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Proudly supporting our local SES Volunteers

We appreciate the ongoing sacrifices of our SES Volunteers who often miss out on family gatherings and events to serve our communities.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year

Sonia Hornery

State Member for Wallsend



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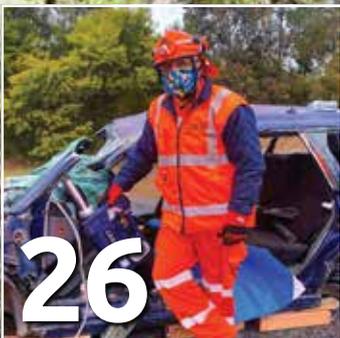
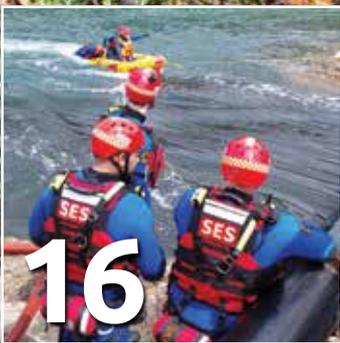
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The NSW Government will continue to support you and the hard work you do in preparation for and response to storm and flood emergencies as we make our way through this particularly challenging storm season.



**THE HON DAVID ELLIOTT MP
MINISTER FOR POLICE AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Last time I wrote, I reflected upon the floods which occurred earlier this year. Now, however, we are well and truly now into this year's storm season and the work of SES units across the state has been called upon to assist many communities already. My thanks to every one of you, who has responded to the call for help.

I was proud to see the three SES members who were deployed to Canada as part of a 53-strong team, return home safely. It was such a fantastic opportunity to work alongside other emergency service personnel from NSW and to learn new skills in a different country. I thank those members for committing to the deployment, during a period of heightened anxiety around the Covid-19 pandemic.

Now that we are through what appears to have been the worst of the pandemic, it is great to see SES members back into training and operations – helping communities across NSW. You provided invaluable assistance across Greater Sydney as well as regional centres as part of the mammoth inter-agency effort to support the Covid-19 response. This work was greatly appreciated and I was delighted to see so many able volunteers stand up and assist in roles which standard training may not have prepared you for.

More recently, I was incredibly proud to see the work of SES in the Forbes region when I visited with the Premier and Deputy Premier on the 18th of November. The preparation done by the SES in the lead up to this flooding event worked wonders,

in that the community was well-prepared and those at greatest risk had been evacuated to safer locations.

Every flood event is different and I hope every one of you are proud in knowing that communities facing predicted storm and flood events feel safer knowing you are on the ground to help, before, as well as during these weather events.

The NSW Government will continue to support you and the hard work you do in preparation for and response to storm and flood emergencies as we make our way through this particularly challenging storm season.

The selflessness of SES members is appreciated by communities across the state and by myself. Again, I want to thank you for giving your time to help protect others and wish you all the best for the summer ahead.



CARLENE YORK APM
NSW SES COMMISSIONER

It is hard to believe that the year is almost at an end, and what a year it has been. For our Service, it has been an incredibly busy year, with major flooding, supercell thunderstorms and even tornadoes hitting our communities. We have also even ventured interstate on a number of occasions to support communities that aren't our own. As I write this, more than 300 of our members are supporting the community of Forbes as flooding inundates the town. I was able to have the opportunity to visit Forbes along with the Premier, Deputy Premier and our Minister to see first-hand the work you have been doing and I could not have been more proud. I want to thank each and every one of the members that have helped support our communities.

With the Bureau of Meteorology advising that the current Storm Season is likely to see us continue to experience strong winds, heavy rain, and the very real risk of more floods, I want to remind everyone the importance of looking after yourself. We can often find ourselves constantly going for long periods of time, so I want to remind you to take the time to look after yourself, rest, and make sure you take time for you and your families. Your wellbeing is important and something I care about.

With our state moving forward out of lockdown, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank those members who have provided the service with

their vaccination information. I want to add, our decision to mandate the vaccination was not something we took lightly. We undertook vigorous risk assessments and consultation processes before coming to a final decision. Having said that, I'm confident the processes we have put in place are essential and will best safeguard our people and our communities. With restrictions now easing and activities, like training, back on the agenda, I'm excited for the future and opportunities that now await after the past couple of years contending with the implications of COVID-19.

Over the past few months, we have busy working on the Availability Project, and I would like to thank our Project Advisory Group volunteers who have been providing their insights into this work on topics including what our requirements are, what the scope should be and how we should engage our members. Your ongoing time and efforts gathering input from across our membership base has been invaluable to the project, and will help us to make sure that we deliver a solution that truly meets the needs of our volunteers. Our Deputy Commissioners Damien Johnston and Daniel Austin are proud to be co-sponsoring a project that volunteers are so passionate about, and are looking forward to continue collaborating as we begin to assess potential options and reach some key decision points.

It has been a few months since the launch of our new Strategic Plan, and I'm happy to share some fantastic highlights. As part of our first priority area 'Our People', 800 of our members have signed up for mental health first aid training. This is a great achievement. To support 'Our Community', we recently streamlined our structure and created an additional 11 roles to support our planning and preparedness functions, funded from an increase in budget received from the Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Management Strategy. Another highlight within the 'Our Capability' area, is that a project advisory group has been created for the availability project, providing incredibly valuable member advice to the sponsors. All members are encouraged to join in on the Strategic Plan's six-month review, which will take place through a Teams Live event in February. I am looking forward to seeing you all there, and touching base with our members beforehand as the state re-opens.

I'd like to finish with a very Merry Christmas to all our members. I know summer holidays are very different for us, being part of an emergency service and responding to a call at a moment's notice. Despite your enthusiasm to help your community, please don't forget to take time off, when the time is right, where you are either not on-call or can go away on holiday, to recuperate and really take the time to relax.

Stay safe

“
With restrictions now easing and activities, like training, back on the agenda, I'm excited for the future and opportunities that now await after the past couple of years contending with the implications of COVID-19.
 ”



STEVE HALL
SENIOR CHAPLAIN

“
**The deliberate strategy of focusing on
 “what is” gives ownership back to me.
 I own all of my decisions – the good
 ones and the bad ones.**
 ”

One Little Word

Leave during Covid is exciting. My non trip to Queensland was poetry in motion. My kids suggested sleeping in the motorhome in the driveway. They could hold up signs with new destinations each day (such a blessing) to give us a sense of going somewhere. Stay home we did and we slept inside.

However, I did get to listen to an interview on Conversations with Anna Mears the Olympic cyclist. Anna broke her leg in the lead up to the Olympics and had to work hard to get back in shape to compete, which she did. But her head was all over the place. Her coach took her aside and told her that she could keep thinking about the “what if’s” – can she compete, will her leg hold up, could it happen again

– or she could focus on the “what is”. Anna said that this conversation helped her immensely, she went on to compete and medaled.

I was fascinated with the idea of changing “what if” to “what is”. I can’t control the “what if” – I can’t control the infection rate, the spread, whether I am in lockdown or going on holiday. Will we get to 70% and when? The incessant fear mongering, the doom and gloom, the selective application of truth (remember truth) all grind away at pushing me inevitably to “what if”.

This changes when I bring my world back to “what is”. I can control what is in my power. I can look after myself physically – exercise (within reason), control my diet (a little less see-food),

sleep and get outside. I can look after myself mentally – for me reading, connecting to new ideas, keeping an eye on the good going on in the wider world. I can stay in touch with people – on teams, Zoom, phone calls, even dare I say it letters (cards really). And I can pace myself to get through this.

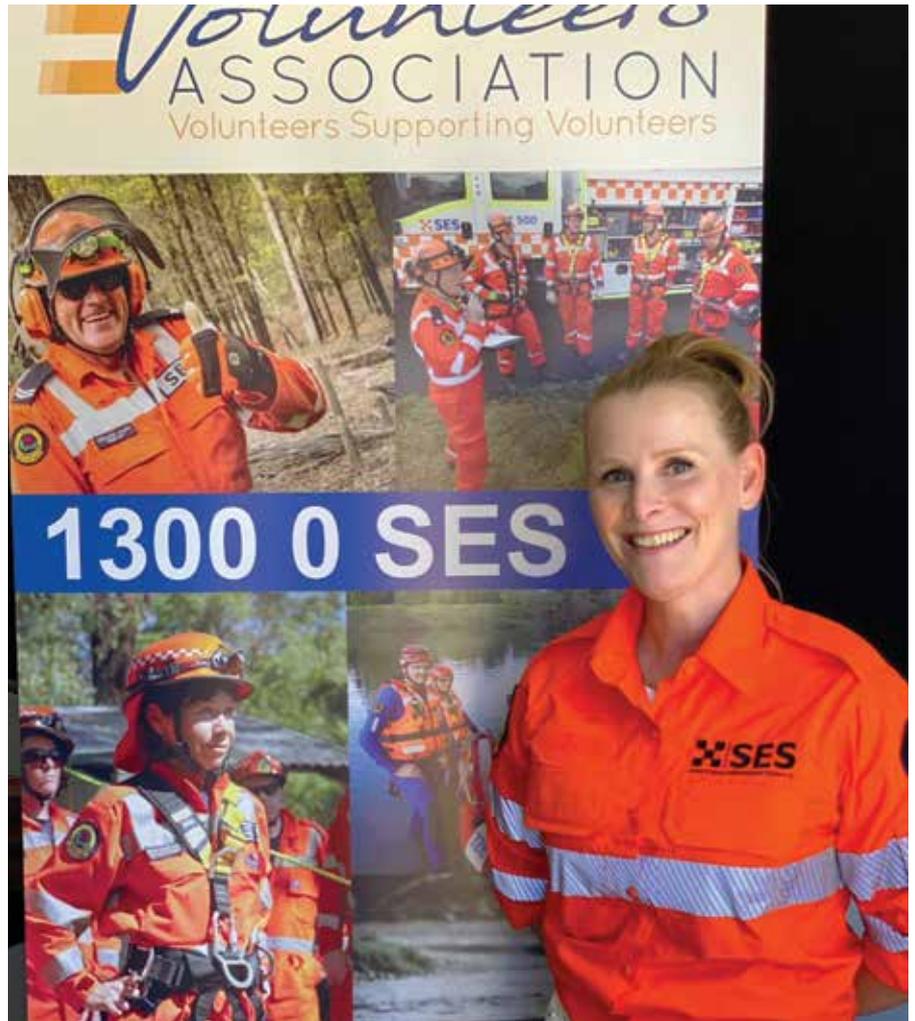
The deliberate strategy of focusing on “what is” gives ownership back to me. I own all of my decisions – the good ones and the bad ones. I can bring my focus in to what will help me get through this. I am not avoiding the world but rather finding my way to navigate through it and I can change my settings when I need to.

