

The official journal of the NSW SES Volunteers Association

the

Volunteer

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Federal Labor proudly supports our SES Volunteers, who serve our communities with courage and compassion in times of disaster.

Thank you for keeping our communities safe.



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Murray Watt**



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Tanya Plibersek MP**



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Pat Conroy MP**



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Dan Repacholi MP



Senator Tony Sheldon



Anne Stanley MP



Susan Templeman MP

Authorised P Erickson, ALP 5/9 Sydney Ave, Barton ACT 2600

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kim.davis@nswsesva.org.au

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shannon.crofton@nswsesva.org.au

Managing Director

Erin Pogmore (Metro Zone)
erin.pogmore@nswsesva.org.au

Director

Megan Hamblin (Wellington)
megan.hamblin@nswsesva.org.au

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Mental Health Coordinator

Adam Jones
Member Benefits Coordinator

Teddy Haryjanto
Mental Health Coordinator

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Member Recognition Coordinator
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CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM 1800 626 800

CONTRIBUTIONS



Please send all content to:

The Volunteer Editor:

Carlee Maccoll

Unit 1, 2-6 Lindsay Street, Rockdale NSW 2216

Phone: 1300 0 SES VA

Email: editor@nswsesva.org.au

Content for *The Volunteer*

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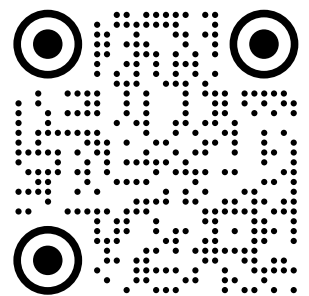
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JIHAD DIB MP MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

As we approach the end of 2023, I would like to reflect on what a year it has been. Having been your Minister for Emergency Services for a little over eight months, I feel privileged to be in this position and to have worked with so many SES volunteers. What strikes me every time I talk to an SES volunteer or member is their passion and dedication to their unit and local community.

The past three months have been particularly busy, and I have had the opportunity to visit SES units, be part of medal presentations, observe internal SES and multi-agency flood rescue exercises, and attend station openings.

After years of high rainfall, and what was the SES's busiest year on record in 2022, there has been a significant shift towards warmer and drier conditions. But the SES continues to work on how it responds to flooding disasters and ensuring volunteers are even better equipped to keep communities safe, as well as managing what has been a busy start to storm season.

Last month I had the pleasure of announcing, alongside Commissioner York and NSW Premier Chris Minns, \$25 million in funding for almost 200 new vessels, vehicles and equipment to build the SES's flood response capabilities. The vessels have been designed in a way that makes it easier for volunteers to rescue people in floodwaters, while the vehicles have been fitted with 'vehicle as a node' Wi-Fi technology so volunteers can still communicate on radios even if their normal connection drops out.

The way we respond to natural disasters needs to keep evolving, and interoperability is an area we must

be proactive in. Last month, I was incredibly proud to watch on as rescue personnel from across the country and even as far away as New York emulated flood rescues in challenging simulated conditions as part of the SES's Flood Rescue Symposium. It was an opportunity for agencies to get together and discuss best practice in flood response, and it's an example of how the SES is working towards greater interoperability.

On a more local level, Commissioner York and I had the pleasure of opening the new Auburn SES headquarters building as the unit celebrated its 40th anniversary. The new building has additional storage facilities and amenities, but the most important feature is that it was designed by and for the local unit members.

I am immensely proud of the SES. With almost 11,000 volunteers across that state, I am comforted that when we need help, it will always



be there. Whether you are in your first year or a long-standing member – or somewhere in between – I would like to say thank you. Thank you for all your work, the sacrifices you make, and your commitment to helping others. I wish you a happy and safe holiday and look forward to what the new year will bring.

“
It has been a privilege to lead
our membership as we continue
our mission of saving lives and
creating safer communities
”



CARLENE YORK APM
NSW SES COMMISSIONER

Christmas is right around the corner and Storm Season is in full swing, with windy and wet conditions taking trees down and causing flash flooding. Operationally, we have continued to respond to a large number of storm and weather events, the most significant of which saw us establish a Flood Rescue Area of Operations in our Southern Zone.

Thanks to NSW SES members who have responded to floods and storms. I'd also like to acknowledge our members who have assisted NSW Rural Fire Service in support roles and the Department of Primary Industries with the Varroa Mite response.

Our members have also come together for some fantastic training events over the past few months, particularly to further enhance our flood rescue capability. In early November we held a four-day Flood Rescue Symposium which included practical training, presentations and opportunities to meet flood rescue experts from across the globe and every state and territory in Australia. The symposium was convened by the NSW SES as the lead agency for flood rescue, and was attended by representatives from NSW Police, NSW Ambulance, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service, VRA Rescue NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, Marine Rescue NSW, and interstate and international representatives. The event provided an opportunity for flood rescue experts to share, learn and take best-practice flood rescue skills back to their broader teams, with flow-on benefits for their respective communities.

The frequency and scale of flood disasters, particularly in recent times, demands consistent high-level flood rescue capability across



emergency agencies within NSW, as well as Australia and internationally. NSW SES has been conducting a number of multi-agency land-based flood rescue operator courses in Western Sydney. We have also continued to conduct Exercise Noah, a flood rescue training opportunity, in a number of zones.

Meanwhile, our Bush Search and Rescue members tested their navigation skills in a plane search at Barrington Tops, which is a regular feature on the training calendar, allowing operators to hone their search and rescue capabilities.

The NSW SES also featured in several episodes of Channel 9's Missing Persons series which aired recently. This series provides great insights into the work, skill and dedication of volunteers and the vital role we play in supporting police and other emergency services.

Out in our communities, members held engaging events including 'Women Helping Women' workshops, and also ran youth internship and mentoring programs at many units over the past few months. We also launched our Spontaneous Volunteering Project, which will provide greater capability to many areas of the service in the future.

I'm pleased to let you know that, as chosen by our members, the NSW SES Availability Solution will be called myAvailability. The myAvailability mobile app will be launched in



December and will provide our members with a simple way to manage their availability and assist the community. The Volunteer Voice Survey has also been released and I look forward to seeing your feedback.

Lastly, I'd like to say a big thank you as I mark four years as NSW SES Commissioner, which has gone so quickly. A lot has happened since I first took on the role, and we have faced a lot together – both challenging events and exciting changes. I could not have imagined what would occur in those four years, and the demands placed upon all our members to respond to community needs. I have been absolutely overwhelmed with the passion, commitment and professionalism of everyone in NSW SES. It has been a privilege to lead our membership as we continue our mission of saving lives and creating safer communities.

Stay safe.

CHECKING IN ON OUR ORANGE FAMILY

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

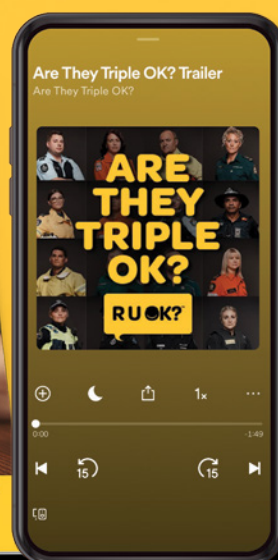


Ashleigh and her crew

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

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

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



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



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

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

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At TAFE NSW our goal is to help change lives. Whether improving crisis or emergency management and leadership skills, bushfire awareness or multi-agency communication skills, the National Centre for Emergency Management Studies (NCEMS) has a course that can get you and your team emergency ready. NCEMS is a specialist department within TAFE NSW, committed to providing nationally recognised qualifications to help you better function in an emergency.

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Working with Spontaneous Volunteers



Multi-agency AIMS



Exercise Management for Emergencies



Basic Wildfire Awareness



As the year comes to an end it's a perfect moment to pause and reflect on the journey we've undertaken together, celebrating the milestones and accomplishments that have defined the past 12 months.

Here at the VA, our dedicated team has been tirelessly working on completing our rural retreat and training facility at Windellema, and we are thrilled to announce that the grand unveiling is just around the corner. In the meantime, we extend a warm invitation to our volunteers to book the property for a day (or more) of relaxation and unwinding with fellow volunteers,

family & friends. Simply drop us an email at office@nswsesva.org.au to secure your spot.

In line with our commitment to volunteer & community well-being, we've proudly rolled out the First Responders Resilience Program throughout NSW in collaboration with Ordinary Courage and NEMA. This quarter we have held training events at Glen Innes, Wagga Wagga, Coffs Harbour, Lithgow, Shoalhaven, Kempsey, Ballina, Goulburn, and Hawkesbury. These training events, open to all first responders and community members, have seen a remarkable turnout of NSW SES

Volunteers at each location. If you've been part of these sessions and would like to share your experiences through a testimonial or feedback, we welcome your contributions via our office email.

For those eager to take an active role in our program as a co-facilitator, we encourage you to reach out to us. Your participation in the delivery of our FRRP program is an invaluable contribution, and we look forward to discussing this exciting opportunity with you.

To stay updated on program details and upcoming dates and locations, please visit www.sesvaevents.com.au.



2024 CALENDAR

A big thank you to everyone who submitted images and participated in the selection process for our upcoming calendar. Calendars are currently in the printing stage and will be distributed before the Christmas break to those who've placed orders. If you haven't secured yours yet, simply provide your contact information, postal address, and SES unit to our office email. Remember, these calendars are distributed free of charge to VA members.

THE VOLUNTEER MAGAZINE

As we eagerly anticipate the New Year, the first edition of The Volunteer Magazine in 2024 is set for release in April. If you have content to contribute, please send it in by 13th March 2023, to editor@nswsesva.org.au.

MERCHANDISE

In the spirit of the festive season, we're delighted to announce a special Christmas offer on our merchandise. Enjoy a 20% discount on all stock throughout December by using the code XMAS23, valid until 31st December 2023.

