

the
Volunteer

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the Volunteer

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Thankyou
to the mighty
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events

Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains
Shadow Minister for Emergency Services

Phone: (02) 4751 3298 - Email: bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au



Authorised by Trish Doyle MP. Funded using parliamentary entitlements. June 2021.

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Contents

REGULAR FEATURES

- 4 From the President
- 5 From the Minister
- 6 From the Commissioner
- 7 From the Editor

FEATURES

- 10 Newell Highway Truck Crash
- 14 Warwick Cary Internment
- 15 Port Stephens Family Fun Day
- 16 NSW SES Fleet Showcase
- 18 Response to the March Floods in Penrith PGA
- 20 Port Macquarie Unit
- 22 Community Education Initiative
- 24 Vertical Rescue Professional Development
- 26 WA Deployment
- 31 Community Reading Group
- 32 Condobolin Unit
- 33 Flood Crisis – Personal recount
- 34 South Eastern Zone Disaster Rescue Challenge
- 35 New Member Experience
- 36 Ballina Unit
- 38 Across the border
- 40 Mental Health First Aid
- 41 Hunters Hill & Scouts
- 42 Sand Bag Filling Unit





KIM DAVIS ESM
PRESIDENT NSW SES
VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION

We did see a number of volunteers directly affected by the floods, but on a positive note, we had the opportunity to deliver a Mental Health First Aid course to 14 members on the North Coast.

While the community focus has remained on the COVID-19 response as well as the north coast flooding, in the Association we have remained focused on mental health and welfare support for our members.

We did see a number of volunteers directly affected by the floods, but on a positive note, we had the opportunity to deliver a Mental Health First Aid course to 14 members on the North Coast.

We are consulting diaries and will be looking at other locations to roll out courses and any enquiries can be directed through our office. We are

excited to be adding Aboriginal and Torres Straight MHFA to our programming in the latter half of the year.

With the rain we have been receiving, work at the VA Retreat has been difficult! The lower dam is beyond full and a beautiful environment for many local creatures however the damp ground has made maintenance work difficult. As the weather continues to get cooler we will endeavour to get as much done as we can in preparation for Spring/Summer and to have established more camping locations – stay tuned.

The Association is continuing to meet with both the SLT of the SES as well as parliamentary representatives to discuss volunteer matters.

We are establishing online meetings with our Ambassadors, check with your local unit or our office to see who your Ambassador is, or if you would like to take on the role. We are also looking at additional member benefits opportunities so if you have any contacts you would like to share, have a benefit you would like to offer or have any other feedback, please send it through to our Member Benefits Coordinator.

Stay safe out there and look after each other.

For all current and upcoming courses please check out our website www.sesvaevents.com



Mental Health First Aid Training

Learning . Networking . Sharing



Each year 1 in 5 live Australians will experience a Mental Illness. Many people are not knowledgeable or confident to offer assistance. Physical first aid is accepted & widespread in our community, however most do not cover mental health problems. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches people the skills to help someone who they are concerned about.



Having Mental Health First Aid Skills means that you can assist a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis and help make a real difference in your community. What's more, you will be able to actively reduce stigma in your community by responding appropriately to myths and misunderstandings about mental illness.



Learn the skills to make a difference - Because we can all be more aware and more informed...





REGISTER ONLINE FOR OUR UPCOMING COURSES



THE HON DAVID ELLIOTT MP
MINISTER FOR POLICE AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

At the last time I wrote to you all, NSW was in the midst of one of the worst storm and flood event of our generation. Thousands of people were displaced or cut off by flood waters, and homes and properties were inundated or even washed away. Amidst it all there were hundreds of stories of hope, with nearly 3,500 SES personnel deployed throughout the event. The men and women in orange worked around the clock to keep the people of our State safe, from flood rescues to closing roads and making resupply missions, the SES were invaluable to the operation. During just that event, volunteers responded to more than 14,000 requests for assistance, a mammoth effort that deserves recognition. I was able to see your efforts first hand in the Hawkesbury and around Moree and know how grateful the people of these areas were to you all. I am incredibly proud of each and every one of you, I know you do it without want of recognition but your communities will be forever grateful for your contributions.

You have also proven that is not only your own communities you are dedicated to protecting. During the floods many units were deployed across the state, to the areas that needed it most. Volunteers were also deployed to Queensland and more recently to Western Australia, following the aftermath from Cyclone Seroja which hit the north west coast with devastating force. Your contributions here and interstate have made the people of NSW proud.

After a challenging year, I want to assure you all that the NSW Government will continue to support you. Last year,



it was announced the Government will provide \$36 million over five years for a new first responder mental health strategy for emergency services. Of this, NSW SES will receive \$5.9 million to be used for initiatives including the development of a mental health and wellbeing strategy, enhanced support services, employment of internal psychologists, and training for NSW SES leaders in mental health and wellbeing.

Recently, we celebrated National Volunteer Week, and I was lucky enough to spend it travelling across the state and visiting volunteers in Albury, Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Moree and Inverell.



It was an incredible opportunity to thank hundreds of volunteers in person for their efforts during the floods and year round. During the week, NSW also celebrated Wear Orange Wednesday and I hope each and every one of you were able to celebrate and be celebrated. Seeing landmarks across the country light up was a heart-warming tribute to each and every one of you.