Who would have thought that changing one little word could make so much difference.

It's hard to believe it's that time of year again with Christmas and New Year's Eve just around the corner & we know too well, that the festive season means something very different to those in emergency services. It has been a hectic year for all - at the time of print, we have multiple units operational with the current storm and floods events & while most people will be spending the Christmas period winding down with their families and friends, dedicated volunteers like yourselves will often be spending this time away from your loved ones, helping keep our communities safe in times of need just like you do all year round.

The VA will also continue to work through the Christmas and New year period to ensure we are here to provide assistance to our members in need. While we wrap up 2021, we are looking forward to 2022 and have big plans for the VA and our members.

- » We are currently in the process of under going works at our rural property in Windellama and look forward to the completion of new facilities and to be able to welcome our members back in 2022- watch this space!
- » Our focus will continue to be on Mental health first aid and ensuring our members throughout NSW have access to our courses – locations and dates will be uploaded onto our website soon www.sesvaevents.com **Courses are provided free for NSW SESVA Members.**
- » We will further expand our advocacy services for members and continue to gather feedback and opinions of volunteers to improve safety and capability of the organisation.
- » We aim to expand training opportunities for our members through grants and sponsorships
- » Continue to provide a high level, confidential welfare program for our members.



Congratulations to our Managing Director and NSW SES volunteer Erin Pogmore, who has been recognised by the Australian Mental Health Foundation for her work, commitment and innovative approach to supporting the 10,000 volunteers of the NSW SES. We are so proud of her dedication, hard work & achievements – she is an inspiration to us all!

We could go on about her frontline work as a firefighter, rescuer, flood rescuer and Urban Search and Rescue specialist for Australia's international task force. And we definitely won't bang on about her international recognition for aviation rescue. We suspect that it's these roles, where she gets in and does the work, is why she has such an understanding, respect and empathy for all things mental health.

As if organising, funding and delivering mental health courses and support was not enough, Erin

also works for a 100acre retreat and wellness centre for volunteers and their families.

We love great aussies, who just get in and do the hard yards, and this is why these people have the respect of their peers. This to us is a leader who shows how it's done ...

"It is clear that Erin Pogmore is an incredibly selfless person who cares deeply not only about mental health, but creating awareness of its importance. It is wonderful to see Erin recognised for the hard work she puts in as a volunteer, going above and beyond in her varied roles across our Emergency Services. Erin isn't one to seek recognition for the countless hours she puts in to mental health initiatives, so it's our privilege to say congratulations on your well-deserved award, and thank you for the work you do."

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. David Elliott

VA PROUD TO SUPPORT NSW SES VOLUNTEERS

In hopes of developing a wellness attitude and raising awareness around world mental health awareness day on October 11, the Wollongong unit ran wellness bingo amongst their members.

This was a calendar of wellness activities that challenged their members to complete throughout October- they included all covid friendly activities that had a focus on maintaining good mental health. Some of the activities included listening to a podcast, sharing a wellness tip, go for a walk, run or bikeride.

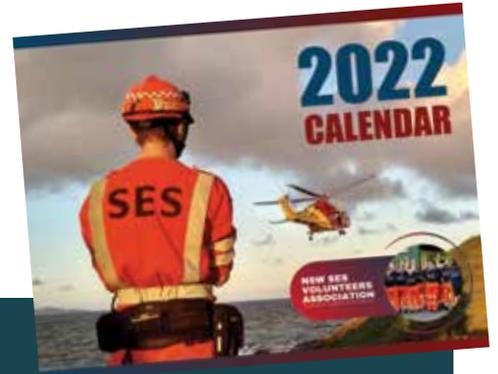
It was a great initiative to build that sense of connection and togetherness again and encourage participation.

Shellharbour Unit also ran a number of member engagement activities during September to boost morale and we also received great positive feedback from members who participated.

The VA was proud to sponsor both initiatives and provide prizes for the various winners / participants along with being the sponsor for the NSW SES Trivia night during the lockdown period. If you have a question about sponsorships and grants please contact the VA for more information.

2022 CALENDAR

Keep an eye on the post as our 2022 calendar has now been published and sent out – thank you to everyone who contributed by sending in their images and also to all the members who voted, we appreciate your input!



We have another jam packed edition of *The Volunteer Magazine* and it is all thanks to the units and fellow volunteers who contribute and share their experience and knowledge with us all! If you would like to have your unit featured in our next edition or have a suggestion or feedback, please email editor@nswsesva.org.au.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New year – Stay safe

Carlee Maccoll

NSW SES Volunteers Association

The NSW SESVA provides a number of member support services to the thousands of NSW SES Volunteers throughout NSW. These include, but are not limited to:

- Welfare support
- Advocacy services
- Support programs (flood, bushfire & drought assistance)
- Access to training & development opportunities
- Grants, scholarships & sponsorship opportunities
- Mental health first aid training & access to our rural retreat
- Access to our Member benefits program

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Julie Owens MP

Your local Federal Member for Parramatta



Every year, SES volunteers work tirelessly to keep our community safe. This year, you have stepped up to protect us during unprecedented bushfires and a global pandemic.



Thank you for your service in 2021 - I wish you and your loved ones all the best for the holidays and a happy new year.

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“Every year, SES volunteers work tirelessly to keep our community safe, you are there in times of our greatest need. This often means that you miss out on family gatherings to serve our communities.

Thank you for your work and dedication at all times but especially during such a challenging 2021 for our nation. Your work does not go unnoticed.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.”

Jihad Dib MP

Member for Lakemba
Shadow Minister for Emergency Services
Shadow Minister for Energy and Climate Change

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Authorised by Jihad Dib MP.
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**“Thank you State
Emergency Services
Volunteers for
supporting our local
communities in times
of need during 2021.
Wishing you and your
families the very best
for Christmas and a
brighter 2022.”**



Janelle Saffin MP

MEMBER FOR LISMORE

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Putty Land Search



It was the story that had the whole of Australia watching – a three and a half year old non verbal autistic boy was missing. He had wandered off from his family’s home and there was no trace of him to be found in the rugged terrain surrounding their property in the Yango Drive area of Putty NSW.

For four days, emergency services and family members scoured the surrounding areas to find little AJ. Thankfully the land search was a success he was found and located in

good condition after spending 3 nights in the bush alone.

Rescue footage shared by NSW police shows the boy sitting in a shallow creek and drinking water with cupped hands while a helicopter circles overhead. NSW SES Volunteer Bluey was first to reach AJ and carried him back to waiting emergency services and AJ’s family. This was a phenomenal outcome and we are so proud of the efforts of all of the individuals involved in the search and retrieval of AJ.



PORT STEPHENS UNIT

The search team consisted of 7 members from Port Stephens SES Unit, known as "Search Team Charlie": Bluey, Alysha, David, Russell, Timmy, Ben and Levi.

THE SEARCH AREA

We were tasked to search area 9, which was to the South West of the home. We drove our vehicles up to the top of the steep hill and commenced our search from the very top down the valley and to the creek bed. The search area was quite steep and had several large rocky cliff faces to scale down. And there were many large rocks with caves on

the underside, as well as wombat holes which we searched along the way.

FINDING AJ

Our members were completing a line search when we heard the PoAir helicopter overhead. Unfortunately we were unable to hear the information from the aircraft due to the sound of the rotor blades with its close proximity to the ground & we continued to move forward towards the aircraft and that is when Bluey found AJ. Bluey was walking through the creek bed at the time and must have only been 20 or so metres away, so was able to get to AJ quickly.

THE EXTRACTION

Bluey made sure he was very gentle, lifting AJ carefully out of the water. We took AJ over to a dry area to check for injuries, where we wrapped him in an emergency blanket, a dry shirt and a hat to protect him from the sun. The way we had come in was too steep and dangerous to try to take him out that way so we worked with NSW Police to ensure the best extrication plan - following the creek which, while it was muddy, slippery and uneven - it was the safest way to get him out. AJ was quite relaxed while being carried. Every so often we would need to walk



over a branch or up an embankment and he would start looking around at where he was.

We sang a song to him on the way out to keep him calm and relaxed and AJ fell asleep on Blueys shoulder. When we walked out of the bush area, his family were there along with a waiting ambulance.

This was a huge multi-agency effort with NSW Police, Ambulance, SES, VRA all working together.

WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE

There was a huge wave of relief when we found AJ. We then had to ensure he was okay, and prepare

for the journey out. Handing AJ to family and paramedics was like nothing you've ever felt. It was just incredible to see him reunited with his family.

DID YOU LOSE HOPE

We never lost hope. This was just a sensational outcome and we are so happy to see AJ reunited with his family.