Please be aware that shipping will experience a brief delay from 20th December - 11th January 2024, due to the temporary closure of our warehouse over the Christmas period.

2023 AT A GLANCE

As we glance back at 2023, it's evident that being a NSW SES Volunteer is more than a commitment; it's an immersive journey of teamwork, camaraderie, and personal growth. It transcends the ordinary, encouraging volunteers to embrace

new challenges and discover untapped potential. Courage and integrity become guiding principles, shaping every action.

Volunteering with NSW SES is a transformative endeavor, a dedication to resilience, community, and the pursuit of a safer future.

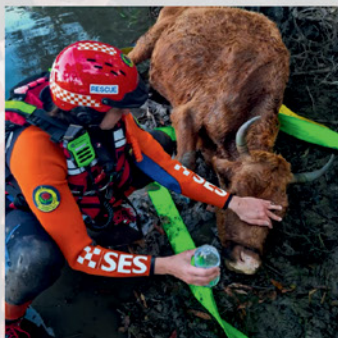
To all NSW SES Volunteers, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your commitment and dedication. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year & stay safe in your volunteering endeavours!

Carlee Maccoll
Editor

2023

At a glance...

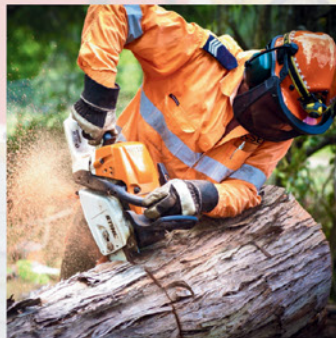
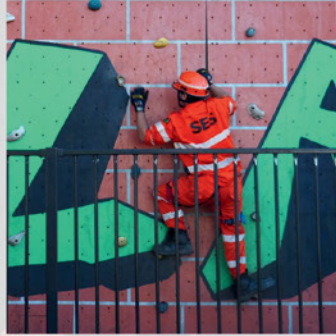




2023



2023



Embracing the NSW SES Volunteer life is more than just giving time—it's joining a tight-knit team, thriving on camaraderie, diving into uncharted territories of learning and experiences, and summoning the courage and integrity you never knew you had...

2023

NSW SES Youth Intern Trial 2023



NSW SES and the Volunteer Strategy team would like to congratulate the 73 students from across the state for their recent participation in the 2023 Youth Internship Program trial.

The trial took place across 8 units (Cowra and Cootamundra (SHZ), Broken Hill (WTZ), Shellharbour (SEZ), Murwillumbah, Ballina, Dorrigo & Casino (NEZ)) with students participating from 22 schools over a 9 week period.

The program provided students with fantastic hands-on experience along with the opportunity to get involved and build networks with the emergency services within their local communities. Together with their peers, they have shared in an incredible experience stepping into the shoes of an NSW SES volunteer.

The success of the program has truly highlighted the important and close relationships that SES units have with their local communities. Feedback collected from the trial further demonstrated the importance of community engagement within schools, including:

- » Increased awareness of the role NSW SES carries out in the community
- » Improved community capability and resilience when faced with storms, floods, and tsunamis
- » Increase in youth participation and membership at units
- » Developed informal brand ambassadors in the local community
- » The program has sparked new energy and ideas to NSW SES

We thank everyone who have championed this program and to our volunteer members for creating such a positive experience, sharing their knowledge and stories with our young interns. With the success of the trial,

the Volunteer Strategy team will soon commence planning to roll out the program in further Zones throughout 2024. Watch this space!

See what the interns had to say about the program!

“
The different experiences each week and how they were all engaging

“
Getting to meet new people and see what you all do but going out on the boats was my most favourite

“
Great time, great people, lots of things to do and learn

“
I enjoyed how flexible and understanding the crew is and how they truly talk to you like a person rather than just a student



Ballina Unit



Murwillumbah Unit



Shellharbour Unit



Cootamundra Unit

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

The Internship Program trial has filled our interns with a love of orange, which has spread to families and their communities. We are excited to welcome onboard new members who are aged 16+ and look forward to the many more interns who expressed their plans to join SES as soon as they turn 16.

Volunteer Strategy would like to thank the Volunteers Association for their support in providing a keepsake to the interns.



Generation 1 Light Rescue Vehicle (LRV)

Hold onto your helmets SES Volunteers, because the NSW SES Fleet Replacement Program has some exciting news! We are proud to introduce the Gen 1 Light Rescue Vehicle (LRV) to our Fleet.

Built on a Toyota Landcruiser 70 series single cab chassis, this new vehicle will provide a significant enhancement to our response capabilities and efforts. The LRV is highly capable, fit-for purpose and is designed and equipped to enable NSW SES Volunteers to efficiently undertake General Land Rescue (GLR) responses in rugged, remote and difficult access areas.

Equipped with a set of eWXT (waterproof) rescue tools and essential Milwaukee M18 power tools, the LRV also features manual transmission, front and rear live axle suspension with diff locks and has rear track correction (rear track width made the same as the front to improve cross country mobility and vehicle safety). The LRV is fitted with the Vehicle as a Node (VaaN) Smart Connect System and UHF CB radio. In addition, the vehicle includes a long rear trundle drawer with a lockout mechanism, has a centre console



fridge, and has a central locking system fitted to body lockers and cab chassis doors.

The LRV is specially designed to provide the high mobility needed to reach areas inaccessible by larger trucks and is an ideal choice for navigating through steep and rugged

terrain, soft farm paddocks, beaches, sand dunes, and fire trails or areas with dense foliage.

The first LRV will be delivered in August, with a total of sixteen vehicles scheduled for delivery to Unit's throughout this financial year. This new addition will complement

a Unit's Medium or Heavy Rescue Vehicle and is allocated where there is a defined capability need, risk profile and demonstrated frequent occurrence of remote/difficult access rescue incidents.

The LRV also has the capability to undertake flood, storm and other support operations where required and has been designed to transport an Ark Angel rescue raft on the roof if needed. With a single cab layout, this vehicle can be driven with a standard Class C licence. Its range of features extends to adjustable scene lighting and a towing capacity of up to 3.5 tonnes.

More than just a new set of wheels, the LRV represents a new capability within our fleet that reinforces our commitment to creating safer communities and ultimately, saving lives. Look for additional information about the new LRV available on the Fleet home page in mySES. This will soon include the Vehicle Equipment List (VEL), Product Description Sheet and LRV Familiarisation Video.



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.**

The Hon. Sonia Hornery MP

State Member for Wallsend
Deputy Speaker



67 Nelson Street,
Wallsend NSW 2287
wallsend@parliament.nsw.gov.au
(02) 4950 0955

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THANK YOU SES VOLUNTEERS

We appreciate your ongoing sacrifice to keep our communities safe through your dedicated service.

THE NATIONALS
for Regional NSW

GURMESH SINGH MP

Member for Coffs Harbour

Shadow Minister for Tourism, Emergency Services and the North Coast
coffsharbour@parliament.nsw.gov.au (02) 6652 6500



Youth Internship

Over ten weeks in term three, NSW SES Murwillumbah, Cootamundra, Ballina, Casino, Dorrigo and Shellharbour units across the state, hosted 72 youth internship students from twenty schools.

The program gave the students the opportunity as temporary members to experience first hand what its like to volunteer with the NSW SES.

Students participated in a various range of activities such as sandbagging, first aid, hand tools, searches and navigation.

The program also introduced these students to other emergency services with discussions from Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Police, Rural Fire Service and NSW Ambulance.

As well as many new practical skills, students take away with them new leadership skills and a greater understanding of what its like to volunteer in the community, with many already applying to become full members and joining their local unit.

After then ten weeks, all students celebrated with a graduation, inviting their families and communities to celebrate with them.

Congratulations to all units, members, schools and students who were involved in this program.

A very big thank you to the Volunteers Association for the Paddy Dolls for each student.



Litigating with the SES

Litigation is 'the process of taking legal action' in a court or Tribunal.

This article will discuss the issue of members 'taking legal action' against the SES. For members seeking to review decisions of SES management this will most likely be an action in the NSW Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (NCAT) though there could be actions in the courts (Local, District or Supreme).

THE DEFENDANT

The State Emergency Service does not exist as a legal entity. *The State Emergency Service Act 1989* (NSW) ('the SES Act') says that there shall be a State Emergency Service¹ but says nothing about its legal standing. The Office of the SES is an executive agency, part of the Department of Communities and Justice.² That means any legal action against the SES should properly name 'the State of New South Wales' as the defendant.³ The State of New South Wales is of course a very large defendant with infinite resources.

THE STATE AS MODEL LITIGANT

States understand that they are significantly better resourced than nearly anyone that will try to bring legal action against them. Recognising this power imbalance, the states, including NSW, are expected to behave as model litigants.⁴

The obligation to act as a model litigant requires more than merely acting honestly and in accordance with the law and court rules ... Essentially it requires that the State and its agencies act with complete propriety, fairly and in accordance with the highest professional standards...⁵

A model litigant must not 'require the other party to prove a



matter which the State or agency knows to be true' and must not take advantage 'of a claimant who lacks the resources to litigate a legitimate claim'.⁶

THE FACTS

Litigation is however a place to challenge contested facts and to argue both the interpretation of the law and how it applies to the facts. Being a model litigant does not deny the state the right to resist claims, to challenge allegations and to require applicants to prove facts that are not admitted. As the policy says:

The State or an agency is not prevented from acting firmly and properly to protect its interests. The obligation does not prevent all legitimate steps being taken in pursuing litigation, or from testing or defending claims made.⁷

Even if the model litigant should not require proof of known facts, litigation is adversarial which means it is up to the litigants to bring evidence to establish their case – 'those who assert must prove'.

