Bermagui SES Mule-II Stretcher Carrier Release

**NSW SES Bermagui Unit Welcomes Brand New Multi II Stretcher Carrier to Enhance Response Capability!**



## EXCITING NEWS AT BERMAGUI SES!

**Bermagui, NSW – 31 December 2023** – The New South Wales State Emergency Service (NSW SES) Bermagui Unit is thrilled to announce the arrival of the *Multi II Stretcher Carrier*, a state-of-the-art piece of emergency response equipment, aimed at significantly boosting the unit's capability to provide swift and effective assistance to the Bermagui community. This vital acquisition has been made possible with the support of the SES Volunteers Association (SESVA) and the Bermagui Beach Hotel.

The *Multi II Stretcher Carrier* is specifically designed for emergency response teams to efficiently navigate through challenging terrains, which are often encountered in the Bermagui area. Its advanced design ensures that patients can be transported safely and comfortably, reducing the risk of further injury and enabling faster delivery of critical care.

Unit Commander *John Mills*, NSW SES Bermagui Unit, expressed enthusiasm about the new addition: "The introduction of the *Multi II Stretcher Carrier* is a significant milestone for our unit. It enhances our operational efficiency, especially in remote and difficult-to-access areas. This equipment will not only

aid in our operations but also in ensuring the wellbeing and safety of both our volunteers and those we assist."

The *Multi II* is equipped with features that cater to the diverse and challenging environments faced by the NSW SES. It includes an adjustable undercarriage that provides stability and maneuverability, an ergonomic design that reduces physical strain on volunteers, and a compact form that enables easy storage and transport.

This initiative reflects the NSW SES's commitment to continuous improvement in service delivery and community safety. The acquisition of the *Multi II Stretcher Carrier* also demonstrates the valuable role played by the SES Volunteers Association and the local community in supporting the local Bermagui SES unit through funding and resource provision.

The NSW SES Bermagui Unit extends its heartfelt thanks to the SESVA and the Bermagui Beach Hotel for their ongoing support. The Unit remains dedicated to providing top-notch emergency service and encourages community members to consider joining the NSW SES as volunteers. For more information on how to get involved, please visit <https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/volunteer>.

## ABOUT NSW SES BERMAGUI UNIT:

The NSW SES Bermagui Unit is comprised of highly trained volunteers dedicated to serving the community in times of emergencies and natural disasters. They are equipped to handle a range of situations, including flood rescue, storm damage, and community education.

## ABOUT SES VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION (SESVA):

The SESVA works to support the volunteers of the NSW SES by providing resources, support, and advocacy, ensuring that the volunteers have what they need to serve the community effectively.





# Maintaining Operational Rhythm at the Unit Level

## INTRODUCTION

Does this sound like your unit during initial operations?

- » Teams to crews are deployed as numbers arrive, and at times, more than one crew leader is in a vehicle.
- » Vehicles and trailers leave without a check to ensure they have all the equipment needed for the event (storm or flood rescue).
- » There is more than one unit officer in the operations room during the initial stand-up and deployment of crews.
- » There is no shift plan established and no clarity of coordination of tasks or planning for the follow-up IMT or field crews past the first 10 hours.
- » No night shift Deputy Incident Controller has been identified.



## WHAT IS OPERATIONAL RHYTHM?

Operational rhythm, sometimes called battle rhythm, combines and interacts with established procedures, processes, leadership, clarity of intent down to the crew and individual level, and IMT coordination for extended or continuous operations.

All of these elements are interlinked, and a unit may contain these elements:

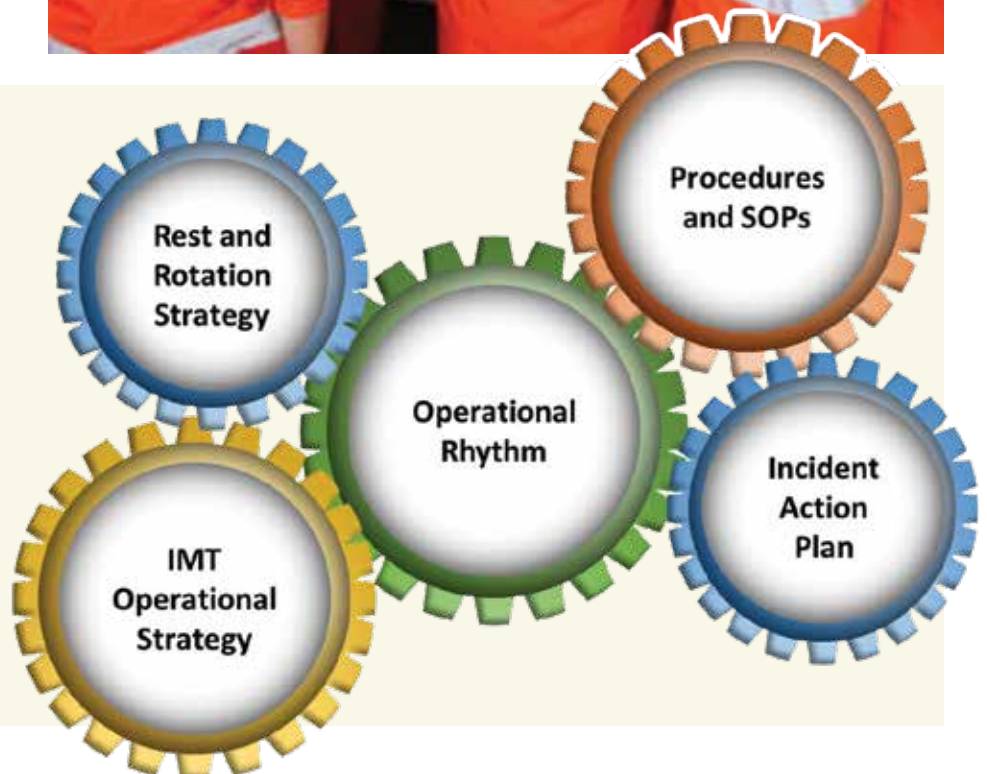


Figure 1: Unit Operational Rhythm



**PROCEDURES AND SOPS**

NSW SES has several operational procedures. However, Units should establish procedures that directly relate to how they will fit into those procedures if the document cannot be implemented as written. For example, the Unit does not have the membership or range of skills. In this case, a procedure is written for the unit to determine how the intent of the procedures will be achieved. This may be through a combined crew from the unit with personnel from NSW RFS to achieve

tasks (IE SES heights qualified personnel with NSW RFS crews doing the ground-level work).

Other requirements may not exist, such as manning for the operations centre. A pre-planned SOP that may include out-of-area or assistance from the cluster or Zone HQS and agreed upon with that group should be developed and implemented when required. Another may be the operational Incident and deputy incident controller appointment. This will establish the rest, rotation, and training for the roles.



**REST AND ROTATION STRATEGY**

All of the leadership and expertise in the unit mustn't be consumed in the first 24 hours of an operation. Your people provide both their leadership and/or expertise and their local knowledge that will be needed to guide operations and crews into the extended timeframe of an operation.

All unit members must be trained and understand they may not be called in immediately but must be informed as soon as possible of when they will be needed so they can make sure arrangements are in place to be free when the shift occurs. Likewise, Unit Commanders and other unit leaders must know the exact requirements.



**IMT OPERATIONAL STRATEGY**

Many units cannot manage the IMT managerial functions or the sub-functions. The unit needs to determine the essential or minimum IMT capability for initial operations and how it can supplement its IMT capability if required.

As a basis, most units will have:

- » **Incident Controller and alternate shift Deputies.** One single point of command, control, and coordination is essential.
- » **Operations Officer.** The role will task crews and coordinate information back to the Incident

Controller and Planning/ Intelligence

- » **Planning/Intelligence Officer.** This role will develop IAPs and SITREPS, maintain a common operating picture for the IMT, and establish a roster for operations, as a minimum.
- » **Beacon Operator/s.** At least one, if possible, two Beacon Operators to capture and communicate operational tasking and reporting.

The IMT strategy should include a transition process from command to a Division or Sector HQ, if the event is likely to escalate and a higher HQ takes over command of the event.





### INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

IAPs have been in NSW SES procedures and training for a significant period and are essential in command, control, and coordination. The Incident Controller must produce a plan as soon as practicable or delegate the development of one. Either way, the Incident Controller authorizes its release and is responsible for communicating with the higher command and the functional heads in the IMT.

This document shows that higher headquarters can plan assistance and have confidence

that the unit has established command, control, and coordination arrangements.