The resources that were made available for this land search were incredible:

- » The Police with their command, in the air, on foot, trail bikes, horses, divers and Dog Squad;

- » The NSW State Emergency Service alone provided in excess of a hundred searchers per day. This was additional to the Bush Search And Rescue arm who also set up the GRN Cell On Wheels;
- » The Rural Fire Service in the air, on foot, trail bikes, pumping water from a dam and providing welfare;
- » Cessnock VRA Rescue Squad assisting the SES effort;
- » The local community also pitching in, adding to the overall effort.

By Alysha Springett

Deputy Unit Commander & Training Coordinator | Port Stephens Unit



Volunteer Strategy Team: Striving to add value where it counts

Delivering what our volunteers want to see and experience with the NSW SES is something the Volunteer Strategy Team are putting as their priority in 2022. The team, made up of staff from both SHQ and Zone, has a primary focus on volunteer recruitment, retention and engagement but is committed to and passionate about connecting with and advocating for our volunteer membership.

Being an advocate for our membership means that we are curious and interested in volunteer perspectives. We listen and gather information, so that we can develop insights about what is important to our people.

Acting Manager Chris Hovey has been instrumental in establishing Volunteer Strategy as the “go to” source for our fellow staff teams to understand the volunteer experience and gain valuable insight and feedback to the needs and wants of our membership, and how impact is felt and experienced at a Unit level; *“the feedback we receive from our members is used to inform – their input is invaluable and we are continuously*

sharing this information and feeding it back to the wider SES support network to advocate for the member’s experience”

It is the focus on action that the team feel is important to emphasise – whilst receiving feedback is important, it does not become valuable unless it translates into tangible and actionable items which the team constantly focus on delivering for our volunteers.

One such deliverable was a series of online workshops held in 2021 including several self-service informational sessions (July), and the *Leading through Challenge* series (September-October) which focused on professional development in leadership and conflict management soft skills.

These workshops were developed based upon feedback the team had received from various Unit visits and contacts as well as from the results of the Volunteer Voice Survey (2020), and member Exit Surveys, and were both well attended and well received with an average 369 pre-registrations per session. Sessions were facilitated in conjunction with Craig Farmer from *Employee Assistance Services Pty Ltd* and included several NSW SES members as panel representatives and guest

speakers (including our new Senior Manager Well-being and Support Services Liz Gould), to offer valuable insight and advice to our members.

Craig Farmer was keen to come on board and offer his tips, tools and techniques for managing difficult situations knowing the value that soft skills in this area have; *“the quality of the working and personal relationships amongst the members dictates the quality of membership experience. Operational skills are important to fulfil the mission of the NSW SES, however it is the emotional intelligence skills that allow teams and leaders deploy these effectively.”*

Craig commended the sessions run by the team “for investing in the skills of the members to be able to continue to build positive Unit cultures and skilfully deal with things when tensions arise (as they inevitably do)” and overwhelmingly, this was echoed in very positive participant feedback both during the sessions via interactive polls and live Q&A, and in post-session evaluations.

After the success of the Online workshop series, the team are keen to run more and encourage any feedback

NSW SES VOLUNTEER STRATEGY TEAM



- A Volunteer Strategy Manager**
 Clarendia Hovey
 (Andrew McCullough on secondment)
- A Volunteer Strategy Officer**
 Kerrie Pearce
 (Craig Wyles on leave until Jan 2022)
- Program Support Officers**
 6.5 FTE each
 Belinda Freeme
 Kristy Rowlands



on future topics to be sent through. Recordings of the sessions, links to the presentation slides and resource material can all be found on mySES accessible via scanning the QR code below.

The Volunteer Strategy Team are continuing to work with our Units on recruitment campaigns, retention and engagement ideas, volunteer data management, reporting, plus more. There is an extensive suite of products available for volunteers which may be of interest and benefit to your Unit, including Unit Check-Ins so we enthusiastically encourage you to get in contact with the Team to discuss what they can do for you! Contact us via experience@ses.nsw.gov.au



Participant feedback:

“Valuable resources for the toolbox”

“... a great big thank you to the Volunteer Strategy Team and all our wonderful presenters for organising and delivering this series - Leading Through Challenge. I have truly enjoyed it and learned a heap! Thank you - Well Done!”

“Another great presentation. It is so valuable for all of us to grow and learn from”

“These sessions help to reinforce the life skills we can learn by being here (in SES) along the visible skills (saws and roofs) that SES can offer people to help them grow and develop.”

Bonnievale



On an overcast Monday morning over twenty Flood Rescue Operators representing a dozen Metropolitan Zone units gathered in the Royal National Park to undertake critical training to hone and refresh their water rescue skills.

Organised by the Sutherland Unit on behalf of the Zone it made use of the naturally occurring swift water at the Bonnievale Bridge situated between Bundeena and Maianbar.

Operators were able to practice a range of skills and techniques including;

- » Self-Rescue from swift water
- » Throw bag rescues
- » Reach & Rescue pole drills
- » Inflatable hose drills
- » Rafting and tethered rafting
- » Highlines

With training opportunities heavily limited during the COVID 19 lockdown most operators present had not been in actual swift water for several months, so it was a good opportunity to refresh their skills and get back into the cycle.

It also provided a valuable opportunity for members to familiarise themselves with the full range of available flood rescue equipment and build teamwork with members from other units should they deploy together on operations.

As the only naturally available site with consistent swift water in Sydney the Bonnievale campground is a critical component of currency training for



local units in support of the man-made facilities at Penrith and Manly Hydraulics.

This was the first exercise SES had been able to run at the location for nearly 18 months due to limitations imposed by asbestos removal works and structural damage to the bridge. The service was gratefully appreciative of the support from the NPWS Royal Office during this time to help get this site back online.

Concluding the exercise with a lunch spread from the Sutherland Catering Team the members present said they had enjoyed the opportunity to rehash their skills, gain exposure to different techniques and work with colleagues from other units. Further professional development exercises at this location are scheduled for December.

By Samuel Corby



NSW SES Menai Unit Stadium Stomp

On the 14 November 2021, 6 members of NSW SES Menai unit joined Stadium Stomp ... and finished it!

Stadium Stomp was run at Sydney Cricket Ground to raise funds and awareness for mental health. It covered the entire stairs in the stadium, twice plus Don Bradman stand (roughly 6,700 steps and over 6km in length.)

From our members perspective completing the Stadium stomp was difficult physically, but it's nothing

compared with the hardship and struggle that people with mental illness have to face on a daily basis. We want to thank NSW SES VA for their continue support in this field.

In Australia, 8 people die from suicide every day and 1 in 5 people experience symptoms of mental illness each year. Mental illness can be debilitating and can have devastating impact on not only those living with it, but those around them.

So, please talk to your mates, see if they are ok.

If you or someone you know is struggling you can contact one of the following numbers for help

- » **Lifeline 13 11 14**
- » **Beyondblue 1300 22 46 36**
- » **Sane 1800 18 7263**

If you do not like talking on the phone, you can text 0477 13 11 14 between 1800 to midnight. It is a service that is also provided by Lifeline.

Or, you can liaise with NSW SES VA & one of their mental health coordinators.



Bankstown Unit's help with the COVID Vaccinations

Bankstown PCYC

Late July we received a call to assist NSW Health in the vaccination centre at PCYC Bankstown. Most members saw it as a great opportunity during these difficult times to help the community. I, myself had been stood down and thought I would like to help the community increase the vaccination rates as soon as possible so we could come back to a "normal" life and return to work.

As a unit and with the help of our surrounding units, we sent up to seven members daily for four weeks helping with crowd control and assisting at the vaccination hub. The job was not only different but also very interesting.

We greeted up to 2200 people a day. We would make sure they sign in, keep social distancing also helping them getting all the documentation ready for the check-in process to make it as fast, smooth and as comfortable as we could for them, a few of them were stressed and didn't like needles so we did our best to re-assure them by talking to them and in case of anxiety, sending them to the front of the queue



to make it as quick and painless as possible for them.

Other times we just spent time chatting and listening to people to make the time goes faster while waiting in the queue but also helping people creating a MyGov account and link it to Medicare to obtain the valuable Covid Certificate in order to be able to go back to work.

Our job as a member of the SES is always to help the community and listen to the needs and concerns of those and address them the best we

can - regardless whether it be a tree that has fallen on a car, someone caught in flooding or in this instance, someone coming to get vaccinated. Most people were very grateful of the job we did and thanked us for giving our time to help and this was the same with NSW Health staff with whom we had a great relation working together with the same Goal of getting people vaccinated as smoothly as possible.

Arno



Campbelltown Unit at the Macquarie Fields Vaccination Hub

Glenquarie Shopping Centre Vaccination Hub at Macquarie Fields was very busy from the 21st August to the 19th September 2021. Campbelltown Unit was happy to be asked to be involved in this response.

Kathy Garancsi from Metro Zone was our amazing organiser and Ian Shepherd, the Campbelltown Unit Commander, was in charge of coordinating the Campbelltown Unit's response. This involved organising enough volunteer members to man all of the Hubs each day from 21st August through to 19th September.

From early in the morning, 06:30 start until 19:00 at night, members

were at the Hub checking QR codes, giving information, answering questions and helping the crowds to get in the correct lines. Each day up to 12 Campbelltown members were onsite at the Hub for their 12 plus hour shift. The Liverpool unit was manning the Hub at the Liverpool Vaccination Centre and the Bankstown Unit was manning the Hub in the Bankstown area. Many volunteers from other Metro Zone Units were also involved in supporting the Vaccination Hubs.

Campbelltown Unit was also in charge of making snack packs and lunches each day for all of the members at the 3 hubs, delivering the lunches and ensuring that the Bus

from Campbelltown Unit was on site at Glenquarie each day for the use of SES members. These tasks involved the Catering team and Logistics team at Campbelltown. The Catering team at Campbelltown also provided dinner for the Campbelltown Hub team members each night when they returned from their long day at the Hub.