Claims that a decision maker e.g a senior officer has determined to cancel a person's membership or revoke their appointment, has acted from improper

motives, to advance their own interests or to favour someone else are serious allegations. The more serious the allegation the more the court or tribunal must feel persuaded that the allegation is true which in turn requires detailed evidence that in many cases will be unavailable.⁸

THE LAW

A tribunal or court is not merely concerned with the facts, they are also concerned with the law. First, in any claim there are things that must be established to win. A litigant needs to know what needs to be proved and bring relevant evidence. Only evidence that is relevant to those elements will be considered.⁹ Many self-represented litigants hope that if they come and explain their story and their perspective the court or tribunal will intervene to grant justice but that is not the process. The court is a court of law and can only give a remedy if the applicant can show that the necessary elements to give the desired legal remedy have been established.

Second, a litigant needs to understand the jurisdiction of the court or tribunal. This is particularly important in NCAT. Tribunals like NCAT only have jurisdiction where

legislation specifically provides that the tribunal can review decisions.¹⁰ There are no provisions in the SES Act that are reviewable by NCAT. That means that anyone who wants to challenge a decision by the SES including decisions on disciplinary matters would need to seek a remedy in the courts rather than NCAT.¹¹

In seeking to review of administrative decisions, there are two types of reviews – a merit review and a judicial review. A merit review is where the Tribunal gets to remake the decision as if it was the original decision maker and it can make whatever decision it thinks should have been made. A challenge to a decision made under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) (the GIPA Act) is a merits review.¹²

A judicial review, on the other hand is much more limited and only allows the Court or the Tribunal to intervene if the original decision maker did not act according to law, e.g they took into account irrelevant material, failed to consider relevant material or made a decision that was 'so unreasonable that no reasonable person acting reasonably could have made it'.¹³ The SES Act says that the Commissioner may revoke an appointment as Local Commander 'at any time and for any reason'.¹⁴ You can see how difficult it would be to get judicial review of that decision given the Commissioner's unlimited discretion that is there are no 'out of bounds' reasons.

In cases where judicial review is available a court or tribunal will not set aside a decision even if the presiding member thinks they would have made a different decision. Where legislation has given discretion to an officer, such as the SES Commissioner, the tribunal's role is to make sure the Commissioner has acted according to law. If they have then the legislature has intended that is their decision that is the final decision.

One ground for judicial review is a denial of natural justice. Natural justice requires that a person is given an opportunity to be heard or make representations before a decision is made that is against their interest. In *Gilmour v Waddell*,¹⁵ a case challenging a decision by Queensland SES to terminate the applicant's membership, Justice Ryan said:

Natural justice requires a fair hearing, not a fair outcome (as judged by a person in the applicant's position). The focus is on the process not the actual decision.

Natural justice requires someone in the applicant's position to be informed of the accusations made against them and to be given an opportunity to state their case. It also requires the decision maker to be free from bias.

In *Castle v Director General State Emergency Service* Mr Castle was successful in arguing that he had been denied natural justice, but the Court refused to reinstate him to the position of Unit Controller on the basis that by the time it had come to court his appointment would have ended in any event, and the unit had been deregistered.¹⁶

COSTS

It is expensive to litigate. *Jay & Anor v Petrikas (No. 4)*¹⁷ involved volunteers with the NSW Rural Fire Service who, after being cleared in a disciplinary hearing, sued those who had lodged complaints and the District Superintendent. Taking the matter to the NSW District Court the plaintiffs converted their win to a loss. They were unable prove the elements of 'malicious falsehood'. They were ordered to pay legal costs in excess of \$100,000.

The damage that the plaintiffs claimed was the cost of engaging lawyers to deal with the internal disciplinary proceedings. There is no doubt that those who chose to engage lawyers to respond to allegations will face costs. Correspondence with the SES VA has asked whether an agency like the SES should fund the legal costs of those who are defending themselves or challenging decisions and that such an action would be consistent with the obligation to not take advantage 'of a claimant who lacks the resources to litigate a legitimate claim'.¹⁸

The Model Litigant rules do not require such generosity. All manner of people sue the state and the state is in no way obligated to help fund claims against it. With respect to paying the legal fees in cases where the government is the claimant and the member is responding to a claim or allegation, there is also no obligation to meet the respondent's legal costs.

It has been suggested that members who are subject to disciplinary allegations should be able to call on the government's insurer – the Treasury Managed Fund (TMF). The argument is that if someone outside the SES sued a member, the TMF would meet the legal costs of defending the claim. So, it might be argued, if the SES makes a complaint about a member and subjects them to a disciplinary process, the TMF should likewise meet the costs of defending the claim. The argument is however flawed.

The TMF is an insurer. It agrees to meet:

... the liabilities of a TMF Agency and specified Covered Individuals, including, but not limited to, public liability, products liability, professional indemnity, environmental impairment liability, liability for claimed misleading representations, aircraft liability, watercraft liability, cyber liability, legal expenses, statutory liability and medical negligence.

Coverage extends to 'Voluntary workers of the TMF agency'.¹⁹

But the insurance applies to claims for 'compensation or damages' and the legal costs involved in defending those claims. Where a member is subject to a disciplinary proceeding or is seeking to challenge an SES decision there is no claim for compensation or damages against that member, in which case the insurance will not apply.

The TMF does cover the

... costs, charges and expenses in relation to any proceeding, inquiry or investigation held or conducted by a regulatory body, a government authority, a self-regulatory body recognised as such by the applicable law or an external administrator of a body corporate, where there is risk of the TMF Agency or Covered Individual incurring a legal liability, or coverage is otherwise in the interest of the TMF;

First, a member who is the subject of a complaint or disciplinary proceedings could not look to the TMF to fund their legal representation as the proceedings do not create a risk of liability for the payment of damages.

Second, although the SES is a government agency, a court and the TMF would interpret 'a regulatory body

[or] a government authority' as an external body such as the Independent Commission against Corruption, WorkSafe, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, the Privacy Commissioner etc. They would not accept that the agencies own internal processes represent a relevant 'inquiry or investigation'.

THE RURAL FIRE SERVICE

The Rural Fire Service (RFS) very helpfully makes its service standards publicly available. *Service Standard 1.1.24 Assistance in Legal Matters for Members of the NSW RFS*²⁰ explains when the RFS will provide legal assistance to members. It says:

To be eligible [for legal assistance], the member must establish that his or her involvement in the proceedings (either civil or criminal) or coronial inquiry relates to official duties and that he or she has a substantial and direct interest in the proceedings

Legal assistance is not available for:

- a. Matters where it is alleged that a member has committed a criminal offence while acting in his/her capacity as a member of the NSW RFS, and the Commissioner is of the view that the member was behaving contrary to the Code of Conduct;
- b. Disciplinary action against the applicant that has been commenced under the Rural Fires Regulation 2013;... [and]
- c. Disputes between individual members.

The SES can be expected to apply a similar policy.

With respect to costs where a member is the applicant in proceedings challenging an SES decision, meeting the costs would be inconsistent with the *Guidelines for The Provision of Ex Gratia Assistance for Legal Representation for Ministers of the Crown, Public Officials and Crown Employees*. Those guidelines say 'Ex gratia assistance will not be provided in actions which have been initiated by a ... public official'.

CONCLUSION

There is not a level playing field. The SES is part of the government, and the government has

lawyers employed to represent the government's interests. The government is expected to be a model litigant but that does not mean that it is required to 'pull its punches' nor is it required to try to level the field by providing legal assistance to those that seek to challenge it.

As a volunteer at various community legal centres this author has often had to explain to people that the law is a self-help tool. Lawyers can tell you what the law says and what your 'rights' are, but the law is not self-executing and it is up to individuals to use the law to obtain their remedy. It can be very hard to persuade agencies, even those you expect are there to protect rights such as Consumer Affairs, or the Fair Work Ombudsman to take action to obtain a remedy for individuals. The law gives consumers and employees rights, but it is up to them to take the matter to court or a relevant tribunal but that is expensive and emotionally draining and technically difficult.

As for costs the SES is under no obligation to fund legal representation for members who are subject to disciplinary proceedings or those that are seeking to challenge decisions made by the Commissioner or her delegate. There is no chance that the Treasury Managed Fund, nor the governments ex gratia legal support, will provide legal assistance to members responding to disciplinary proceedings or seeking to challenge decisions.

This article will provide no comfort to members who are aggrieved by decisions of the SES management and who wish to challenge those decisions. The unfortunate reality is that litigation is an expensive, time consuming, emotionally draining and generally unsatisfactory way to resolve an issue. Litigation is a win-lose situation – someone wins, someone loses. The government may be a model litigant, but they are entitled to defend their position and seek to uphold their decisions. As the cases show, taking matters to NCAT or the courts is rarely successful.

Michael Eburn
AustralianEmergencyLaw.com

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17. [2022] NSWDC 628.
18. Model Litigant Policy for Civil Litigation, [3.2(F)].
19. iCare, Treasury Managed Fund 2021 Statement of Cover, p. 15.
20. https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/8754/1.1.24-Assistance-in-Legal-Matters-for-Members-of-the-NSW-RFS.pdf. That document refers to the Guidelines for The Provision of Ex Gratia Assistance for Legal Representation for Ministers of the Crown, Public Officials and Crown Employees. Who is a 'public official' is not defined, but the RFS is clearly anticipating that this will include volunteers.



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Member for Wyong

Liesl Tesch MP
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David Mehan MP
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Young Emerging Leaders

Each year the National SES Volunteers Association (NSVESVA) provides some funding for up to two Young Emerging Leaders (YELs) from each of the States/Territories to attend the National Memorial Service for fallen Emergency Service personnel.

This service is organised by AFAC and conducted in early May on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin. Many Chief Officers and other dignitaries, such as the Governor General and some Senators, attend this service.

In May 2023 the Young Emerging Leaders from the SES Volunteers, from all states and territories, accompanied by the Chair (Gordon Hall ESM) and Deputy Chair (Dr Faye Bendrups OAM) also attended a special meeting with His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd.) and Mrs Hurley, at the Governor Generals Residence in Yarralumla, Canberra.