I want to again issue my thanks to you all, your dedication for your communities keeps us all safer. Thanks must also go to your families, employers and friends, without their support volunteers would not be able to make the positive mark they do on their communities.



CARLENE YORK APM
NSW SES COMMISSIONER

Over the past few months, you have helped your local communities through some of the biggest floods we have seen in decades. For some, they have been floods never experienced before. While flooding is still occurring in Western Zone, I do want to thank everyone for their efforts over the past few months and putting their lives on hold to help others.

I want to take this opportunity to especially acknowledge the volunteers in Western NSW. I know you don't need me to relay your own history from the past decade to you, but I do want to acknowledge it – a prolonged drought, bushfires, floods, the pandemic, and a mouse plague. Despite all of this, you continue to persevere and continue to soldier on and think of others over yourself. Please know your resilience and dedication to your local communities has not gone unnoticed. Thank you to each and every one of you for continuing to wear our orange uniform and working for the benefit of others.

As I am sure you are aware, we have been working towards finalizing our new Strategic Plan, which will help guide us and identify our achievements for the next three years. I am pleased to share it is now in its final stages, and we will be launching it very soon. I know in the past our service has had strategic plans and goals that have not

all been fulfilled. This time it's different – we acknowledge the past, what we are working towards in our present, and have very clear goals of what we will achieve in the future. We know how we will achieve this – by focusing on our people, our community, and our capability. These are the three pillars of the strategic plan, which outline what we will do to move us onwards.

A core part of getting this new Strategic Plan right, was through the creation of our new mission and vision. Our mission (saving lives and creating safer communities) combined with our vision (a trusted volunteer-based emergency service, working together to deliver excellence in community preparedness and emergency response) were updated after a survey last year revealed that the majority of you didn't like the old vision statement and wanted it changed. These statements are not just empty words, they will help guide our future decisions, so I'm very thankful that we were able to develop them with so much input from members.

On a final note, it is incredibly pleasing to see our major exercises up and running again. The inaugural first State Road Crash Rescue Challenge was held in Mogo on 22 and 23 May in conjunction with Fire and Rescue NSW. This event will be held every year going

forward and it's a fantastic opportunity for our members to demonstrate their expertise and solidify relationships with our fellow emergency services.

I'm also looking forward to the State Disaster Rescue Challenge (SDRC), which will be held in Metro from 31 July to 1 August. For those who are new to the service, SDRC is a biennial event that sees teams from across the state compete in a series of challenges. Eight teams from across the Zones will be battling it out for the top prize, with the highest scoring team going on to represent us at the National Disaster Rescue Challenge, which is being held in Perth on 16 and 17 October. These challenges give us a chance to test and improve our skills while also getting to know people from other Units who we might not otherwise encounter. Good luck to everyone who is currently competing in the Zone challenges and thank you to those who came to help and support. I'm a big believer in improving our skills wherever possible, and if you can have a little bit of fun doing it, even better!

So, whether you're responding to the current floods in Western NSW, helping out with the Zone Challenges or simply continuing to serve your community in your normal role as an SES member, know that we appreciate all that you do.

Stay Safe



WOW DAY & NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

At the time this magazine has gone to print, we have just celebrated National Volunteers Week (from the 17th May - 23rd May 2021).

It was a great opportunity for everyone to recognise, celebrate and thank the millions of Volunteers we have Australia wide, for the vital role they play in our lives and the significant contribution they make in our communities each year!

WOW Day also coincided with NVW

and on Wednesday the 19th Of May we put the spotlight on our amazing NSW SES Volunteers and celebrated the remarkable work you do all year round. Having had a hectic last few months with major flood and storm events, I think the celebrations couldn't have come at a better time and it was great to see the appreciation and uplifting messages from the community for all your efforts. We are very proud of all our fellow Volunteers!



UNIT AMBASSADORS

The VA is seeking members to represent their unit as a Unit Ambassador – this is an exciting opportunity to work with the VA & be part of a state-wide team committed to providing a positive and supportive volunteering experience. We held our first zoom meeting earlier this month with the Unit Ambassadors and look forward to welcoming onboard new members as the year progresses. If you are interested in representing your Unit and the VA, please read through the position description which can be found on our website and send your nomination through to office@nswsesva.org.au

This quarter we are focusing on developing our Member Benefits program and are actively seeking organisations and businesses to get involved and onboard. If you know an individual or business that would like to offer our fellow SES Volunteers a discount or special offer please let us know. We want to make the program beneficial for all our members throughout NSW (metro and regional) and encourage your feedback and input. All current member benefits are listed on our Facebook member benefits page – NSW SES Volunteers Association Member Benefits

Please note when joining that all fields and terms and conditions need to be agreed to or the membership will not be approved.

If you have any feedback or suggestions for the VA please send them through to office@nswsesva.org.au



UNIT AMBASSADORS

Represent your Unit

Do you enjoy building relationships & communicating with others? We are seeking members to engage, listen, communicate & share information about the Association and how it can help members.

You will also be able to provide the Association with current & emerging information on volunteer's concerns and opportunities for support from your Unit

This is an exciting opportunity to be a part of a group of enthusiastic members working with the Board of Directors and fellow volunteers.