Over the four-week period Campbelltown members put in 4368 hours, this also included the Catering and Logistics teams.

Campbelltown Unit appreciated the opportunity to be involved in this event providing assistance to the hub and valued the guidance from both Metro Zone SES and NSW Health.





Why We Volunteer

Recently, a random question was posed to me, “Why do you volunteer?”. Initially I was a little thrown by the question, as my motive for doing so was so sub conscious that I hadn’t really given it much consideration other than “I wanted to help others in need”

Now that I have had more time to reflect, I realise it’s much more complex than I originally thought. So hopefully, this short article will save you time researching an answer if you are ever asked the same question.

DEFINITION OF A VOLUNTEER

There are endless definitions for the word “volunteer”, however, I was struck by the limited way in which the word volunteer was defined. I thought most were too simplistic, so I continued to search and found what I believe to be a suitable definition by Susan Ellis and Katherine Noyes -Campbell authors of *By the People*.

“To volunteer is to choose to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one’s basic obligations”

This definition contains several key words and phrases that make this definition so important:

- » **Choose:** emphasizing the element of **free will**;
- » **Social responsibility:** meaning purposeful action that benefits others, whether individuals, small groups, or society at large (allowing for possible benefits to oneself as well);
- » **Without monetary profit:** meaning no personal economic gain, but allowing for some form of reward or reimbursement (monetary or other) that is not meant to equal the value of the service given; and;
- » **Beyond basic obligations:** meaning over and above what is necessary, unavoidable, required,

or generally expected. Basic obligations include caring for one’s own family, responsibilities of citizenship such as voting, or doing one’s paid job.

SO WHAT MOTIVES US TO VOLUNTEER?

There are many reasons that we are motivated to volunteer here a few:

- » **Altruism** – a concern for the welfare of others
- » **Psychological benefits** – feelings of pride, an intrinsic value
- » **Reputation** – public recognition that people may get from others for their kindness.
- » **Solicitation** – asked by other from our social network
- » **Values** – the endorsement of one’s values and sense of social responsibility

My hope is that next time I am asked why I volunteer I will have a great elevator pitch that might encourage others to join me.



Castlereagh Cluster

July saw Gilgandra Unit have a recruitment information night where the unit gained membership of 10 new members who are currently in training for General Land Rescue.

The evening was followed closely by a Job Ready Induction Workshop which was attended by Gilgandra and Coonamble Units. Gilgandra Unit had an interagency Road Crash training evening with ASNSW organised by Gilgandra Unit Commander, giving new paramedics exposure to working at a road Crash Rescue scene and RESCUE operators practice working alongside Paramedics. Coonamble and Walgett Units met in Walgett to do joint unit RCR training which was a good success.

August brought Gilgandra Unit 3 new flag poles which are a great addition to the new HQ, the Unit also was joined by the Gilgandra clinical nurse educator to carry out PAD training. It will see 20 volunteers from across Gilgandra, Coonamble, Lightning Ridge and Orange City Units trained in PIARO which is being run by Castlereagh Cluster with the instructing being done by trainers from Forbes, Cootamundra, Burruga and Gilgandra.



These efforts of our volunteers across Castlereagh Cluster Units have been nothing short of amazing and it is great to see our new members coming to help their communities and learn new skills.

Castlereagh Cluster has been keeping busy with the running of our GLR training schedule. We now have 7 new storm operators boosting the

capability of our area. We are looking forward to completing the rest of our RESCUE courses later in November and December. A huge thanks is needed for all our the volunteers who have been supporting and training our people with support coming from Forbes, Aberdeen, Taree, Burruga, Gilgandra, Lithgow and Port Stephens.

Linda Burney MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BARTON

"Thank you to our wonderful NSW SES volunteers who have put their lives on the line this year in the most challenging of conditions. Whilst many of us this holiday season will be with friends and family, this dedicated and selfless group will be keeping us safe."

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Joel Fitzgibbon MP

Federal Member for Hunter

Follow me on:



Thank you to our selfless SES volunteers for always responding when your community needs you most.

3 Edward Street, Cessnock
Phone: 4991 1022



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THE VOLUNTEER MAGAZINE



To have your article featured in *The Volunteer Magazine* - Please send content to editor@nswsesva.org.au

If you have any questions or would like further information on the Magazine and submissions, please contact The Volunteer Editor Carlee Maccoll P: 1300 073 782 E: carlee.maccoll@nswsesva.org.au

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Thank you

for protecting our community through one of our toughest years. I am proud to support our SES volunteers.

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FIONA PHILLIPS MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR GILMORE

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Authorised by Fiona Phillips, ALP, 3/59 Junction Street Nowra



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Merry Christmas AND

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Wishing you all a safe and festive Holiday Season

Thank you for your ongoing support throughout 2021



Edmond Atalla MP MEMBER FOR MOUNT DRUITT

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Authorised by Edmond Atalla MP, Suite 201 Westfield Shoppingtown, Mount Druitt funded using parliamentary entitlements.

ARE THEY TRIPLE OK?



We're always there to help.

Let's make sure we help each other and ask R U OK?

ruok.org.au/triple-ok

RUOK?
A conversation could change a life.



Animal Rescue

Port Stephens SES were responded to a horse fallen and trapped in Hinton.

Franklin, the 24 year old horse, had slipped on mud and slid backwards down a slope becoming trapped against trees and branches.

Franklin was safety sedated and monitored by the vet onsite, and an extrication plan was developed to get Franklin out.

Surrounding lantana bushes were removed by our Chainsaw Operators, while our Rescue Operators arranged the straps, slides and skids out of the SES Large Animal Rescue Operations (LARO) trailer.

Crews carefully positioned the slide beneath the sedated horse, and NSW SES & NSW Rural Fire Service crews then worked together to move the 1/2 tonne horse onto the slide using ropes. Once on the slide, the slide was delicately winched down the slope and onto the grassed area of the paddock.

Franklin was then checked over again by the vet and reunited with his owner.

We are pleased to confirm Franklin is safe, well and had not incurred any injuries.

Excellent teamwork from NSW RFS, NSW SES, NSW Police and the Veterinarian.





Road crash rescue

A volunteer perspective

RCR AT MOSS VALE

I could have done a generic post about the job yesterday, who, what, how etc, attached some photos and called it a day, all under the disguise of the WCB Facebook page.

But you only get to go to your first job once. So here is my version of events for those who want to read it. My internal thoughts on virtual paper for you all to see.

Proceeding to the shed.

There's a car trying to reverse a trailer blocking the road. Once I get past that, I turn onto Berrima Rd. There's a tractor with a line of cars behind it. Seriously, this feels like a cruel joke. I'm never going to get on the truck, and I swear 50km/h never usually feels this slow.

I made it onto the truck.

Approaching scene.

I have my first "omg" moment, and it's not because I've just seen a car on its roof with a trapped driver for the first time. I scan the crowd for the familiar

face I knew I didn't want present at my first RCR. When your partner works for another emergency service in the area, it's only a matter of time before we encounter each other on a job, but I really hoped it wouldn't be my first rescue.

My brain had enough to process already without feeling like I was being watched the whole time. I feel slightly relieved when I realise this time, he wasn't there.

"Can you get cribbing" . Alright, game on.

I vaguely remember also grabbing the air bag protection and taking it all to the tool dump. There were a couple of trips to and from 46, grabbing tools and whatever else I was requested to go get. I was comfortable with that arrangement.

The warm zone. This isn't too bad.

"Alright can you put the air bag protection on the steering wheel" Wait. What? That's not the warm zone!

I can usually calm my breathing and heart rate easier than this, but its not working for me now.

I count 10 steps to the tool dump. Heart rate still high. 10 steps to the car. Heart rate probably higher still.

Before you know it, I was lying on the road, next to the patient who was upside down in her car seat trying to put the octopus on. Why isn't this working for me?! I do a quick mental check in - is this not working because I'm panicking? No, this genuinely is not happening like it should be. There are two legs sitting hard against the steering wheel and I can't get the straps around it. Report that back to the team leader.

"Get the undies" - helped break some glass.

"Can you get the spreaders"

By this stage I realised there were two teams working at getting all the doors off the car simultaneously. Holding the hard protection for one of the Operators while he was on the tools gave me a couple of seconds to actually take in what was around me and how quickly everything was happening.

When did they stabilise? That happened so fast I didn't even see it happen. How did that first door come off? I didn't see that happen either. When did those bystanders get here and start taking photos? I don't remember seeing them before.

This is the most amazing form of organised chaos I have ever witnessed. But it happens so much faster than I could have anticipated. The bar has been set high now.

Work gloves off, patient gloves on. I forgot to put patient gloves underneath my work gloves. I won't make that mistake again - latex gloves and sweaty hands are a frustrating combination.

Patient extricated from vehicle.

Pack up time.

Debrief time.

Home time.

I answered half a dozen work calls, returned the few more that I had missed over the last hour.

Isn't this just the most bizarre concept? We all left scene, and slotted back into the real world like nothing even happened. One moment it's just a standard Thursday afternoon - blink and you're in orange - blink again and you're back at work.

Why can I still smell the patients perfume, I wonder if that's normal?

My body also aches like I've just been to the gym. I can't say they didn't warn us about that.

I took the dog for a walk to try and wind down and enjoy the sunshine. I felt a little more like a normal human being after that. Adrenaline well and truly lingers. Luckily the perfume scent didn't.

What I thought my first job would be like versus what it actually was like couldn't have been further apart.

I thought it would feel so unfamiliar, and I had envisioned standing by the truck wanting to help but not knowing how - but everything you learn in training just kicks in.

You retain so much more than you think you will from 3 hours in the yard every Tuesday night.