The Governor General addressed the group and he spoke about leadership and the positive aspects in relation to disasters and emergencies. Mrs Hurley engaged the group by singing "You are my Sunshine" and the whole group joined in.

A book about the History of the SES in WA was presented by the two young emerging leaders from WA,



Cassidy Kempster (North Shore SES) and Alex Corinaldesi (Cockburn SES).

A Garden Party with many attendees from many countries, followed to celebrate the Coronation of Kings Charles III.

The Young Emerging Leaders from the SES from the States and Territories were;

Alex Bartaska (Vic), Stuart Catt (SA), Alex Corinaldesi (WA), Marie Cunnington (NT), Jamien Frankcombe (Tas), Teghan Hunt (Qld), Cassidy Kempster (WA), Amy Lambert (ACT), David Lang (Qld), Max Moon (NSW), Aidan Pateresen (NSW), Codie Powell (Vic), Torben Smith (ACT), Jay Tanase (Tas)



**ROBYN
PRESTON MP**
Member for **HAWKESBURY**

Merry Christmas and Thank You
SES VOLUNTEERS!



If I can help you, please contact me on:
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Email: hawkesbury@parliament.nsw.gov.au



MELISSA McINTOSH MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR **LINDSAY**

Authorised by Melissa McIntosh, Liberal Party of Australia, 331 High Street, Penrith NSW 2750.



A: 331 High Street, Penrith NSW 2750
P: (02) 4722 0600 **f:** [MelissaMcIntoshMP](#)
E: melissa.mcintosh.mp@aph.gov.au
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Kalbarri National Park Difficult Gorge Rescues



SES Volunteers Association of WA • October 2023 Newsletter

The school holidays have been quite eventful for the Kalbarri SES and their fellow emergency service volunteers, with challenging callouts to 4 Ways Gorge in the Kalbarri National Park.

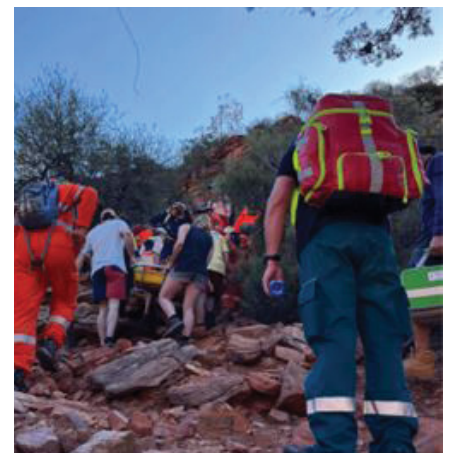
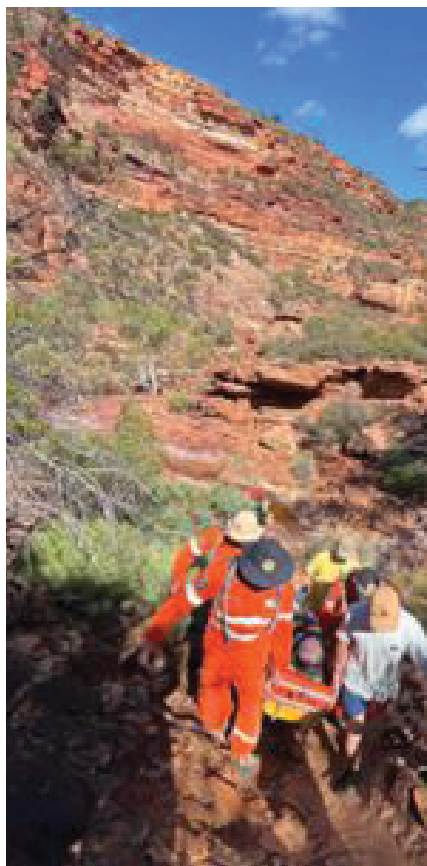
Injured hikers have been rescued from the remote and difficult-to-access area on at least two occasions, which is no small feat. The rescuers had to navigate the rugged terrain of the gorge and the boulder-strewn riverbed to reach the casualties, get them to a safer location for medical attention, and then carry them out of the gorge.

Some smart and resourceful solutions to the various difficulties faced included floating the casualty on an inflatable raft at one stage and loading the stretcher onto the SES 'stretcher mule' to traverse the long sandy final section. Collaboration among the different emergency services, including the Police and Park Rangers, along with volunteers from the Kalbarri SES, the Kalbarri Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, and St John Ambulance, is crucial in situations like this. It's a testament to the dedication and teamwork of all involved that they were able to safely complete these challenging rescue missions and ensure the well-being of the injured hikers.

Efforts like these highlight the importance of trained and dedicated first responders who are willing to go above and beyond to help those in need, especially in difficult-to-access and dangerous locations. It's a reminder of the essential role that emergency service volunteers play in keeping our communities safe and providing assistance when it's needed most.

Contact

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I want to express my gratitude to all the SES Volunteers in my electorate of Bankstown and around NSW for your unwavering commitment, and for going above and beyond to help those who are in need. This is especially true during dangerous and extreme weather conditions when you risk your lives to save others.

I wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe holiday season and New Year.



The Hon. Jihad Dib MP

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

Shop 21/1 Broadway Plaza
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Suite 8, 23 Terminus Street, Castle Hill NSW 2154

9899 7211 alex.hawke.mp@aph.gov.au

alexhawke.au AlexHawkeMPMitchell



Authorised by A. Hawke, Liberal Party of Australia, Suite 8, 23 Terminus St, Castle Hill NSW 2154.

Mountains Mishaps

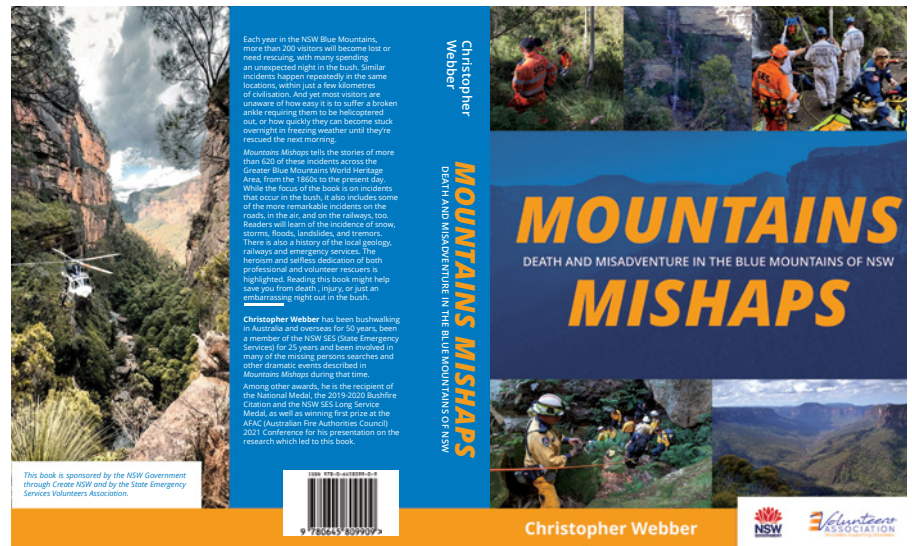
Between 2004 and 2007 nearly 400 people were reported missing in the Blue Mountains region, which led to 200 search and rescue operations and the number increases every year.

Now, a similar number of visitors get lost or need rescuing per year, with many spending an unexpected night in the bush. Most incidents happen in the same locations, within a few kilometres of civilisation. This book is the story of those search and rescue operations.

The Blue Mountains National Park has the highest visitation of any National Park in Australia, more than 4 million visitors per annum. The actual number of incidents is uncertain, as only about 20% of outdoor adventure incidents are reported to the public. Through Freedom of Information requests and interviews with local people, this book aims to help break the silence.

Readers will not only enjoy some gripping adventures, but also learn how to enjoy their trip in the Blue Mountains to the maximum. The over 620 episodes cover from the 1860s to the present day. Most people survived, but there were over 240 untimely deaths. There are in excess of 200 colour photographs and many maps. For the first time, all the Blue Mountains canyons are mapped together, and all the storms and snowfalls are catalogued.

These incidents may have a wide effect on the local community and tourist industry. Up to nine organisations may be involved searching for a single man. For example, one 2013 search involved 1,000 people and lasted four weeks. Another search, involving 400 people, resulted in a miraculous survival and payment of \$200,000 to the survivor, who suffered permanent injuries. One man survived an air crash and a week of freezing temperatures without food in some of the most rugged terrain to found his own airline. A couple got lost in the same place twice in the same weekend, and had to be rescued each time. Another man



tried to cross the rugged, 150 km wide Wollemi National park with only some potatoes and naan bread in his back pack. 99% of missing persons are found, but there are several mysterious disappearances and some murders.

The book has a chapter for each cause of injury or death – 12 in all, plus a Preface, Introduction, and four appendices. Each chapter starts with some personal stories, followed by a description of the hazard, and instructions on how to avoid it. This is followed by other stories arranged in chronological and geographical order.

The focus of the book is on incidents that occur in the bush, but there are some of the more remarkable incidents on the roads, in the air, and on the railways, too. There have been 40 air crashes, for instance. Readers will learn of the incidence of snow, storms, floods, landslides, and tremors. There is also a local history of the geology, railways and the local emergency services. The heroism and selfless dedication of both professional and volunteer rescuers is highlighted. Blue Mountains rescuers have received many awards for their bravery.

This is an important and unique book, featuring prize-winning research,

which anybody with an interest in emergency situations, cars, trains, planes, canyoning, bushwalking, mountain biking, swimming, liloing, rock climbing, and other outdoor activities should read. It could save your life, or at least save you from an embarrassing night in the bush. This book will tell you where to go, what to take, and when. This is a non-academic study that can easily be read in small stages.

This book is sponsored by the NSW Government through Create NSW and by the State Emergency Services Volunteers Association. The research for the book won first prize for a presentation at the AFAC21 Conference.