The position description can be found on our website www.nswsesva.org.au

Please send applications to office@nswsesva.org.au

Volunteers ASSOCIATION
Volunteers Supporting Volunteers



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Don't forget to check out our Eat Sleep Respond merchandise online and grab yourself some apparel to keep you warm this winter! We have thick ESR Hoodies and beanies and also large SES golf Umbrellas to keep you dry & out of the rain. Our apparel and merchandise are available online at www.eatsleeprespond.com.au and www.nswsesva.org.au/shop



Keep warm this winter in our Eat Sleep Respond Apparel

www.nswsesva.org.au/shop

Shop Online

2022 CALENDAR

Each year the VA publishes and distributes our yearly calendar to Members. All images that feature in the Calendar are provided by our members and chosen by the members (by way of vote). If you have any high definition pictures that you would like to see in the 2022 calendar, please send them through to office@nswsesva.org.au. We are taking submissions up until the 30th October 2021 and there is no limit on the amount of images you can submit.

We are now accepting content for the September edition of the Magazine – if you would like to feature in the next magazine, please send in content to editor@nswsesva.org.au by the 13th of August 2021. Thankyou again to all that have contributed to this edition!



Feature in our 2022 Calendar



Each year the NSW SES Volunteers Association publishes & distributes a yearly calendar for our Members.

All images that feature in the calendar are sent in by volunteers and are also chosen by volunteers - the NSW SESVA calendar is 'For the Volunteers, By the Volunteers'.

If you have any high resolution photos that would look great in our 2022 Calendar, please send them through to the office. We are taking submissions throughout the year until the closing date on the 30th of October 2021.

*** There is no limit on submissions so feel free to share as many as you like. Landscape images are the preferred layout



Send in your calendar submissions via email to office@nswsesva.org.au by the 30th of October 2021

NSW SESVA 1300 073 782





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ADVISORY

Jim Koutsouklakis
www.alphaoneadvisory.com.au

Providing Member Benefits To our NSW SESVA Members



Newell Highway Truck Crash

This is HEAVY Rescue!

Call received 0511hrs – Wednesday 21st April 2021. Car and truck collided. Location – Newell Highway, between Gilgandra and Coonabarabran. Approximately 25kms to the north of Gilgandra.

ACTUAL SCENARIO

1 x heavy vehicle (B-double combination) heading south on Newell Highway, lost control, rolls onto its side, totally blocking the highway. Prime mover remains partially upright (*unstable*) whilst both trailers come to rest on their side.

1 x heavy vehicle (semi-trailer) ploughs into the first truck lying on its side blocking the highway. *In short it was a case of a fully laden semi-trailer, at full speed, 't-boning' a fully laden, B-double which had rolled onto its side, blocking the entire roadway.*

Both trucks are fully laden and 1 x occupant in each vehicle. Driver of first vehicle uninjured whilst the driver of the second vehicle has significant injuries and is severely trapped (encapsulated) by confinement/compression injury. No car involved as per the initial call details.

Diesel fuel was freely leaking from both trucks. Some of this was absorbed by the use of soil and 'kitty litter' – dozens and dozens of bags of which, made up for some of the freight on one of the trucks.

On arrival of the Gilgandra SES Unit, we found paramedics and NSW Fire + Rescue personnel had achieved communication with the trapped patient. This required a climb onto the top of the semi-trailer (some 3m+ off the ground) to a point where one could gain visual access to a portion of the patient only. He was conscious and conversing with the paramedics.

The access to the trapped patient was extremely limited in the phase of initial assessment. Access required climbing onto the truck body and only a small gap was available for visual contact with the patient. The patient was trapped in the cab of the truck (seen above in the red truck body, adjacent the 2 x paramedics).



Members of the various agencies and resources on scene, hold a site briefing to discuss the risks, the various options and agree on a 'plan of attack'. There were a number of risks identified and if these were to be managed. Due to the protracted scene time, the size of the scene, and the number of response agencies involved, site co-ordination was going to be important.

The prime mover of the rolled truck, as shown in the right of the photo above, was sitting at an angle which made it highly unstable. This was initially stabilised by the use of 2 x *Stab Fast XL®* units from our heavy rescue trailer (these were later removed in preparation for vehicle the relocation activity).

We knew from the moment of arrival on the scene that it was not going to be any ordinary RCR call – it was going to be a **complex, heavy** and **protracted** operation.

Due to the complexity and number of resources required, a briefing was

held involving all agencies and services on scene so as to decide on a 'plan of attack'. The early resources on scene included 2 x heavy duty tow trucks with a third and a heavy crane, on their way.

The cab containing the driver was *well encapsulated* by the first trailer and mixed freight contents of the B-double combination truck. It was soon decided that the most realistic option was that of **CONTROLLED vehicle relocation** whilst the trapped driver remained in situ, in the cab of the second prime mover. This relocation was going to have to be highly measured and

“
This relocation was going to have to be highly measured and controlled. Any inappropriate or unplanned movement could well see significant injury to the trapped driver – or worse still, death.
”

controlled. Any inappropriate or unplanned movement could well see significant injury to the trapped driver – or worse still, death.

The paramedics on site, in conjunction with the retrieval doctor, felt the patient was stable and that we had some degree of time on our side, for release. Pain relief, oxygen and IV fluids were being administered.