I thought I would be hyper aware of everyone watching us work. In reality, I was so engrossed in my small jobs, I didn't even have time to consider anyone else not currently involved in our close circle.

A question I got asked later that night: So, now that you've experienced your first RCR, do you still think rescue is for you?

Yes. I'm probably more keen now that I've seen the real life impact our rescue team has on our community. You can think about it, prepare for it and train for it, but I don't think you ever really know until it happens. That first job has really cemented it in my mind.

Nicole

Coffs Harbour Unit

Local companies say Thank You to SES with \$10,000 Donation

The severe hailstorm and ferocious winds that hit Coffs Harbour and the Mid North Coast in October this year left local residents and emergency workers stunned.

NSW SES workers believe it's one of the worst storms to hit the Coffs Coast, leaving behind a damage bill in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Local companies Handybin Waste Services and Biomass Solutions joined forces donating \$10,000 to the local SES to say thank you for their hard work and dedication.

Staff from both companies suffered property damage during the storm but were able to continue the critical task of waste collection and processing for the community thanks to the hard work of the NSW SES securing so many local properties.



Both Handybin Waste Services and Biomass Solutions have been part of the local community for many years collecting and processing waste for more than 40,000 homes and businesses on the Coffs Coast every week and providing local employment.

"This is a great opportunity for us to show our appreciation for the hard work of the men and women of the local SES. Waste services are critical for the community,

especially during times of upheaval and stress and we acknowledge our staff for their ongoing commitment to the community" said a company spokesperson.

Coffs Harbour Unit Commander James Daniels said that ; "The past three weeks has been a very arduous period for our volunteers' speaking about the over 1400 requests for assistance.

James outlined that the Coffs Harbour SES also continued to provide frontline rescue responses to motor vehicle accidents and flood rescues during this time.

"We are very appreciative of the support by Biomass Solutions and Handybin Waste Services. Donations like this go a long ways to making things better for the volunteers in the Coffs Harbour City Unit" Mr Daniels said.



RCR Course

Port Stephens SES congratulates their 11 newly qualified Road Crash Rescue Operators.

These members have undergone numerous theory and practical sessions to learn the essential skills and techniques, prior to undergoing their final assessments.

The course originally commenced in July 2021, however was impacted by Covid. The course theory was moved to an online format, and we had to await Covid restrictions to lift in order to perform the practical components of the course. We are very fortunate to we have extremely adaptive trainers and participants that were able to move the theory to online, to keep the course going. These members are critical to ensuring the required 24/7 rescue roster is maintained, particularly for daytime and holiday period availability.

A huge thank you to everyone involved.

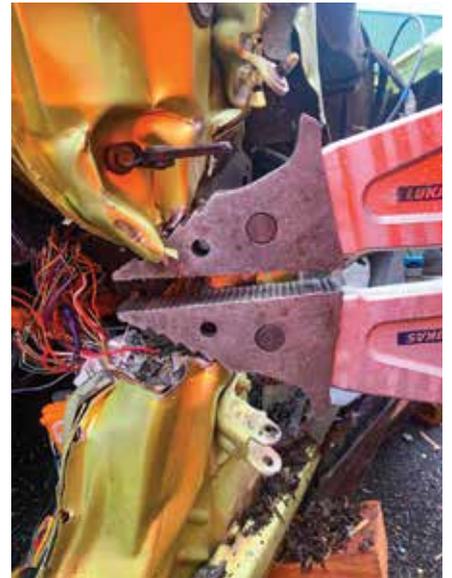
During the Covid lockdown, we also started weekly webinars with a rescue focus, and sessions so far have included topics such as Mass Casualty Situations, Electric Vehicle Rescue, When Cars & Water Collide, New & Emerging Technology and USAR Overview.

These webinars are designed to support continual learning and enhance the knowledge and understanding of rescue members from around the State.

We have received a great amount of support and positive feedback regarding these sessions, particularly from members keen to further their knowledge and from GLR Units.

These webinars will continue on into 2022. Session information is regularly posted on the "NSWSES General Land Rescue Operators" Facebook Group.







NSW SES Introducing High Clearance Vehicle Capability

Many NSW SES members would have seen Defence Force Unimog trucks being utilised to support emergency service rescue operations during major flood events. Often wading through the toughest conditions to evacuate people at risk, or delivering essential items (eg food, fuel or fodder) to support local communities or livestock isolated by floodwaters. The Defence Force advised that from 2021, they would no longer be able to provide support to emergency service operational response with high clearance vehicles. Their Unimogs are being removed from service and will be replaced by much larger and heavier vehicles that are not suitable to use on flooded roads and tracks.

NSW SES commenced a project to build and introduce our own High Clearance Vehicles (HCVs) into service, that will allow us to continue to save lives and create safer communities during flood events.

HIGH CLEARANCE FLOOD OPERATIONS VEHICLE - OVERVIEW

- » Cabin capacity for 6 (or 2 in front and a prone patient across the rear bench seat)
- » Able to wade continuously up to 1.2 metres deep
- » Forward scanning SONAR to visualise the road ahead
- » Reverse camera and ultrasonic sensors
- » Remote control spot lamp
- » Satellite Navigation and Vehicle as a Node communications system
- » 6m remote controlled LED light mast for broad area illumination
- » Warning devices and front, side and rear work lights

Six Mercedes Unimog (U4023) Extreme Off Road vehicles have been purchased. Specialised flood rescue and logistic support modules that are interchangeable are being designed and manufactured to ensure a diverse range of flood operations and other support tasks can be undertaken. These state of the art High Clearance Flood Operations Vehicles will enhance NSW SES capability for:

- » Flood rescue (land-based, on water and in water)
- » Towing and vessel launching
- » Transporting individuals, including mass evacuation
- » Transporting resources (including food, fuel, fodder and medical supplies) to isolated communities
- » Supporting other emergency service agencies; such as body recovery, land search and fire-ground logistics

About the Base Vehicle

- » Mercedes Unimog U4023 Extreme off-road chassis Front, rear and centre diff-locks
- » Central tyre Inflation System
- » PTO for hydraulic systems
- » Front and rear hydraulic winches with synthetic cable
- » Mid mounted crane for self loading/unloading
- » Stowage for 28 litre fridge and vehicle equipment, including recovery kit
- » Pintle hook with air brake connections to tow heavy trailers as well as 50mm ball tow couplings front and rear



The Flood Rescue Module

- » Flood Rescue module with Class 1 Inflatable Rescue Boat and motor stowed on ready rack
- » Stowage for specialist flood rescue equipment
- » Stowage for flood rescue kits for operators/crew
- » Integrated fold down side steps for access to stowage compartments
- » Heated 70 litre fresh water shower with anti-bacterial soap dispenser



- » Storm operations
- » Rugged access operations; including vertical rescue, bush search and rescue and deployment of critical communications equipment.

The first of the High Clearance Flood Operations Vehicles are expected to be delivered and introduced into service by mid 2022. These versatile and durable vehicles will undergo extensive testing and user evaluation before the remaining five bodies are built, which are likely to be in service by early 2023.

With the flood rescue module removed, the HCV will provide a flexible logistic support platform, with fold down seats and full canopy with bows for emergency evacuations. They will also be able to carry palletised loads, drums of fuel, bales of hay, sandbags or any other logistical support required.

Because the risks of flood in NSW are ever present, NSW SES have requested the Defence Force loan or gift three of their retired Unimogs to our agency, to allow us to provide a limited high clearance capability much earlier than our purpose built vehicles will provide. Arrangements are currently being considered and it is anticipated three repainted Defence Force Unimogs will be available to support our flood response operations by early 2022. These are intended as an interim capability and will be phased out once our dedicated vehicles become fully operational.

NSW SES has established an internal Working Group to deliver the high level operational policy, procedures, safety risk management, training and the administrative support to conduct and sustain operations with these vehicles. A User Group has also been established to guide the detailed design of these

specialised vehicles and to develop the tactical level operational techniques/procedures our flood technicians will need to operate them.

The six High Clearance Flood Operations Vehicles will be strategically located within designated Units who will act as the vehicle custodian. However, they will be State owned assets, deployed and controlled by the applicable NSW SES State Duty Commander, as required to meet our operational requirements and support local communities across NSW.

You can watch a video about the High Clearance Flood Operations Vehicle on this website: <https://nsw-state-emergency-services.publish.viostream.com/fleet/media?v=nf75g57dj33k39>



Award-winning Cell on Wheels Generation 2 to be located around the State



The Stay Safe Keep Operational (SSKO) Program is putting the finishing touches on five new Cell on Wheels Generation 2 (CoW) vehicles in preparation for the Initial Operational Capability.

For the past six months, the new CoWs have undergone rigorous testing and optimisation to ensure they comply with work, health and safety requirements, and to ensure reliability in the field.

This attention to detail and safety was recently recognised by SafeWork NSW. The Cell on Wheels Generation 2 won the large business (government) category at the 2021 SafeWork NSW Awards, which recognise excellence in work health and safety (WHS).

“This is wonderful acknowledgement for all members who have worked together on developing five Cell on Wheel Generation 2 assets,” said Daniel Austin, Deputy Commissioner Operations.

“I am very proud of your collaboration and commitment to the highest WHS standards. Well done.”

With the next phase in the project to commence shortly, there is exciting news to share about where the new CoWs will be based.

Following a consultation process, a new CoW will be based in each of the following locations: Dubbo, Goonellabah, Goulburn, Metford and Penrith.



Many factors were considered in deciding the locations, including: an analysis of CoW activations, communications blackspots, drive times, member availability, topography, accessibility to location, and Zone command support.

NSW SES has established an Operational Support Unit (OSU) to

assist in managing and operating assets like the CoW. The OSU will consist of appropriately trained members from across the State.