If, for any reason, the Incident Commander cannot develop an IAP, it should be an early request for assistance.

IAP can be established for a shift or many days and have annexures for particular tasks. Many Operational IAPs for storms or floods can be pre-prepared and modified to meet the current situation. While this is a smart strategy, pre-prepared IAPs mustn't be implemented WITHOUT a clear reflection of the current situation and strategy.



### CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL RHYTHM

At the unit level, the following considerations should apply to an IMT operational strategy:

1. **STAND UP ONLY WHAT YOU NEED INITIALLY.** Stand up only for what you need of the IMT roles, but be prepared to go big early if BoM predictions and local knowledge lead the unit leadership team to consider it a wise move.
2. **ESTABLISH A SHIFT TIMELINE ASAP.** Shift timelines are used to establish the coordination points for the IMT visually. This is where the Incident Controller can synchronise actions and tasks, saving time and reducing wasted effort.
3. **DEVELOP A COMMON OPERATING PICTURE.** Situational awareness and

shared understanding are essential to clarify what is impacted, what resources are at hand and on order, etc.

4. **IAPs and SITREPS.** IAP and SITREPS are essential in ensuring a detailed strategy, clear intent, and end state to all who need to be informed of the situation. These documents are essential for the Unit to establish that it has command, control, and coordination arrangements in place. The better the documents and regularity of SITREPS, the fewer questions the Incident Controller needs to deal with from internal and external agencies.
5. **BRIEF UP AND OUT REGULARLY.** Keeping everyone informed is essential in coordinating support. This is essential when it may take time to raise and deploy support.

### CONCLUSION

The operational rhythm will utilise unit members to establish command, control, and coordination arrangements to support your strategies. It will also ensure local knowledge and situational awareness is readily available to support out-of-area assistance and coordination of external agencies.

Nothing improves efficiency more than exercising your strategies to remove potential problems and identify opportunities for improvement. Don't wait for an operation to test out your operational rhythm strategy.

#### Glenn A. Jones ESM

NSW SES Life Member  
BAdmin Lead UNE, Adv Dip  
PS (EM), Dip PS(EM), Dip VET,  
DipTD&D, Dip QA,

# Wellbeing Support Services

The Wellbeing Support Team continues to reach out and connect with members across the state.

The team works to support all members with access to our peers and chaplains, psychologists and our Member Assistance Program (MAP).

In October 2023 we employed a Senior Psychologist in the team and this has meant we have been able to expand proactive reach out calls to a larger number of our members following exposure to potentially traumatising or complex events.

October 2023 also saw the running of the Peer Support Duty Officer conference at SHQ. This two day training brought all of our Duty Officers together to sharpen their skills and reconnect to ensure they are ready to support the members with the latest and best information, skills and strategies. All members are encouraged to contact our Peer Support line 1800 626 800 if they require support and a listening ear.

In February 2024, the Wellbeing Support Team ran another successful recruitment and training for new Peer Support Officers. We were inundated with many excellent applicants and following the Induction Weekend, we onboarded 21 new Peer Support Officers representing all zones.

In the last two months the team have been on the road visiting units across a number of Zones increasing the visibility of the Wellbeing Support Team, making stronger connections, and supporting our peer support officers and chaplains as they visit units and deliver my5 sessions.

**24/7 Peer & Chaplaincy Support**  
 **1800 626 800**

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**1300 361 008**  
 Connect online: [one.telushealth.com](https://one.telushealth.com) or by mobile.





In late March 2024 we have the Peer Support Conference where we will bring together all the peer support officers and chaplains from across the state for a weekend of connection and learning.

Our Member Assistance Program, TELUS Health 1300 361 008, continues to provide Holistic wellbeing support for all members:

- » 24/7 access to counselling and resources available to help you with strategies to support yourself and others.
- » Online modules for members on topics such as eating for health, work wellbeing, avoiding burnout, depression, and work-life balance.

- » Articles, toolkits, audio recordings and more on topics like keeping kids safe online, burnout, stress management, change and resilience, financial wellbeing, mindfulness, and physical wellbeing programs.

MAP support is available to all members and their immediate family members from age 16 up. It is free (5 x sessions), confidential, and facilitated by professionals. In most cases, you will be offered an appointment within a couple of days from the time you call.

You can also download the TELUS Health App. at <https://nsw-ses.lifeworks.com/feed>



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