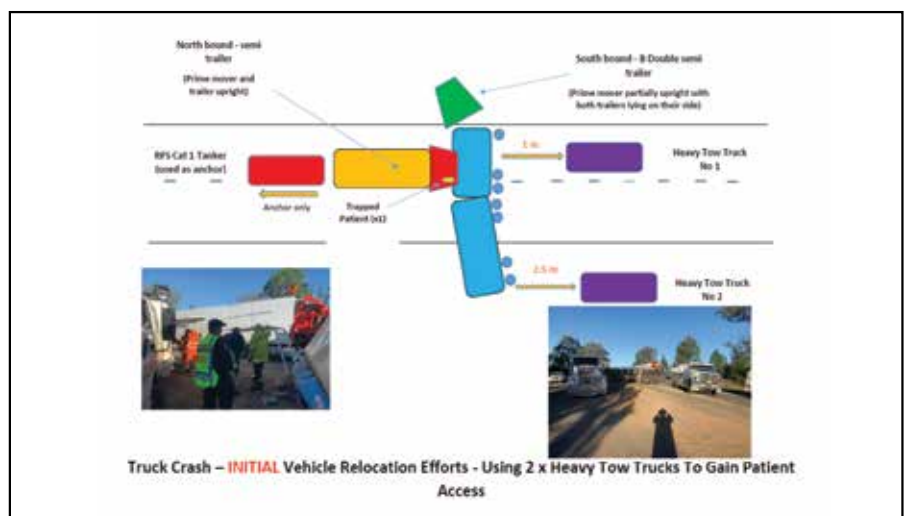
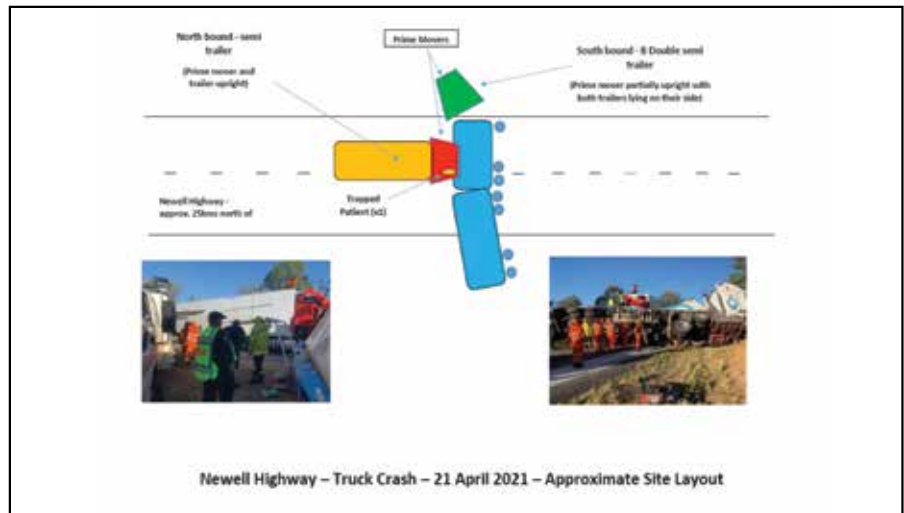
In the event of unsuccessful relocation attempts, 'Plan B' was to involve the dismantling of the truck cab – piece by piece, which would be a painfully slow operation.

We were a little nervous. We had undertaken vehicle relocation activity previous but this was with a passenger car and not two heavy vehicles with weights of 30 to 50 plus tonnes each.

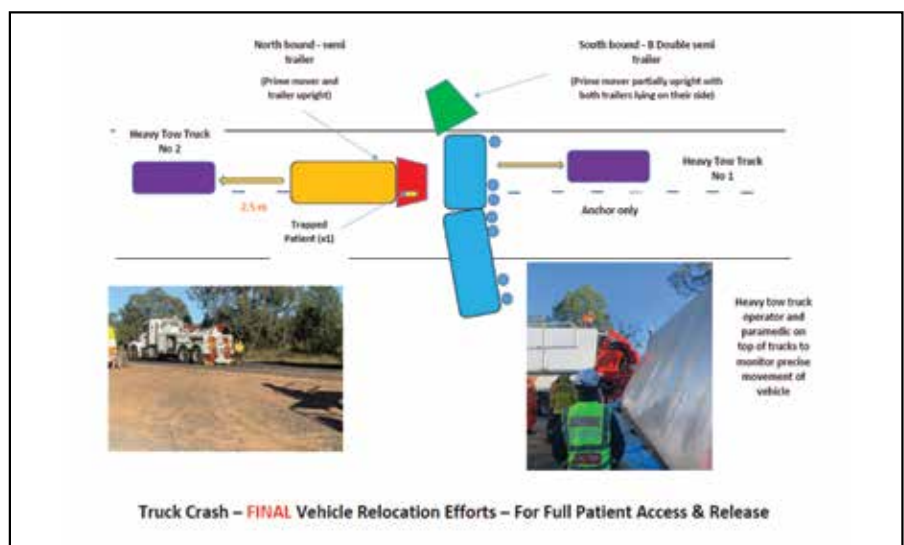
The vehicle relocation was to be undertaken in two steps and a third step would be the actual release of the patient from the truck cab.