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CONTACT AUTHOR:

Christopher Webber
M: 0424720676

Mountains Mishaps is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and by the NSW SES Volunteers Association

Keep Calm and Carriage on:

Inaugural NSW Multi-Agency Rail Rescue Exercise on Track for Best Practice Sharing

On the weekend of 27-28 May 2023, volunteers across multiple volunteer rescue agencies in NSW participated in the inaugural Multi-Agency Rail Rescue Training at the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) Rail Yard in Dubbo.

The Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) specialised training event was hosted by VRA Rescue NSW and was attended by regional and rural NSW road crash rescue (RCR), General Land Rescue (GLR), Industrial Domestic Rescue (IDR) qualified operators and support teams from NSW SES, VRA Rescue NSW, Fire & Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service, as well as paramedics and the Special Operations Team from NSW Ambulance.

The various challenging scenarios, involving vehicles and rolling stock (train carriages) in a collision were designed and held in a controlled environment, which equip emergency service members with the knowledge and expertise should they be confronted with a situation like this as a first responder.

Simulated scenario-based training like this provides agencies with practical experience that boosts capability, preparedness, resilience and awareness in rail, road, and pedestrian incidents.

Brenton Charlton, Commissioner VRA Rescue NSW, said "This is a great opportunity for all agencies, including NSW SES VRA Rescue NSW, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service and Ambulance Service, to come together to uplift the skills and capability of their members.

"With a focus on rail-related rescue incidents they can return that back to regional and rural NSW communities, building not only capability within the organisation but resilience across our communities.

"We are really excited to be here for this event. This is the first event of this kind, and we intend on hosting these across regional and rural NSW so we can further support our communities in times of need." said Commissioner Charlton.

The first Multi-Agency Rail Rescue Training is nine months in the making to bring to life. It is designed to build resilience and enhance interoperability amongst rescue agencies in Western NSW.

The focus was on incidents around rail networks, designed to hone the expertise of the various rescue agencies response through real examples of emergencies in NSW.

Jeremy Fewtrell AFMS, President Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) and Deputy Commissioner, Fire and Rescue NSW shared the benefits simulated scenario-based training activities such as these provide agencies in boosting capability, preparedness, resilience, and awareness.

Mr Fewtrell said, "This is a great opportunity to bring everyone together in fostering a spirit of learning, cooperation, and partnership.

We hope this is the first of many specialised rail rescue training activities and we look forward to continuing the cooperation and partnership with the various agencies into the future." he said.

As these scenarios focused on learning and up-skilling in a multi-agency team dynamic, teams were granted with ample time to brief, collaborate, and talk through their



extrication plans without the time pressure (otherwise experienced in Road Crash Rescue Challenge events).

Tony Hine, Technical Assessor for the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) and Leading Firefighter for Fire and Rescue NSW, was part of the specialist and technical team behind the first Multi-Agency Rail Rescue Training activity held in Dubbo. Tony designed the technical elements of the scenarios that would ultimately test the rescue operators on how to build critical thinking and appreciation of factors at an incident and dealing with emergencies as they arise.

Tony said, "When agencies come together and collaborate to create activities like this, we can enhance everyone's skills."

"When events like this do unfortunately occur, various agencies have and will need to work together to deliver the best outcomes for casualties. And it's these types of training activities that are designed to enhance the skills, knowledge, and confidence of our first responders," he said.

As always, the wonderful and extremely talented NSW SES volunteer moulage team provided each scenario with the enhanced capability to test participants with simulated experiences through applying makeup, prosthetics, or simulated blood as a visual representation of injuries. A mix of both mannequin and volunteers (including children of VRA Rescue NSW and Fire and Rescue NSW personnel) were used in each scenario.

Troy Jones, Medical Assessor at the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) and Clinical Training Officer at NSW Ambulance was the medical lead for this exercise.

Supported by fellow NSW Ambulance educators — Geoff Kiehne, Peter Lang, and Christine Bates — the team gave feedback to the paramedics, clinical volunteers, and rescue operators on how they can work together throughout the exercise featuring four teams — each made up of representatives from all agencies who each had to treat and extricate all patients.

Troy said this was believed to be the first-time agencies have had access to rail infrastructure like this to perform training of this calibre in NSW. "We undertook the exercise because this is something that has the potential to happen in our regional areas, especially considering all the regional rail networks we have and many level-crossings which aren't gated,"

"This gave rescue agencies the opportunity to work under and around trains and within crushed cars... which they learnt can be very difficult given the limited space."

Troy said, "Triaging was also an important component of the scenario. While teams had to extricate all patient's safety, they also had to prioritise which patients should be attended to first based on their condition." Troy said.

****Trigger warning:** Moulage is the art of applying make-up to depict realistic-like injuries for medical education, therefore no injuries featured here are real.

MULTI-AGENCY RAIL RESCUE EXERCISE

Special thanks go to the organising team behind this event, including David Cockbain (ARRO / NSW SES), Tony Hine (FR NSW / ARRO / NSW SES), Troy Jones (ARRO / NSW Ambulance), Geoff Kiehne (NSW SES / NSW Ambulance), Kristy Saffy (VRA Rescue NSW), Tony Cole (VRA Rescue NSW), Rodney Coombes (VRA Rescue NSW), Anthony McEachern (VRA Rescue NSW), Craig Barlow (VRA Rescue NSW), Teon West (NSW SES / VRA Rescue NSW), Allison Dickson (NSW SES), Kathryn Crofts (ARRO / NSW SES), Jimmy Chan (FR NSW / ARRO / NSW SES), Brenton Charlton (Commissioner VRA Rescue NSW), Andrew Luke (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operations, VRA Rescue NSW), Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM (President ARRO and Deputy Commissioner FR NSW).

Volunteers from participating agencies planned and collaborated with agencies, businesses, and stakeholders over several months to bring it all together. It's a monumental effort to organise an event of this scale.

Vehicles were donated by Wilson's Towing Dubbo. Food and beverages were supplied by Rapid Relief Team (RRT) to keep members fueled and hydrated so they could focus on the learnings of the day. The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) provided the rail yard as the location, and Pacific National provided the rolling stock (train carriages) for the simulation scenarios.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

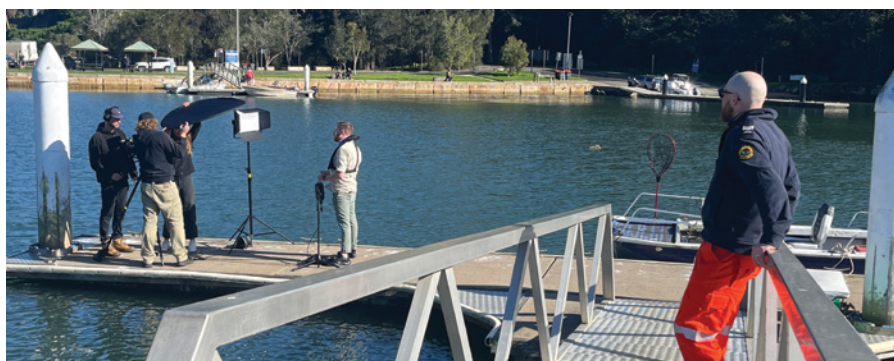
Website: <https://arro.org.au/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AustralasianRoadRescueOrganisation>
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/australasian-road-rescue-organisation/>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/australasianroadrescueorg/>

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kathryn Crofts

Volunteer, NSW SES Ryde Unit
Volunteer, Communications Lead, Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO)
Ph: 0437 108 844 | E: kathryn.crofts@member.ses.nsw.gov.au





Spontaneous Volunteering Video Shoot

Is there anything more bracing than standing on the edge of the Hawkesbury River at 0700 on a cold Saturday morning and watching the sunrise while shivering silently in one's socks. Just magic!

The SES has been promoting the engagement of spontaneous volunteers and so it came to pass that selected Sydney Metro Zone volunteers were canvassed to act in an infomercial about spontaneous volunteers sharing some of the facts that might make it safer for all concerned. Parts for the shoot included those of a Boatie, community leader, fisherman, kayaker, swift water rescuer and on-water operators. Under the able Direction of SHQ staff, the filming took place at Parsley Bay Wharf, Brooklyn utilising the professional camera skills of Atmosphere Productions – an agency that prides itself on being able to make SES Volunteers deliver their lines effectively to camera.

Scripts and a proposed filming timetable for each part, were distributed

prior to the event while exchanges via MS Teams prior to the event, and in the pre-shoot AVL meeting, included early concerns about our ability to learn our lines. On the day this was largely resolved through the use of an autocue system that worked brilliantly in our back-up “speeches to camera”.

At Brooklyn we each began with our back-up grabs followed by selected action scenes shot with movement and lines being delivered simultaneously – not so breezy, and in my case requiring multiple takes. And then for me the easy bit – being filmed as a community leader “engaging with the community” – with no lines and no script because no sound was being recorded.

As with all such productions one can never know who or what will make it to the end product and what will end up on the cutting room floor.

I remember once being interviewed about a Sydney storm for television news, being questioned by the reporter and being filmed for about five minutes – and then watching the news where I appeared saying “This storm has hit us hard”.

Whatever the final product I find these experiences to be rewarding in and of themselves. And who knows – maybe the start of my new career in the movies at the age of almost 75, should I be spotted by a perceptive talent scout!

Best of all was that during the filming of the fishing action, we repeatedly threw in a line using prawns as bait and actually started to get bites! Alas no actual catches – but plenty of little bream that got away with a feed.

Bill Hoyles

Canada Bay SES Volunteer.

Leadership Development at the NSW SES

In August 2023, NSW SES launched the Leadership Capability Framework.