The SSKO Program team and the Operational Support Unit (OSU) are working closely to prepare for the implementation of the five CoWs in the new locations.

MEET THE NEW COMMANDER OF THE OPERATIONAL SUPPORT UNIT

Simon Gethin was recently appointed as the OSU Unit Commander after a competitive recruitment process. Simon is an experienced Project Manager and Business Analyst within the field of information technology, who is currently working at the NSW Department of Education.

An active NSW SES member for over eight years, Simon has performed various IMT roles for large incidents across the State. He is a volunteer and previously worked for NSW SES for over five years, where he was a key member of the team that developed and implemented beacon.

Simon manages the OSU and reports through to the South Eastern Zone Commander.



Simon Gethin with a CoW Generation 2.



Exercise at Picnic Point, Sydney.



Exercise in the Snowy Mountains.

HOW THE COW ENHANCES SAFETY AND OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Maintaining clear radio communications in remote and rugged areas is a complex challenge. Although Government Radio Network (GRN) coverage spreads across approximately a third of New South Wales, and is being expanded, there are many places where coverage is patchy or non-existent.

The GRN (also known as the Public Safety Network) is a digital network shared with other emergency services organisations (ESO) and provides numerous safety and operational benefits over older Private Mobile Radio (PMR) networks.

The GRN enables better radio communication between NSW SES members and personnel from other ESOs. The GRN also offers better voice clarity over a wider area, and centralised support from the NSW SES State Operations Centre, including an emergency duress alert.

That's why the NSW SES SSKO is working on new transportable solutions like the CoW to plug the gaps in GRN coverage, and for situations when infrastructure is damaged, or for extra capacity during major incidents.

Designed in collaboration with the NSW Telco Authority, the CoW consists of a GRN cell (communications cabinet) and generator pod on a rugged 4WD Iveco Daily Truck built to handle rough terrain and weather.

The truck's crane lifts the GRN cell and generator pod off the tray, onto the ground.

Once set up on location, the GRN cell and generator pod can be left unattended for at least 2.5 days without refuelling to support operations.

The GRN cell provides a satellite link to the existing GRN network. Once deployed, GRN coverage can be expanded into areas with little or no coverage as needed, enhancing member safety and continuity for operational communications.

MORE INFORMATION

The CoW is part of a suite of programs currently underway to improve operational communications and member safety.

Delivered through the SSKO program, additional initiatives include the Operational Communications Strategy, Vehicle as a Node and the Mobile Incident Command Centre. Read more about these programs by visiting the SSKO Intranet on mySES: <https://bit.ly/NSWSES-SSKO>



Lord Howe Island Training and Support Visit

October 2021

LORD HOWE ISLAND 2021

Who: Port Macquarie Team of 5

What: Training local SES members and work groups and community engagement especially around Tsunami.

When: October 9th-16th

Where: Lord Howe Island

Why: Support for the Lord Howe Island Community SES Unit, community and visitors.

How: Face to face training & community engagement

In Early October an amazing team of trainers and assessors from Port Macquarie Hastings NSW SES completed a weeklong training and support mission on Lord Howe Island. The team consisting of Katie Blake, Michael Ward, Alfred Portenschlager, Jared Bradley and Will Steggall are all experienced operators with all the team being General Land Rescue Operators, three Vertical Rescue Operators and four Flood Rescue Technicians.

The week comprised a variety of challenging training scenarios, first aid currency training, unit stocktakes, new member induction programs, a chainsaw course and Tsunami awareness conversations with other Emergency Services on the Island.

Each day challenging training scenarios were set up for SES Lord Howe Island members to maintain their skills,

learn new techniques and familiarise new members with the equipment available on the Island. Rescue scenarios included a person trapped under a vehicle requiring the use of pack & jack techniques, a road crash scenario that required a side and roof removal using their combi tool, a request to search for a missing visitor and their 2yr old son in Stephen's Reserve, and the set up and use of their Larkin frame for a simulated recovery of an injured person on the side of a steep slope.

As part of ongoing inter-agency relationships with the Island, the Lord Howe Island Board's Weeding team participated in a professional development day with the SES. The Port Macquarie SES trainers spent the day providing First Aid and CPR currency, teaching the weeding team how to package casualties ready for



transport and how to use the SES mule. The 'weeders' also gained experience using edge management rope systems to assist with weeding along some of Lord Howe Island's steeper slopes.

Whilst on Lord Howe Island, the Port Macquarie SES team took on the challenge to climb the 876metres up Mount Gower to check and resupply the two emergency rescue caches that were deployed several years ago. The team also enjoyed a picnic lunch with spectacular views overlooking the island from the top of Mount Gower, before tackling the spine-tingling descent back down the mountain.

One day a few Port Macquarie members decided to take advantage of favourable winds and tides and hired a fishing rod, then woke up at 4.30am to walk up and over Kim's Lookout in the dark for a chance to go fishing

for the prized King fish at The Gulch, before training started that day. Alfred managed to catch a beauty!

After a storm on Friday night, it was heard through the grapevine that a tree had come down blocking a local's access to their home. This provided the perfect opportunity for the SES to help the locals and ran their chainsaw course assessment, clearing the fallen tree on Saturday morning and demonstrating the practical skills gained by being part of the NSW SES.

As part of the visit, the Local Commander Tim Solomon and members from the Port Macquarie unit, liaised with the Island's other key stakeholders such as the Police, Marine Rescue, Welfare, the local hospital, doctor, pharmacist, and The Lord Howe Island Board. They spoke about Tsunami awareness, emergency

evacuation and recovery plans, and the ongoing support and availability of Port Macquarie SES Members to provide vertical rescue capabilities or to help after Tsunamis or severe storms.

This training trip provided ongoing support and training to the Lord Howe Island Unit and community groups, and consolidated friendships built during ex Tropical Cyclone Uesi deployment, where members from Port Macquarie assisted in the clean-up in Feb 2020. The Port Macquarie unit is very happy that Lord Howe Island shares their Local Government Area, and that Eastern Airlines fly directly to Lord Howe Island and are all looking forward strengthening the relationship between the two units.

» Turn over for more photos

LORD HOWE ISLAND TRAINING AND SUPPORT VISIT



To Serve and Protect

Bringing diversity to Australia's emergency services



Australia has an estimated 250,000 emergency service volunteers. They are vital to the country's capability to respond to emergencies and disasters. However, their contribution is under threat. Australia's volunteer workforce is shrinking.

Head researcher from the Scanlon Foundation Research Institution, Trish Prentice, has composed an essay that discusses and identifies the importance of diversity in Australia's volunteer emergency services.

The essay also celebrates how multiple providers like St John Ambulance, CFA and Life Saving Victoria celebrate volunteers from different cultural backgrounds.

Ms Prentice said, "Natural disasters are a reality for Australia and recent events have highlighted just how important emergency service volunteers are for community safety. This essay reflects on how communities are changing in terms of cultural diversity and how emergency services organisations are responding to those changes. It tells the stories of those who are paving the way for greater diversity in the volunteer ranks."

The essay will be published over two editions of National Emergency Response Journal.

Enjoy Part I below and in 2022 we will bring you Part II which discusses why cultural diversity is important in emergency services.



By Trish Prentice

Head Researcher, Scanlon Foundation Research Institution



Both the number of people involved in formal volunteering and the number of hours individuals are dedicating to these roles have declined in recent years. Time pressures on families and increasing work commitments are playing a role, along with growing individualism and a decline in altruistic values, according to some. For emergency service organisations that rely on volunteers, this is a worrying trend.

These concerns have led to much strategic thinking about how to boost volunteer numbers. Emergency service volunteer ranks have traditionally been filled by “able-bodied, Anglo-Celtic, heterosexual men,” with little representation from Indigenous, culturally diverse or LGBTI groups. Female volunteer numbers have also been low, due to perceptions of an ‘old boys’ or ‘military’ culture in emergency service organisations. Yet these organisations are coming to see that to remain viable and, as some would argue, to operate effectively in their communities, they will need to attract and retain a more diversified volunteer pool.

This essay tells the stories of volunteers from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds who have joined the emergency service

WHY AUSTRALIA’S EMERGENCY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS RELY ON VOLUNTEERS

The storm that tore through the eastern suburbs of Melbourne on 9 June, 2021 was the most recent in a series of natural disasters that have devastated Australian communities. From the bushfires that ravaged many Australian states in late 2019 and early 2020, to the storms and floods that isolated communities in New South Wales and far North Queensland in early 2021, Australians have continually been reminded of their vulnerability to the power of Mother Nature.

In the midst and aftermath of disasters, communities rely on the assistance of emergency service organisations. First responders provide critical aid to individuals and communities, ensuring public safety, assessing damage or injury, and offering practical, medical and emotional support. The recent Victorian storms sparked more than 5,000 calls for help to the State Emergency Service (SES). A thousand volunteers were deployed to affected areas and many remain there, working to restore access and essential services to homes and suburbs. Such events remind us how much we rely on these organisations to ensure our communities are safe.

In Australia, emergency service organisations consist of fire and ambulance services, state emergency services, marine rescue, the coast guard and lifesaving organisations. These organisations are predominantly volunteer-based,^{xiii} supported by only a small number of career or paid staff.

The vastness of the Australian landscape, differences in population density and the unpredictable nature of emergencies make it unfeasible to employ a full contingent of paid emergency workers for every Australian community. Volunteers like these give their time and skills freely to ensure that communities have emergency support all day, every day.

volunteer ranks. It describes why they joined, what they have gained from the experience (and the challenges), and how their organisations and the broader community have benefited

from their service. While numbers of volunteers from diverse backgrounds are still small, these individuals are paving the way for broader institutional change.