During the entire vehicle relocation activity, ALL personnel (apart from the winch operator and paramedic) were moved back from the site for reasons of safety i.e. in case of flying debris or a winch rope breaking. The winching operation was controlled by a single winch operator (with a winch remote control) placed on the roof of the semi-trailer. This allowed for easy visual inspection of the 'moving parts', and easy contact with the senior paramedic

» continued on page 12



After the initial vehicle relation manoeuvre was completed we undertook a 2nd vehicle relocation step. This involved the 2nd heavy duty town truck, being placed behind the semi-trailer and carefully winching, the semi-trailer (as a whole unit) slowly backwards. The 1st heavy duty tow truck remained in place on the other side as an anchor. This manoeuvre gave us around 2.5m of space – the extrication could now begin in earnest.



The initial or first step of the *vehicle relocation* activity was to slide the rear trailer away from the prime mover of the second truck, whilst leaving the prime mover still, for fear of it undertaking an uncontrolled roll back onto it's wheel. It was in a rather precarious position on the embankment. This activity saw the rear of the second trailer move around 2.5m. This gained us some valuable space between the cab, containing the driver, and the trailer. A NSW RFS, category 1 fire tanker, was used as anchor point on the rear of the second semi-trailer to keep it still – to help with separation.



Our portable elevated work platform can be seen being readied for work and at work in the photographs above. A highly useful resource.

» continued from page 11

(who was also on the roof of the semi-trailer, observing the activity and chatting with the trapped patient). This worked well and was seen as safe.

Next it was:

- » Flattening of the driver's side front tyre as it was feared it was about to burst, due to its heavy contact with sharp edges of metal
- » removal of the driver's side door
- » removal of the cab tool box door
- » a lift of the front portion of the cab roof
- » a dash lift.

All the work on the cab undertaken with the aid of our **portable elevated work platform**. This device proved to be a **highly valuable resource**. It made life much easier and reduced risk to both the rescuers and the patient.

The patient was trapped for a total time of around **5 hours**.

Upon release the driver was assessed fully by the retrieval doctor and critical care paramedic on site, prior to air lifting to the Tamworth Base Hospital for further care.

IN REVIEW

Heavy Rescue Capability

Coming from this event, it showed the need for the rescue units on the Newell Highway to have a HEAVY RESCUE capability. Yet again, the **Gilgandra SES Unit** has responded to a crash involving not only semi-trailers but also road



trains and B-double combination units. We will soon see the day we have a call involving a B-triple combination as we are seeing more and more of these on the road, on a daily basis. Just 6 x days prior to this crash we were called to a farming accident which involved a person pinned in a combine harvester – again a machine with a gross weight of some 26 tonnes. It is time to review the RESCUE capability of the Gilgandra Unit with a possible upgrade to HEAVY RESCUE status.

Interagency Teamwork

The inter agency teamwork evident on the day was exceptional. There was of course the standard 'police, ambulance, fire and rescue' type response agencies and in addition we also had the Roads & Maritime Safety, heavy tow truck operators and the aeromedical retrieval rescue helicopter and crew present on the day. All worked together, exceptionally well.

It must be made mention of the professionalism and manner in which



The above photographs provide you with an idea of the degree of damage suffered to the cab of the prime mover in which the driver was trapped for some hours.

the heavy tow truck operators were willing and prepared to work with the emergency service crews. All were calm, professional and skilled.

Another specific mention must be made of the critical care paramedic from the Westpac Helicopter Service (Tamworth) and the manner in which he controlled the medial aspects of the patient care. Calm, confident and professional are words which could be used to describe his actions.

Ladder Access

One need identified was the need for a short ladder, of around 2.5m to 3m in length to facilitate access onto overturned trucks and into truck cabs.

SES Member Injury

Sadly, one of our members received a severe bruise injury to the mid thigh when hit with the end of a set of hydraulic cutters which were thrown backwards by a steel rod which had just been cut. The injury required

immediate medical assessment, ambulance transport, additional hospital treatment in the ED and absence from work for some days.

Geoff Kiehne

Inspector/Unit Commander
Gilgandra Unit

Note: All of the above photographs were taken, for training and review purposes. This was done so with full approval and knowledge of police present on scene.

Warwick Cary Internment

On Friday the 7th May 2021 Warwick Cary's ashes were finally put to rest with his family. The Minister for Emergency Services The Hon. David Elliott MP, the Commissioner Carlene York, majority of Emergency Services Protocol Officers and many of Warwick's friends from NSW SES and other organisations were in attendance.

Kogarah SES provided the Guard of Honour as a mark of respect for their old Unit Commander.

Commissioner Carlene York also presented a framed NSW SES Flag to the family at the wake after the interment.

The Family would like to thank the NSW SES Volunteers Association for the production of 150 booklets that were handed out at the Interment. I have included a message sent to the family from the staff at the cemetery which is very rare indeed.

Peter Lalor

Hi Esther

Just wanted to email as I didn't want to interrupt you at the end of the ceremony, just wanted to say I hope everything went well for you and your family today. Myself and Simon said to each other at the end it was the most beautiful ceremony we have ever done everything was so well put together and very happy the rain held off for you. If there is anything further you require please don't hesitate to let me know.