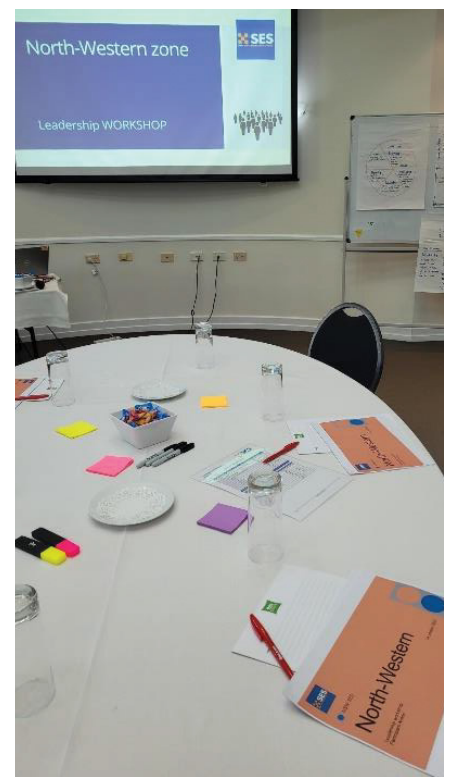
The Leadership Capability Framework is made up of 7 main capabilities: Self, Relationships, Ethics, Influence, People, Strategic Agility and Results.

The Leadership Framework supports all members in recognising their strengths and areas for growth. Each capability is broken into sub-capabilities and moves along progression levels; core, intermediate, adept and highly adept.

As NSW SES rollout and embeds the Leadership Capability Framework: Webpages have been developed to cater for a wide array of learning needs and types; including strengths and behaviour assessment tools, professional readings, videos and podcasts. All learning is accessible from the webpages. Each capability has a specific page dedicated and webinars have been offered and recorded with AUSLAN interpreters to ensure accessibility for all members.

In August, the Self Capability was launched. This introduced the concepts of self-awareness, bringing learning into daily practice, understanding unconscious and conscious bias, neuroscience and the concept of your leadership shadow.

In October, the Relationships Capability was rolled out with a number of resources made available through the webpage and two launch webinars. The relationship webinar had a volunteer leader, Zakia Patel, Unit Commander Queanbeyan spoke about her journey in developing relationships with her team at NSW SES and the success this has led to for her unit. The Relationship Webinar had over 100 members attend and was positively received.



"Great content, warm and inclusive tone to session, calling all of us to reflect and learn. Very well facilitated"

"Interesting to have volunteers share earnings"

"Excellent job. I will be looking into further training in this space"

A volunteer leadership workshop was piloted in North-Western Zone with representation from all units.

The workshop was bespoke to the needs of the zone. These workshops will be rolled out more broadly across NSW SES in 2024.

"The active listening and team building activities were entertaining & great networking."

"The entire course-opened up understanding as a new leader."

"Enjoyed understanding about leadership styles and how to switch styles."

To support members growth in leadership; virtual workshops have been developed and will launch in February 2024 at the core level to develop members deep understanding of leadership across the capabilities. The workshops are designed on current adult learning design principles. Including peer learning, application of learning to their job, self-reflection and coaching.

Current NSW SES Member Support Services and Initiatives

In addition to Peer Support and Chaplaincy, the Being Well program at NSW SES offers access to other support services and wellbeing initiatives. Here is a summary of all of them:

PEER SUPPORT - 1800 626 800

Confidential 24/7 service that provides all members with someone to talk to; an empathetic and non-judgmental "listening ear". Peer Support Officers are trained in Psychological First Aid and can help members access mental health professionals. They can also provide on-scene support during and after significant incidents and events and deliver My5 seminars training about stress, coping and mental health.

CHAPLAINCY - 1800 626 800

Confidential 24/7 service available to all members and their families to advise on cultural, spiritual and pastoral matters, as well as supporting and encouraging the spirituality of members and their families through the provision of ceremonial and religious services. Chaplains are members from a range of faiths who are ordained or licensed ministers and are trained in Psychological First Aid. They can also provide on-scene support during and after critical incidents and events.

PSYCHOLOGISTS - WELLBEINGANDSUPPORT@SES.NSW.GOV.AU

Our psychologists provide clinical support, supervision and guidance to Peer Support Officers and Chaplains. They partner with the Peer Support and Chaplaincy team to provide Psychological First Aid and support members during and after significant incidents and events. They support and guide volunteer and staff leaders whose team members

may be experiencing mental health concerns and maintain ongoing partnerships with both internal and external support services.

MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - 1300 361 008

Free and confidential 24/7 counselling support for all members and their immediate families. Qualified and experienced counsellors provide support across a range of work, volunteering, and personal issues.

COMMANDER AND MANAGER ASSIST - 1300 361 008

Free and confidential service to assist our leaders with people management inquiries. Support is available for any questions regarding difficult conversations with members, advice on how to navigate members' wellbeing or how to better manage your team. Support sessions are booked for a 30-minute consultation.

MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

NSW SES aims to provide awareness education to all members to reduce the stigma of mental ill health, including reporting psychological injury. We offer skills-based wellbeing training for all NSW SES members to improve member resilience, enhance the capability and confidence to be well and thrive in the face of adversity.

- » My5 Education
- » Stress & Its Impacts
- » Managing Fatigue
- » Vicarious Trauma
- » Building a High Adversity Resilience Culture

WELLBEING PORTAL

Holistic wellbeing support for all members:

- » 24/7 access to counselling, professional advisors for advice, work-life support and referrals.
- » Online modules for members to interact with, on topics such as eating for health, work wellbeing, avoiding burnout, depression, and work-life balance.
- » Articles, toolkits, audio recordings and more on topics like keeping kids safe online, burnout, stress management, change and resilience, mindfulness, financial wellbeing, diversity and inclusion and work and much more.

IMMUNISATION PROGRAM

Through the long running immunisation program, members have access to annual flu vaccinations, and other available immunisation offerings including Hepatitis A/B and Tetanus.

BEING WELL NETWORK

NSW SES understands that we all play a role in creating a culture centered around members' wellbeing. That is why we created the Being Well Network which welcomes all members who would like to play a part in ensuring that wellbeing is considered in everything that we do.

For any questions about the support services and wellbeing initiatives, please contact the Being Well program team on wellbeingandsupport@ses.nsw.gov.au

20 years of Peer Support and Chaplaincy

On 12 October, NSW SES marked 20 years of our Peer Support and Chaplaincy program at our State Headquarters on 12 October.

The celebrations offered the opportunity for current unit members to come together and reconnect with original members and share stories about how it all began, travels, operational support, training, and changes the program has seen over the last 20 years.

Commissioner Carlene York spoke passionately about the importance of the program in supporting our members, acknowledging its legacy and stressing the crucial role it will continue to play as part of our new NSW SES Being Well Strategy 2023-2024.

“

We all joined the SES in the beginning to help our community, and being a peer is to help those who help the community. On a personal level it's really fulfilling to be part of such a great team where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

”



Chaplain Robyn Fry and Peer Support Officer Kellie Meek accepted a Certificate of Appreciation from Deputy Commissioner Operations, Debbie Platz, in recognition of the outstanding support all Peers and Chaplains have provided to operational members over the past 20 years.

Peer Support Officer, Jameson Edwards shared his thoughts

on what it means to be a Peer *“We all joined the SES in the beginning to help our community, and being a peer is to help those who help the community. On a personal level it's really fulfilling to be part of such a great team where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”*

The essence of the celebrations was thanking Peers and Chaplains for

the last 20 years and looking forward to the next milestone. All in the spirit of continuing growth and expansion of the program.

Becoming a Peer is an exciting and rewarding opportunity. Ken Strupitis-Haddrick, a new Peer Support Officer became a Peer because of "...curiosity as to what makes people tick. I also believe that every situation can be made better. Many people have helped me at different stages/difficult moments in my life so I am moved to help others in return when I can".

Ken sees peer support work as beneficial for NSW SES and its members:

"By nature, SES work can have challenging moments. With Unit based members being volunteers often juggling family, work and other personal activities, life can get pretty busy. I think it is a mark of the SES organisation that they want to support their members psychological and emotional well-being, both in SES activities and in their personal lives. I believe a well-supported team is better placed to serve the community when they turn to the SES in moments of need".

Joining the Peer Support Unit, Ken learned much about psychological and



emotional wellbeing from training and involvement with the PSU. "In doing so, I have learned a lot about myself - how I can help myself and make good choices in managing day to day life situations. It is also very rewarding when you support someone else and see their improvement and appreciation."

Ken's experience with the Peer Support Unit combines rewarding opportunities, gaining new knowledge and volunteering with supportive colleagues. "I have enjoyed my journey

to date with the PSU. The leaders and colleagues are very down to earth but very caring, knowledgeable and driven to make a difference for SES members and the wider organisation."

If you want to follow Ken's and other Peer Supporters' footsteps and join the Peer Support Unit please contact peer.support@ses.nsw.gov.au or complete this Expression of Interest form. For any questions, please contact peer.support@ses.nsw.gov.au

Coming up in 2024...

In 2024 NSW SES will be introducing a new Safety Management System. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months, but in the meantime if you have any questions, contact the project team on smsproject@ses.nsw.gov.au

SES Safety Management System Project

What is changing?

- Soon NSW SES will be introducing a new tool to report safety and wellbeing issues and incidents
- All safety and wellbeing issues will continue being reported by calling: **1800 737 647** 1800 SES OHS

How will this benefit our members?

- A user friendly system to support our members in making safety and wellbeing a priority
- Improving member awareness about types of safety incidents and ability to report them
- Supporting our leaders through an improved management of safety and wellbeing issues notifications
- Access to meaningful reporting to equip our leaders with information to identify areas of success and continuous improvement

Who is involved?

The Safety and Wellbeing team will be working with the system vendor to implement the system

The project scope is being informed through consultation with the Zone Command, the SOC, HSRs and Being Well networks which include both volunteer and staff members

How can you get involved?

All members are welcome to join the Safety Champions Network

We welcome any members who would like to be involved in the user testing

To be involved, please email: smsproject@ses.nsw.gov.au

Want to know more?