ZULFI**State Emergency Services**

Zulfi joined the SES because, coming from Afghanistan at war, he was mindful of what Australia had given to him. He wanted to give something in return. He said to himself, "Let's do something for these people." So he did.

Four years into his service Zulfi has been involved in many emergencies, from road accidents to fallen trees. He also fought the 2019 Gippsland fires in Victoria, and has taken part in missing person searches. These memories stay with him.

I've done a lot of missing person searches. Sometimes the outcomes are not so great but when you get a good outcome it's fantastic. I've had times when I've found someone and the family have come and hugged me. In those times I feel like I've done something for the country. I've helped someone from here.

Most SES units are not culturally diverse, but Zulfi's in Greater



Dandenong is one of the most diverse in the state. Its 45 members speak 16 languages. Members use this cultural capital in their volunteer recruitment drives, asking people in their own language to join the SES. Zulfi has

found that people in the Afghan community value this approach. "When we are speaking in their language, they ask, 'How did you get into that? What do you do?' They are interested in how I am giving back to the community." He also says it creates trust. "If they see someone like me, they see an idol, they want to be like me." It's led to others becoming involved.

Yet Zulfi knows there can be barriers to getting involved. He found the application process difficult because of the language on the application form. But the unit helped him. "They broke down the process into smaller segments," he says.

Zulfi says being part of the SES has changed his life. He's developed new skills – not least, how to use a chainsaw. He's expanded his social group, meeting a range of people from different backgrounds, many of whom have become friends. But giving back to the community – "that's the best bit for me."

VIVEK**State Emergency Service**

Vivek had his first experience with emergency services when a tree fell on his car in a storm. He had no idea that an organisation existed that could come to his assistance, let alone one that relied on the "selfless" contributions of volunteers. "There aren't volunteer-based emergency services like the SES in India," he says. Vivek decided to become involved. He had spare time on weekends; volunteering would enable him to use it productively and make new friends.

For an international student, the process wasn't straightforward. He contacted one unit but was uncertain whether he could join because he wasn't a permanent resident. Later, he applied through a recruitment drive at his university. He did an induction and was assigned to a unit.

Five-and-a-half years later, Vivek still serves as a first responder. Even though he works full-time, he dedicates 20 to 30 hours per week to volunteer service. The experience has changed him. He's learned skills – like



driving a heavy gauge truck under full lights and sirens – he never imagined he would have. He's developed new interpersonal skills, like how to listen carefully, vital in an emergency. His leadership skills have also grown. He's learned how to make decisions under pressure and how to decide on a course of action on the spot.

Volunteering has enriched Vivek's life. He loves the feeling that comes

from helping people. But there are also challenges.

"Some accident scenes are pretty awful to witness and it's difficult to see people in distress," he says. He's had to learn to control his emotions; to concentrate on the task at hand.

Some in Vivek's community don't understand why he gives his time for free. "They think it's a waste of time," he says. Yet many see how he's benefited from the experience. A couple of friends have decided to join too. He's found that most Australians are positive about his involvement. "They often have the misconception we are paid for our work but when they realise we are volunteers they want to know more, particularly about why I got involved." They often ask about his cultural background, too.

What Vivek thinks about with most pleasure is being able to help the community in small ways. One stormy night he was called to help an elderly Italian man whose roof was leaking. The man was so grateful he invited the unit to stay for dinner, and cooked them pizza in a wood fired oven. Vivek saw the smile on this man's face and went home happy.

Sandbag Filling using the triKIT:

Leaps forward with the Volunteers in mind!



As an SES volunteer, one of the least liked jobs was to fill sandbags - due to the fatigue from holding the bag when having it filled by your colleague, and then having to carry the filled bags from the sand pit to the destination.

There are also a number of other features of this task equally disliked: such as getting soaked while filling the bags, and hands and wrists "cushioning" the shovel when feeding the bag, the accuracy required to get the sand into the bag throat, as well as getting sand in your eyes even with your safety glasses on that have just fogged up as the wind is blowing.

Well, other than getting soaked each time (because we are usually doing this during storm responses), **all of the other issues are now readily eliminated using the triKIT.**



Figure 1 The triKIT – ready to travel to the Sand Pit

BACKGROUND

Developments to create better systems to fill sand bags have been pursued "for ever". As a result there are many options from a range of scoops at one end of the spectrum to large mobile items of equipment costing \$60,000 plus at the other end of the same spectrum.

However, each of the gizmos still has its limitation in the field of WHS (fatigue from bending over or carrying the filled bags, injured wrists, sand in eyes, etc) or Operational issues (including the time to fill the required sand bags, and bag fill variation).



Figure 2 Typical Traditional sandbag filling



Figure 3 More traditional sandbag filling



Figure 4 Sophisticated sandbag filling equipment

The **triKIT** provides bag fill consistency which NONE of the above techniques provide. This consistency enables the barriers and walls to be built from consistently sized "building blocks". As these sandbags are all the same size, the wall builders are not exposed to dramatic variation in the lifting and placement of the "building blocks" - that variation is a significant source of manual handling back injury. Also, the **triKIT** is easier to use and faster.

THE TRIKIT

In 2018, as a result of extensive sandbagging experience, I created a new concept as the basis for a sandbag filling system, and developed it

progressively until it reached a status that I was satisfied with it.

The objectives were:

- » To reduce fatigue
- » To reduce potential for back, hand and eye injury
- » To be more productive
- » To create a more practical system of sandbagging
- » To result in the same bag fill no matter who fills the sandbags
- » To create a cost effective solution rather than "just another approach"

Once these objectives had been achieved (*), the new system was named: "**triKIT Sandbagging System**", or **triKIT** for short. It is composed of three different items:



Figure 5 The Sand Bag Filler (SBF)

THE SAND BAG FILLER (SBF)

- 1 per triKIT

This unit ensures that all bags are the same size, while eliminating hand strike (from the shovel), and taking all eyes away from the sand shovelling vicinity, to minimise getting sand in your eyes.



Figure 7 The One Man Stand (OMS)

THE ONE MAN STAND (OMS)

- 2 per triKIT

The One Man Stand provides the locator for the SBF on The Cart. It also provides a convenient "tool" to remove the filled sand bags from the SBF, and later retain the filled bags during transport from the sand pit on TC.

Why 2 OMSs ?

Exactly the same rationale as for the Cart – as the OMS is attached to each Cart (permanently).



Figure 8 The Cart with OMS fitted



Figure 6 The Cart (TC)

THE CART (TC)

- 2 per triKIT

The Cart provides a convenient height platform to work on while filling the sandbags with the SBF and later enables delivery of the filled bags without any lifting at the sand pit.

Why 2 Carts ?

To maximise productivity, once the first Cart is loaded with filled sandbags, it can be used to deliver the filled bags by Team member #1 (TM#1), while the second cart (now holding the SBF) can have the empty bags fitted by TM#2 and bag filling started by TM#2. When TM#1 returns with the first Cart, the SBF can be removed after filling is completed from Cart #1 to Cart #2.

Hence, the system has its productivity boosted.

(I must acknowledge the excellent contribution made by my colleagues at Lake Macquarie City SES Unit. They contributed their comments and thoughts unselfishly, leading to superior individual item designs as well as a more practical and user friendly sandbagging system. Thank you.*

I also wish to thank the Unit's Commander for allowing this development to be undertaken at the Unit, in the real situation, thus enabling the development of the triKIT to face (and stand up to) the fire of reality.



Figure 9 triKIT with sand bags fitted and filled

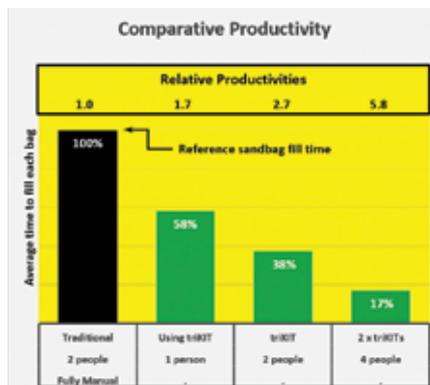
PERFORMANCE VALIDATION

The development of this kit has taken four years, with numerous incremental steps along that path. It was used to fill the sandbags during the storm seasons in 2018, 2019, 2020 and the March storm of 2021.

During this time, the progressively modified units have been used operationally, with the ultimate test during the March storms of 2021. During that storm approximately 2,000 sandbags were filled by Instantaneous volunteers alone, in one afternoon and the following morning !! These volunteers had no prior SES training and had never seen this kit prior to that event.

Its availability (even though remaining in its developmental form) has changed the attitude of the LMQ members significantly to the sandbagging task from “stepping back” to “stepping forward” upon request for sandbag filling assistance.

The following productivity comparison has been made based on sand bag filling operations:



TRIKIT COMPARISON WITH THE TRADITIONAL SANDBAGGING APPROACH

Elaboration of the benefits of the **triKIT** versus traditional sandbagging task would take significant verbiage. Hence, it has been summarised in the following tabulation.