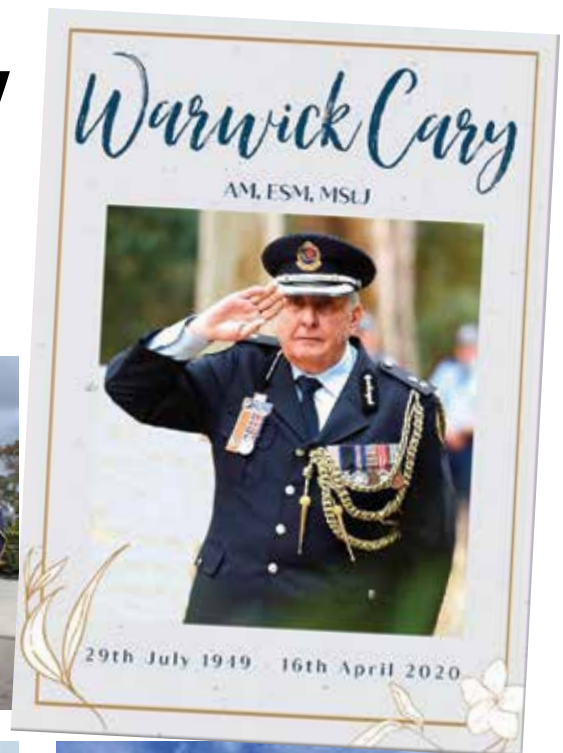
Thanks Esther

Regards

Hannah Langdon

Customer Care Support

Woronora Memorial Park



THE WORDING ON THE PLAQUE IS:

WARWICK GEORGE CARY AM, ESM, MSJ

29.7.1949 – 16.4.2020

In recognition of his Distinguished Service to the members of the NSW State Emergency Service.

Photo Credit Peter Lalor



Port Stephens Family Fun Day

On Saturday, 15th of May the Port Stephens SES Unit held a Family Fun Day at Riverside Park, Raymond Terrace. It was a great opportunity to involve the families of our Unit Members in a fun and safe environment where they could learn more about the SES and the equipment we use.

Everyone enjoyed the day with a BBQ for lunch, fun and games for the kids (with prizes kindly donated by the NSW SES Volunteers Association) give-aways, truck + boat displays and family fun for all the members and their families.





NSW SES Fleet replacement Program NSW SES Fleet Showcase Day

On Friday, 14th May 2021 the NSW State Emergency Service launched the first of hundreds of new vehicles to be rolled out over the next 10 years. The Showcase was held at the Wingecarribee unit with a number of Government officials, SES Staff and Members and staff from other Agencies in attendance.

These new state-of-the-art vehicles are part of an initial \$56.4 million dollar, four year (FY2018/19 – FY2021-2022) commitment by the Government to ensure NSW SES Volunteers are well equipped, well trained and well prepared to respond to floods and storms, saving lives and creating safer communities. We are currently in Year 3 of this program and have seen expenditure of over \$36 million dollars.

The different types of fleet assets delivered included

- » Over snow machines
- » Command,
- » General Purpose,
- » Light Storm
- » Medium Storm,
- » Medium Rescue,
- » Heavy Rescue,
- » A 22-Seater Bus, Snowmobiles,
- » Class 4 Bowloaders and a General Purpose Trailers.

The latest and newest capability, the first of 6 Unimogs were there after recently arriving from Mercedes Benz in Germany. They will be able to provide a significant increase in safety and capability to our members during floods, storms, tsunamis and support operations.

Next Financial year the SES will be rolling out additional new fleet assets including, Community First Responder,



Light Rescue, High Clearance (Flood Operations), Class 1, 2 and 3 Vessels, General Purpose Trailers, Light Storm Trailers, Community Engagement Trailers along with refurbishing our important Sandbag Filling Trailers.

The Government has allocated a total of \$116 million dollars over 10 years through to June 2028 for the NSW SES Fleet Replacement Program so the NSW SES can continue to deliver high quality vehicles, vessels and trailers to our Volunteers so they can continue to save lives and create safer communities.

The NSW SES fleet was previously "a mixed bag" of vehicles with varying levels of equipment and capability,

said SES fleet renewal manager Keith Simmons.

"Previously there were well-funded councils where the local SES unit was well supported and had highly capable vehicles, and there were some councils with less capable vehicles," said Mr Simmons. In one instance, one SES unit was using an old removalist truck.

Since the SES vehicle replacement program commenced, it has replaced vehicles that were more than 30 years old.

"The average age of the fleet is now below 20 years, and the aim of the program is to keep the fleet below an average of 15 years," said Mr Simmons.

"SES volunteers need to have vehicles with modern safety features.



Our members are doing a hard job in circumstances where most of us wouldn't go outside," said Mr Simmons. "They are giving up time with their families to run towards danger when the rest of us would run away."

"SES volunteers do everything from protecting a scene, assisting with searches, assisting with rescues at serious road crashes, as well as supporting first responders when there are fires, floods, and storm damage to homes," said Mr Simmons.

The heavy rescue trucks are equipped with "the jaws of life" to extract occupants in severe vehicle crashes, plus flood rescue equipment, and countless other tools used to save lives in dangerous predicaments.

The Isuzu six-seater mid-wheelbase trucks have also had lap-sash seatbelts fitted to the centre back seats (rather than lap only belts) to boost occupant safety when responding to an emergency.

While Toyota LandCruiser Prado vehicles are used in the alpine region, the NSW SES fleet primarily uses Isuzu D-Max utes and Isuzu MU-X four-wheel-drives across the state to assist with communications technology, deploying volunteers to a scene quickly, and towing vital equipment installed in specialised trailers.