Email the project team at: smsproject@ses.nsw.gov.au

Project Milestones



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On behalf of the people
of Greenway,
**thank you to our
SES volunteers**

for keeping our community safe.

Michelle Rowland



Authorised by M Rowland MP, Australia, ALP Suite 101C, Level 1, 130 Main Street, Blacktown NSW 2148

On behalf of my community,

**Thank you,
SES volunteers!**

**We are grateful for your hard work and
sacrifices to keep our community safe.**



Dai Le MP
Federal Member for Fowler

(02) 9726 3988 dai.le.mp@aph.gov.au
Level 2, 24-32 Hughes St Cabramatta NSW 2166

Authorised by Dai Le MP, Level 2 24-32 Hughes Street Cabramatta, NSW, 2166

*Thank you
State Emergency Service
volunteers for supporting
our local communities in
times of need.*

*Wishing you and your
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Christmas and a
Happy New Year.*



Janelle Saffin MP
MEMBER FOR LISMORE

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P&D Update on Project Lift and Elevate

Project LIFT Program

The People and Development stream of Project LIFT (Local Investment program for Facilities and Teams) has now concluded.

Project LIFT saw the addition of 81 new roles across the agency and the creation of two additional zones that will ensure greater local knowledge and resources can be deployed to support our communities during floods, storms and tsunamis. The recruitment of any outstanding roles from Project LIFT have now been absorbed into the Project ELEVATE program to finalise.

PROJECT ELEVATE PROGRAM

Significant work has progressed in the People and Development Stream of Project ELEVATE, with the recruitment of Interim roles in its final week. The project included 13 weeks of active recruitment with multiple roles being advertised each week.

We anticipate that all Project ELEVATE roles will be finalised by the end of December 2023 (with the exception of the limited unfilled roles).

Membership and Recruitment would like to thank all the members who showed interest and were successful in obtaining roles advertised through Project ELEVATE, and to those who participated in the writing job applications and interview skills training program.



This virtual two-hour workshop focused on providing participants with the knowledge and skills required to prepare a winning job application for a role within the NSW SES and broader NSW Public Sector. Practical techniques were explored on how to confidently present information about skills and experience in a written application and at interview for maximum impact.

Four sessions were held through August 2023, with thirty-five members participating. Positive feedback has been consistently received throughout these sessions. It has highlighted the need to hold Writing Job Applications and Interview Skills workshops more regularly to continuously support



members. NSW SES is working on an inhouse Writing Job Applications and Interview Skills workshop for 2024, which will be made available for all members, with details to be communicated once confirmed.

RECRUITMENT AT NSW SES

The NSW SES encourages all its members to apply for opportunities of interest, by submitting an application via iworkfor.nsw.gov.au. If members would like to know more about advertised roles and discuss their interest, they are encouraged to reach out to the contact listed in the job advertisements.

Please do not hesitate to contact recruitment@ses.nsw.gov.au if you require further information.



Playdates with Emergency Services

Our most recent endeavours is "Playdates with Emergency Services" (for which we are still in the middle of-) is to assist with a 'Better Connection for Better Outcomes' for our Local Eurobodalla Community between both local units of NSW SES Batemans Bay Unit and NSW Moruya Unit as well as all local Emergency Services RFS- Brigades Batemans Bay, Long Beach, Narooma and Nelligen, Marine Rescue- Batemans Bay, Moruya/Tuross Heads, Australian Redcross, NSW Ambulance, NSW Police-South Coast District Command, Fire & Rescue Batemans Bay and Moruya Brigades) in conjunction with Eurobodalla Shire Council Children Services, is to assist our most vulnerable members of our local community which is Families with small children and infants to help and assist with Emergency Planning and Preparedness by having 6x playdates which are held after school and work commitments across the Eurobodalla LGA.

The motivation behind these 'Playdates' is a local report which was conducted after the devastating Bush Fires of 2019/2020 in the Eurobodalla area for which were unprecedented, and we are as a community still recovering.



The study that came to my attention:- 'Want to Help the Children? Help the Parents. Challenges and Solutions from the Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer (Bibs) Study. A study conducted by the University of Western Sydney, Adjunct Professor Kaleen Gribble, Local GP Michelle Hamrosi and Susan Tawai. This study reports a gap and lack of understanding of Emergency planning, needs and requirements

of families with very young children especially during Emergencies.

Our purpose with ESC Children Services was to come up with an idea on how we as Emergency Service providers can connect in a fun but informative way, to help families with very young children, know who we are, where and how to connect and to assist and provide opportunities with Emergency Planning and Preparedness.

We know that children in the area are still stressed when they hear and see lights and sirens. As far as we are aware these events and concepts are different than other events that hasn't been achieved until now.

These events which are right across our local area, are to try and reach as many of our community members as possible. The reaction from parents of small children has been overwhelming and outstanding mentioning how important these events are, and the kindness displayed by Emergency Services personnel. Even to the point of the positive impact it is having on our smallest members of our community right down to 'what they would like to be when they grow up' currently we have a new Ambulance officer in a few years' time!

We are hoping for the Playdates to be a yearly event and have interest from our northern and southern neighbours to replicate these events.

Photos from our Moruya 'Playdates with Emergency Services' for which Paddy is a resounding success and very popular.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING
SUPPORT THROUGHOUT 2023



Edmond Atalla MP
Member for Mount Druitt | Parliamentary Secretary for Police & Counter-terrorism
Phone: (02) 9625 6770 Email: mountdruitt@parliament.nsw.gov.au
Office: Suite 201, Westfield Shoppingtown, Carlisle Avenue, Mt Druitt
Authorised by Edmond Atalla MP, Suite 201 Westfield Shoppingtown, Mount Druitt funded using parliamentary entitlements.

As we approach the year's end, I wish all
a joyful Christmas and a wonderful 2024.

Excited to work with you next year,
and see our regions thrive.



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Recognition Coordinator

Hi everyone, so this year has been a very busy and full on in my role as the VA Recognition Coordinator.

Firstly, you will have all seen or heard by now that the nominations sent off to the Governor Generals office over a year ago have resulted in approximately 700 National Emergency Medals (2019-20 Bushfires) and for Cyclone Debbie being issued from the 1000 or so nominations submitted.

At the writing of this article I am unaware of the names on that list of recipients or nominees but I'm expecting that a significant number of you are going to be saying 'hey why wasn't my name on that list?' or 'why haven't I gotten an email saying I'm a recipient?' all I can say to you is that the nomination list was derived from Beacon and also confirmed by the Zones as to who did what and the time frames involved.

I have had for a couple of years now, grave concerns over the accuracy of who was on that list and also what jobs they were listed as doing, seeing we are all aware that Beacon was not always used to record RFS support activities at the time and that the jobs we all did for the RFS were sometimes different to the SES job descriptions in Beacon.

So while we all wait on further communication from the SES regarding the next steps to fix those short falls, I'd encourage you to get your documents together for the next trench of nominations for the award including any emails or documents, supporting rosters and statements from old Commanders etc. And be assured the VA is lobbying for an appropriate and swift response to the NEM issue seeing it has taken so long to get to this stage.

As the VA Recognition Coordinator, I sit on the Commissioners Honours and Awards Committee where I review nominations for honours and awards in the NSW SES. I can say that I have seen an increase in nominations for SES awards across the state over

the last year. I have to commend all those that have taken the time to think about your fellow peers and recommend them for awards - it's a commendable thing to do.

Writing nominations are hard and it's a journey of discovery not only for you as the author but for us on the committee hearing the stories of bravery and dedication to community you are telling us. Now the big question is, always how do you get one of these through the process? Let me try to explain some of what we need to do.

A nomination is about telling a stranger a story who doesn't know you or your nominee and convincing them why they should give someone

does the individual/s deserve the award. This has to be backed up by 3rd party witness statements, news articles, social media articles and other agency or community reports about what happened. The whole idea here is to show as much detail as possible, in fact more is always better.

A one page statement on an incident or event with no supporting evidence will more than likely be rejected or sent back to you for more information. Also, the committee meets 4 times a year so it may take some time to get an answer so be patient.

The VA in the Honours and awards space has had some wins over the last 12 months with the NSW SES taking on board our recommendation to forward all successful NSW SES Bravery Award nominations to the Governor Generals for consideration under the National Bravery Awards and Honours system. This has never been done before but has been brought up by VA representatives a few times over the years but has now been included in the policy.

Lastly, after some discussion the new Chair of the Committee DCO Debbie Platz APM has undertaken to conduct a full review of the Awards System that will include input from the VA, which is a great result for volunteers as the current system is a little dated and has a few gaps so keep tuned for updates on that one in the new year.

There are some additional things on the boil in the awards space but I'll leave that until my next report in the new year. If you have any awards issues that the VA can assist you with or would like advice to do with awards and honours I am contactable at recognition@nswsesva.org.au

Have a safe and fun New Year and 2024,

Anthorr Nomchong

----- “ -----
I have to commend all those that have taken the time to think about your fellow peers and recommend them for awards - it's a commendable thing to do.
 ----- ” -----

a medal or award. I tell people that what you need to do here is just the same as you would do in an essay for school (remember them?) And the best way to do that is by making sure your story tells us the situation, who was involved, what happened, what was the result of the activity and why



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Dave Layzell MP
Member for Upper Hunter



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**Proud to support our NSW State
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Thank you to our volunteers for your
efforts during 2023. Merry Christmas
and best wishes for 2024.**



Anoulack Chanthivong MP

Member for Macquarie Fields

Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading
Minister for Industry and Trade
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Address: Unit 9 Centennial House,
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The Role of NSW SES in Relief and Early Recovery of Communities

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) released its Corporate Plan 2023-24 to 2026-27 at page 13, it states, "More than ever, managing the consequences from consecutive, concurrent and compounding events requires a coordinated whole of society effort." That plan presents the Emergency Management Continuum in the following diagram:



Figure 1: NEMA Corporate Plan 2023-24 to 2026-27

Like many attempts in other publications, the diagrams represent clear lines of delineation between each phase. But is this the reality for communities and for NSW SES Unit and Local Controllers?