Written by **Tim Kirkness**

SES Volunteer from June 2015

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MANUAL SANDBAG FILLING COMPARISON

Ref	Issue	Traditional manual sandbag filling	
1	Task acceptance	Unenthusiastic	Enthusiastic
2	Training	Main issues to be addressed - WHS & bag fill	No WHS or bag fill issues
3	Ease of use	Easy – skill required to establish bag fill	Much Easier – no fill skill required
4	# of people to fill bags	Two	Two preferred, but one OK!
5	# bags filled at a time	One	Six
6	Posture to fill bags	Poor for bag holder	Vastly improved – good posture for both members
7	Fatigue	The team will potentially fatigue after 20 minutes at the task (and require replacement)	Limited by design – estimated (for 2 man team) to be 120 minutes prior to team experiencing fatigue – and require team replacement
8	Carrying Sand bags	All bags required to be manually carried to destination	Transported on The Cart from pit to destination
9	Filled bag size variation	Significant variation in size: 10kg to 20kg ie 100% variation.	No variation in size 15kg for wet sand Any person, any Unit
10	Productivity	Reference this approach as 100% of time	Est (2 people) only 38% time ie nominally 2.7 times more productive than the traditional method. OR less than half people are required to complete the same task (before allowing for replacement teams to cover fatigue !)
11	Shovel Selection	Preferably round nose	Preferably square nose
12	Transportability for remote tasks	Readily	Totally portable for remote deployment
13	Corrosion	Not relevant	None
14	Durability	Excellent	Robust - Excellent
15	Special features	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Bags are held by SBF for filling (not by colleague) » Instructions on side of SBF » triKIT can be used by one, two or three people in the team (with productivity increasing with additional members)

WHERE DO I BUY THIS KIT?

This Kit is manufactured and supplied by Trident Plastic Engineering Pty Ltd

The triKIT is manufactured and supplied by:



Website www.tridentplastic.com.au

Email info@tridentplastic.com.au

Telephone 02 4954 5455

Location Cardiff, NSW Australia



Vale – Trevor Cockerill

Trevor joined the NSW SES Hurstville Unit in September 1994 and moved into operations after completing SES Induction training. He quickly became a valuable member of the operations team and mentored many new recruits who would join the service over the years to come.

The first of many challenging events Trevor was involved in was the Fathers Day Storms in 1996 and the Sydney Fires that impacted suburbs in Sutherland Shire in 1997. Trevor conducted logistical support during the fires, driving Hurstville's 'Troopie' multiple times to Menai transporting personnel and supplies, and witnessing first hand the flames travelling up the valley over the Woronora River.

Trevor spent many hours assisting the community with Community Education events, as well as operations and logistics support to the local Lions Club for their annual Spring Festival. He dedicated numerous hours to the operations team when the unit was operational and received the State Medal for his support



during the Hunter and Central Coast Storms in 2007. He was appointed Deputy Operations Officer and then Operations Officer at the unit, demonstrating his experience and knowledge of SES operations to all those who were lucky enough to work with him. Always supportive, Trevor was happy to lend a hand in any given situation without hesitation and always with a smile on his face.

Honouring the fallen was of equal importance to Trevor and his attendance at Dawn Services and the NSW Emergency Service Volunteers Memorial Service would become an annual commitment with other



unit members. Trevor was awarded numerous long service awards and medals during his tenure, with the most recent awards being the National Medal in 2010 and the NSW SES Long Service Award for 20 years service in 2015. Trevor retired in 2017 after almost 24 years as a volunteer for the NSW SES and his long service was celebrated by his family and SES friends upon retirement.

Trevor is sadly missed by all past and present NSW SES members and we honour the kind and generous man that we had the pleasure of calling our friend. Rest easy now Trevor, with love from the team at Hurstville SES.

Vale – Stuart Warren

Stuart Warren (SINGE) sadly passed away on Tuesday, Sept 21 at Liverpool Hospital, after battling leukemia for a few months. Cheryl, also a member of the Campbelltown SES unit, and his two adult children were thankfully able to be by his side when he passed.

Singe started volunteering 22 years ago and will always be a valued and much-loved member of the Unit. He quickly progressed to a trainer and a team leader, always being the first to offer help and encouragement to members, he did this in an unassuming way.

Singe had a real passion for flood rescue and was instrumental in bringing flood rescue to the Unit. As Deputy Rescue Officer for Flood Rescue, he instigated swim training and flood activities at the local Council pools for members to maintain their

fitness and skills.

The Campbelltown members will remember his quiet and patient approach when training them., however Singe was also known for his antics and that is how he got name!

Singe had a wicked and dry sense of humour, often bringing a smile to those around him and making them laugh. While working at Liverpool Hospital he was able to convince a few people that the hospital lift didn't just go up and down, but it also went sideways!

A quiet achiever, he was a reliable operator, excellent teacher and faithful friend, Singe always had your back and he will be sadly missed by all of Campbelltown unit and many members of the SES state-wide. We all send our condolences and support to his partner Cheryl and his children.

Rest in Peace Singe



Vale – Athol Price

August 1942 to July 2021

Stalwart member of the NSW SES – Athol Price passed away peacefully at home on 7th July 2021.

Athol was an active member of the Tumut SES unit for 37 years, with the majority of this time in a leadership and mentoring role.

In April 1984 after transferring to Tumut with NSW Police, Athol joined the NSW SES at the request of the then Local Controller Noel Dent, bringing with him his previous leadership skills, Water Police, Marine Rescue skills and prowess as a motor mechanic, all that would be utilised by the SES during his time with the Service. Athol served as a Member of the NSW Police Force from 1967 until his retirement as Inspector in 1997.

In 1990 Athol was appointed Deputy Local Controller of the Tumut Unit – a role he held for over 30 years providing immeasurable support to the Local Controller, SES members and Region Staff.

In February 1985, Athol, keen to become more involved in the local community, also joined the Tumut Rescue Squad, part of NSW VRA where he was elected Squad President, a role he held until the Rescue Squad and the SES combined in October 2002. Also in the

VRA he held the role of Area Coordinator mentoring and working with squads across the southwest of NSW.

In 2002, it became increasingly apparent that the small rural town of Tumut could not sustain two volunteer emergency service organisations essentially running in parallel, it was decided to combine the Rescue Squad with the Tumut SES Unit under one common banner being the NSW SES. During this transition period, Athol worked closely with the Tumut Shire Council, the then Director General of the NSW SES Brigadier General Phillip McNamara and the SES Local Controller to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Athol was an accredited Rescue Operator with the State Rescue Board and had involvement in some major rescue operations, including the Talbingo Mountain bus crash, team support for Thredbo Landslide, flood operations including the major events during 2010, 2012 and 2016 and the Adelong Royal Hotel collapse as well as assisting with GLR audits across the Murrumbidgee Region.

Athol was a large presence within the former Murrumbidgee Region and in particular the GLR/Roadcrash



rescue space and due to his nature and his strong mechanical knowledge, he developed a solid rapport and earning the respect of members across all the emergency agencies in the region.

Described by many as the “quintessential gentleman”, Athol was a mentor, a friend and a calming supportive man to so many. He was a man of dignity, kindness and strong sense of community, he was always to first to arrive and the last to leave and we are all better for having known him, worked with and alongside him in the NSW State Emergency Service.

As said at Athol’s funeral recently - “The world is a safer and a better place due to the life of Athol Price, and it is always a little bit of a sadder place with his passing.”

Vale Athol John Price.



Volunteers from St Arnaud Unit use the new St Arnaud Flood Study to prepare for possible flooding.

New flood information helps the St Arnaud Unit prepare for flooding!

The St Arnaud Unit are excited that the St Arnaud Flood Study has recently been completed by Water Technology. St Arnaud is frequently impacted by flooding, being located in the upper Lexel Creek Catchment. St Arnaud Creek, a tributary of Lexel Creek flows through the centre of St Arnaud, and often causes significant flood damage. Three recent significant flood events that impacted St Arnaud include September 2010, January 2011 and November 2018. During the 2018 flood event 50mm of rainfall was recorded to fall in 1 hour causing significant damages to buildings and roads in St Arnaud.

Matthew Decker, the St Arnaud Unit Controller said “during this flood event there was very little warning time available due to the very high rainfall intensity. Having access to flood maps is critical to guiding where sandbagging is needed and for communicating with the community where the flood water will go before the flood arrives.” Matthew thanked the Northern Grampians Shire Council for completing the St Arnaud Flood Study, “which will be invaluable for VICSES to use to raise the St Arnaud community flood risk awareness and resilience.”



Flooding in St Arnaud during the 2018 flood event along Crone Lane near Alma Street.



Stawell Unit volunteers carrying out an injured bushwalker from the Mackenzie Falls track.

Grampians expected to be busy!

The VICSES Stawell Unit are actively promoting bush walking key safety messages for visitors to the Grampians National Park to try to reduce the number of call outs they receive. On average the Stawell Unit respond to approximately 180 request for assistance per year, a large number of these request are within the Grampians National Park.

Most of these request for assistance involve carrying out people injured or missing when bushwalking.

With the combination of the Melbourne Covid restrictions being lifted this week and with the Grampians National Park Peaks Trail soon to be opened, this is likely to lead to an increase in demand on Stawell VICSES volunteers as well as other emergency service agencies in the region. The Stawell VICSES Unit Controller Alan Blight said, "we are excited that more tourists will be visiting our region, but we want people to actively think about their safety before they go bush walking by making sure you've got appropriate footwear, food and water before you go." To improve bushwalker safety and preparedness we encourage people to:

- » Let friends or family know where they are going before you leave
- » Take food and water with you
- » Wear appropriate footwear and clothes for the conditions
- » Have a fully charged phone and important phone numbers with you
- » Check the weather and fire danger ratings

It's fantastic that people are getting back into the outdoors, but we want

people to be prepared if something goes wrong. Location information challenges are particularly difficult for *open space* locations with no set addresses such as beaches, parks and trails.

Alan said, "we encourage all bushwalkers to be familiar with emergency markers along bushwalking tracks throughout the Grampians National Park. They are designed to pinpoint your exact location during an emergency in public open spaces or a hard to define places. They display three letters and three numbers which gives us an exact location of where the markers are."



Volunteers from Stawell VICSES Unit, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria assist to raise tourist awareness of the bush walking emergency markers.

For more information regarding how to plan for emergencies when on holidays go to the VICSES website: <https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/plan-and-stay-safe/on-holidays>

Also refer to the Parks Victoria website for updates regarding the Grampians National Park bush walking tracks: <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/safety-in-nature>

2023



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