Many of the vehicles are fitted with satellite communications to keep the lines open in remote areas.



Penrith Unit Flood Rescue Team

Response to the March Floods in Penrith LGA

Under the direction of our Flood Coordinator & Deputy Flood Coordinator with the predicted rain/floods coming, a unit IAP and flood roster was developed and disseminated to the flood rescue team prior to the event occurring. As part of the IAP the flood rescue team prepared our flood equipment and vehicles ready to respond should the need arise.

Preparation included pumping up and roof mounting both arks to two vehicles, as well as loading the back of both vehicles with our flood rescue equipment. This consisted of a battery-operated chainsaw and equipment (in case access to a flood rescue was restricted by a tree), our rope kits consisting of numerous ropes along with their hardware, throw bags, reach poles, PFDs, Inflated hose, helmets, Blankets, AED, and Oars. Both vehicles were positioned within the yard for quick response should the need arise.

We were incredibly fortunate enough to have enough flood rescue members to make two teams for majority of the event. During the event, teams often responded together to assist at flood rescues,

but also had the equipment and capacity to operate as a single team should the need arise. We assisted within our LGA with numerous flood rescues, as well as out of area within The Hills and Hawkesbury area. Some of the more challenging rescues included the rescue of 27 Military dogs at Londonderry which took 4 hours, responding in torrential rain at night with poor visibility for long distances and the rescue of two members of the public from a roof at Wilberforce.

Some of the lessons learnt (and some of the things we did well), included members packing extra clothes, a swag and sleeping bag to sleep at headquarters during down time. This was important from a fatigue management perspective & also due to a number of road closures, members were at times unable to get home. Flood rescue members, land-based operators and on water operators specifically came back after each flood rescue completely wet and cold, with members bringing all their clothes to HQ. This meant the team were able to change regularly and put the wet clothes in the drier to dry out. This

went a long way to assist with fatigue management and prevent prolonged hypothermia.

We had an issue with a battery on one of our RIBs that had gone completely flat, while you could jump start it to get it going, it meant there was no tilt control on the motor. We were incredibly fortunate that we identified this during our pre deployment checks in the morning and managed to get a replacement battery. We collected the battery from Battery World just as the rescue for the dogs at Londonderry came in, so it meant we were changing out the battery onsite prior to launching. This didn't affect the rescue in any way while the incident controller was developing a plan with the in-water operators, one of the land base operators managed to change the battery in no time.

As a member of SES for 9 years and having been involved in flood events before, for me a breath-taking moment was the rescue that we affected at Wilberforce. This rescue reminded me of just how dangerous flood waters can be and just how vulnerable we are at times. This rescue involved the launch



of M33 our small RIB with a 25Hp motor. What we didn't realise at the time was the sheer speed of the water. As we headed from our launch location into the main river it became apparent that the engine on the boat was not powerful enough to match the speed of the water. Using various boating techniques, glides, eddy hopping etc, I managed to eventually get to the location only to find a large boil line that we needed to cross to get to the rescue location. It was definitely a heart stopping moment and a moment

that I thanked NSW SES for all the training and professional development that they had provided to me.

During this event, I worked with some incredible flood rescue operators - from land based through to in-water operators, new volunteers that had never experienced flood water before along with seasoned operators with a wealth of knowledge. For me, I was completely humbled to be working with so many amazing volunteers there to do a job. It didn't matter if you were from Penrith Unit, The Hills,

Hawkesbury, or Sutherland, every single member I worked with was an absolute pleasure. Everyone looked out for each other and some even offered suggestions on better ways to perform a task. To me this is what SES is all about.

To the many flood rescue operators that I did work with during this event – Thank you, it was a pleasure working with you.

Sal Suckling

WHS Coordinator | Penrith



Port Macquarie Unit

People helping People and Interagency Cooperation proved essential in managing the floods in the Hastings Catchment.

The BOM suggested we might receive some rain on the coast and some rain in the upper catchment with possible minor flooding ... well 72hours later we had record breaking river heights and a MAJOR FLOOD on our hands with 329 flood rescues and 1200+ requests for assistance within our Hastings cluster of Port Macquarie, Wauchope and Camden Haven.

Friday 19th March started at 0630 with a bull in floodwater near our northern boundary, and then two racehorses in floodwater in the South. The morning continued with the usual sandbag/water diversion requests due to the significant rain in our catchment. Council was kept busy with road closures due to localised flash flooding and then the first two 'human' flood rescue jobs came in mid-morning after



a couple of locals tried unsuccessfully to drive through flood water. By lunchtime the tempo was escalating, requests for assistance were streaming in and our LEMO and LEOCON set up the Emergency Operations Centre and the SOC issued multiple Flood Evacuation Orders in our region.

The following 24hours were hectic with low lying areas being evacuated, storm crews operating and rotating

through shifts, our flood boat operators and swift-water techs managing what seemed like endless Flood Rescue callouts on Friday night, with even more still flowing in on Saturday and Sunday. I remember one request to evacuate 10 people ended up with evacuations for 80 people. "All hands-on deck" and all available resources were being tasked to assist and help manage this major flood event. All the local emergency services were activated with Fire & Rescue, Surf Life Saving, Marine Rescue, Police Rescue, Ambulance, Busways, Council, Welfare, RFS and Essential Services organisations all contributing and helping us to gain intel, assist with evacuations and perform life threatening flood rescues.