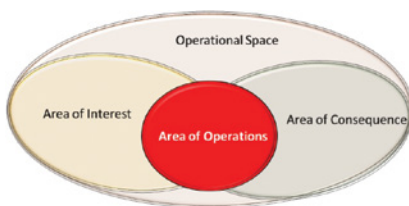


Figure 2: Source: © Glenn Jones based on AIIMS

WHAT DOES AIIMS TELL US?

AIIMS describes the operational space as consisting of:

- » Area of Interest
- » Area of Operations and the
- » Area of Consequence.

Taking floods as an example, the area of operations is where the flood waters are impacting, the area of interest is downstream or, when tidal surges may impact, an area currently not affected. The area of consequence is where the waters have impacted and relief or early recovery operations may need to

commence. The same can be seen for bushfires, the area burnt out and no longer under threat could be seen as the area of consequence.

Communities do not see the differentiating lines between agencies but expect response and recovery agencies and departments to interact to meet their needs.

SLIDING WEDGES

Rather than a hard line between response and recovery phases, Controllers are better to see them as sliding scales of action and accountability. Transition to recovery is best understood and strategised by looking at the process as two sliding wedges:

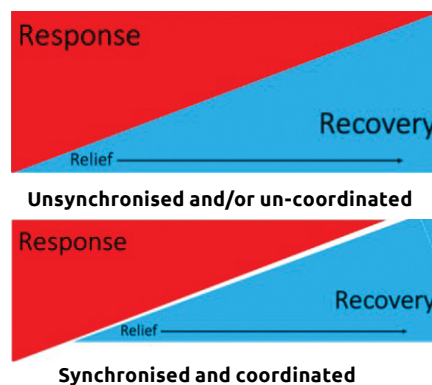


Figure 3: Source: © Glenn Jones

As the diagrams imply, Controllers need to consider and support relief and early recovery operations in the area of interest and extend into the area of consequence over time when safe to do so. It could be argued the Incident Controller has assets such as legislation, community engagement teams, rapid assessment teams and logistical support to coordinate with recovery to identify and deliver needs in concert with the NSW Welfare Support Function Area (Department of Community and Justice) Department of Health, Department of Primary Industry, and NSW Reconstruction Authority, as examples.

These relief and early recovery activities may form part of the response. They may need the legislative powers of the lead or supporting agencies to

achieve the objectives and expectations of the community and Government. Local and Unit Controllers could act as a conduit for their communities into the IMT and to the Incident Controller and assist relief and early recovery operations if no longer needed in support of the response. Some larger units may well be able to do both.

DOES NSW SES AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY IN RELIEF AND EARLY RECOVERY?

Well-managed and early injection of relief and early recovery aligns with most common agencies' strategic incident priorities, such as:

- » Protection and preservation of life
- » Protection of critical infrastructure and community assets essential to community survival during an emergency incident
- » Protection of residential property as a place of primary residence
- » Protection of assets and infrastructure that support individual and community financial sustainability and aid in assisting a community to recover from an incident
- » Protection of the environment and conservation values considering the cultural, biodiversity and social values of the environment

The NSW EMPLAN states that in Part 7, on page 706, "A Combat Agency Incident Controller is the single person/entity that is responsible for the control and coordination of emergency response measures undertaken within the extent of the authority of the agency as defined in the relevant Act and the EMPLAN. They are the final authority in decision-making concerning the incident or emergency within their area of responsibility. The Combat Agency Incident Controller will regularly consult with the relevant EOCON to determine the required activity and support operations to manage the emergency. This includes ensuring operational strategies and

tactics are developed to meet the operational objectives”.

Note the statement says the Incident Controller WILL consult with the EOCON. Likewise, the EMPLAN states that the EOCON is to help coordinate the support required by the Combat Agency.

The agencies under the EMPLAN must assist – see Table roles and responsibilities. Here are just some examples:

WSFA - RESPONSE

- » The functional area is responsible for setting up and managing Evacuation Centres to provide welfare services for those affected by a disaster.
- » The functional area may coordinate immediate assistance (food and emergency accommodation) from an evacuation centre.

NSW HEALTH - SUPPORTING AGENCY PROVIDING:

- » Ensure a whole-of-health emergency incident management capability to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from any event
- » Coordinate the mobilisation of all health resources in response to emergencies, including:
 - Mobilisation of health resources to the emergency site(s) to provide pre-hospital on-site medical and health support and initiation of prioritised patient management
 - The provision of coordinated hospital and medical response to emergencies, inclusive of reception of injured
 - The provision of public health services to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies
 - The provision of mental health support services for events
 - Coordinate health communications response for prevention, preparation, emergency response and subsequent recovery from the impact of events



NSW PUBLIC WORKS - SUPPORTING AGENCY PROVIDING:

- » Maintain an Engineering Emergency Management capability to support Combat Agencies, other Functional Areas and asset owners to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from any event.
- » Provide engineers in support of Combat Agencies in first response.
- » Coordinate the provision of engineering resources in response to and recovery from emergencies, including:
 - Provision of specialist advice,
- Undertake emergency works including protection, making safe and
- temporary repair works as requested by Combat Agencies and other Functional Areas,
- Coordinate, monitor and report on repair, reconstruction and relocation
- of public buildings and infrastructure as requested by Combat Agencies, other Functional Areas and Agencies,

- Coordinate clean up, make safe, tarpaulin maintenance and other such items as requested by Combat Agencies and other Functional Areas, and
 - Provision of advice to Combat Agencies and other Functional Areas on issues such as structural repair grants and other items under the NSW Disaster Relief Guidelines, including managing the engineering aspects of those grants.
- » Provide engineers to support Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces.
 - » Coordinate the supply of goods and services in response to and recovery from an emergency.
1. Identify at-risk animals and agriculture and support warning and preparedness measures.
 2. Coordinate support to primary producers, animal holding establishments and the community, including rescue, evacuation, emergency care of animals and the assessment, humane destruction and disposal of affected animals. Also, the supply of emergency fodder, water and aerial support as required.
 3. These few examples demonstrate that the EOCON can draw on various Government Departments to assist in the area of consequence for relief and early recovery operations.

NSW DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES – AGRICULTURE & ANIMAL SERVICES FUNCTIONAL AREA (AASFA)

Supporting agency providing:
Response:

CONCLUSION

Units often discuss, train and take action in the prevention and preparation as well as response phases of the comprehensive approach to emergency management. But they also have and could ensure they are conversant with the potential relief

and early recovery strategies may be needed when their community is most dislocated and under stress. Embrace all of the comprehensive approaches to prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery (PPRR) or NEMA's EM continuum to ensure your communities are best served during an incident or disaster.

One key area in which Controllers can act is at LEMCs. Promote discussion on how relief and early recovery operations would be undertaken. Promote a strategy for action and engage and contribute to community engagement and collaboration to determine their needs. This is particularly important for small and isolated townships that may get isolated, and therefore, community initiatives that your unit can support are essential.

Glenn A. Jones ESM

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



" On behalf of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party we would like to thank all the NSW SES Volunteers for their tireless efforts in supporting and protecting our community. We acknowledge their selfless dedication and commitment to people in our community who are most at need, especially in these difficult times. Stay safe! "

Robert Borsak & Mark Banasiak
Members of the NSW Legislative Council



Authorised by Robert Borsak MLC & Mark Banasiak MLC,
Parliament House Macquarie Street Sydney NSW 2000
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Vale Stephen Sanson

19 December 1957 – 12 October 2023

Stephen Sanson (Steve) joined the Ashfield and subsequently Ashfield-Leichhardt (ASL) Unit of the State Emergency Service (SES) in 1984 at the age of 26. During his 39 years of Service with the NSW SES, Steve was awarded the National Medal, with two clasps and the SES Long Service Award with two clasps for his diligent and honorable service. Steve participated in all aspects of SES in ASL. While he dealt with several major health issues (including being an amputee), he contributed significantly to operations, exercises and events. His most notable achievements included-

- » A valued member of the successful 1987 Ashfield Rescue Team which defeated all comers in the Sydney Inner Division Rescue Competition
- » Awarded the National Emergency Medal in 2017 for response to Cyclone Debbie
- » Awarded an SES Unit Citation for dedicated service to first aid and public safety at NYE in Balmain for over 20 years
- » the Premiers Emergency Bushfire Citation in 2020
- » Managing the SES Radio function for the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic at Checkpoint India for over 15 years



» Performing Logistics support duties in various IMT's for the RFS and SES Steve trained many members of ASL and neighboring Units in operating our communications equipment, Beacon operation for both Field and IMT roles, and First Aid. Steve relished the opportunity to be involved in training, taking on the role of Training Coordinator for ASL over many years.

Steve managed the Finance function for ASL amongst his other roles. He was a diligent caretaker of ASL assets. Steve was also an innovator, and ASL's unique electronic sign-on system was entirely constructed by Steve.

Outside SES, but of course with SES colleagues participating, Steve's major

passion in life was 4WD adventuring, being an amputee he had a purpose built 4WD to allow him to venture across Australia on outback safaris, notably the NSW Police Forensic Group annual safari. In the few weeks before he died, Steve was off, adventuring in WA, having driven across the Nullarbor – a long held desire. It was here that he began the final battle with his health and came back from safari early to try to get things under control. We lost Steve not long after he returned from WA, after he had regaled us with adventurous stories and escapades from the safari.

Steve was a good caring and loyal friend, patient and considerate to fellow and former members of ASL. Never too busy to stop to chat, to help where he could, to explain something, to entertain us with his latest adventures, and to inspire us to live life against the odds and to accept any challenge. Steve did this, and we are better for knowing him, we are heartbroken that he is gone, and he will always be remembered by his friends.

Sharon Buckley

Unit Commander
Ashfield Leichhardt



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