I am very proud of our local community especially those who helped



their local community! People who owned boats assisted those surrounded by flood water or helped to evacuate their neighbours. And even those not in the flood zone had friends check in on them if they were affected by the torrential rain to help collect and lay sandbags. The resilience demonstrated by our local community helping each other, was certainly an essential and a vital part of managing this event.

We were also very appreciative when Out Of Area crews rolled in from the VRA, NSW SES, QFES (QLD SES and QLD Fire & Rescue) and even VIC SES. They brought with them extra boats, arc angels, radios, and extremely helpful and qualified personnel to increase our response capabilities. They were welcomed by our Local Units and the wider community. We have had some

awesome and very positive feedback from many of those in our community that they helped during the floods.

This rain and flood event resulted in many homes and businesses being inundated with water, whole neighbourhoods being flooded with power and phone outages across the district. Many of our communities in our upper catchment were also isolated, and even when the flood waters receded, they were still isolated as the bridges and causeways were undermined by the sheer volume and force of the water. However, as the weather cleared, we were able to deploy helicopters to run welfare checks and evacuate others who needed medical treatment, resupply isolated homes with essential food, gain and provide intel on the situation in the upper catchments.

A week later we had closed all outstanding jobs and were now assisting NSW Resilience as we transitioned from the 'Rescue and Response' stage to the 'Recovery & Resupply' stage. Throughout this flood event the main feature was a focus on getting the job done, collaboration and cooperation between all emergency organisations and people helping people. I honestly believe this is why we had zero fatalities and why we were able to manage and coordinate such a mammoth event so successfully – so here is a BIG THANKYOU to all our volunteers and to all those who helped our communities in our time of need!

Katie Blake

Port Macquarie Unit



Randwick Unit

Community Education Initiative

NSW SES Randwick Unit have partnered with Randwick-Waverley Community Transport Service to launch an exciting new initiative to connect with the local community and build resilience.

Community Transport drivers from the Randwick-Waverley branch have become ambassadors for NSW SES, acting as a conduit to provide information from NSW SES to clients of the transport service.

Many of the transport clients are elderly, frail or are living with a disability.

"A personal touch, a friendly chat, can make all the difference in getting our message across" said Regina Böhler, Community Capability Co-ordinator at NSW SES Randwick Unit.

"We have a diverse community, so it's important we use a variety of

ways beyond social media to reach out and connect" she said.

The idea came about after Regina, who works as a casual driver for the Randwick-Waverley Community Transport Service, recognised that several clients of the service had also been assisted by the NSW SES.

"About three months into my job as a driver, I was sent to an address in Coogee to collect an elderly couple and take them to a medical appointment.

"To my surprise I found that I had met the couple who are in their nineties a few years before, having attended an SES job at their house.

"As I recalled the husband was apologetic for calling the SES saying he found it difficult nowadays to climb up a ladder or he would have fixed the roof himself. We were all impressed that at his age he would still

contemplate climbing into a roof space to fix a leaking tile and were only glad to assist.

"So here I was now meeting them again albeit in a different capacity. It gave me a real sense of community and the couple were delighted to find I had been part of the SES crew that helped stop water leaking into their living room.

"I find it immensely rewarding to live in a community that looks after people in need, be it help with transport or having a leaking roof fixed." Regina said.

With the generous support of Ben Whitehorn, Manager of Randwick-Waverley Community Transport, a partnership between the NSW SES Randwick unit and Randwick-Waverley Community Transport was launched. Drivers were recruited after Regina, in her capacity as the Community



We have a diverse community, so it's important we use a variety of ways beyond social media to reach out and connect.

Capability Co-ordinator, spoke at a staff meeting about the SES and the assistance available to clients of the transport service.

"My colleagues are a fantastic bunch and very community minded. They jumped at the opportunity to chat to our clients about the SES and provide

them with information. The feedback from both drivers and clients so far has been incredibly positive."

Randwick-Waverley Community Transport provides an invaluable and much needed service in the Eastern Suburbs. The clients have nothing but praise for the drivers.

Their professionalism and community minded spirit makes them ideal ambassadors for the NSW SES.

"A big thank you to my lovely colleagues of the Randwick-Waverley Community Transport service for helping me get this off the ground. Thank you also to Wolf Villalta my fellow SES Volunteer for assisting me in handing out SES information kits to the drivers," said Regina.

The partnership with Community Transport helps the unit to build community resilience in the local area. With the ongoing support of Ben Whitehorn, General Manager of the Randwick-Waverley Community Transport Service, and Dorothy Tran, NSW SES Community Capability Officer – Metro Zone, plans are in progress to possibly extend the initiative throughout NSW.



Vertical Rescue Professional Development

Some years ago, back when we had a small team of State Learning and Development Officers, regular Professional Development (PD) workshops were run for Trainers and upcoming Trainers in some of our more advanced skills like Vertical Rescue (VR). These helped to ensure that our Trainers were delivering current and consistent training whilst developing their knowledge and experience of new techniques and equipment.

Many members have lamented the demise of this professional development and the Vertical Rescue Capability Development Group (VRCDG) along with others have been asking for something like this to be brought back for a number of years.

Late last year the VRCDG decided to push ahead and do something itself.

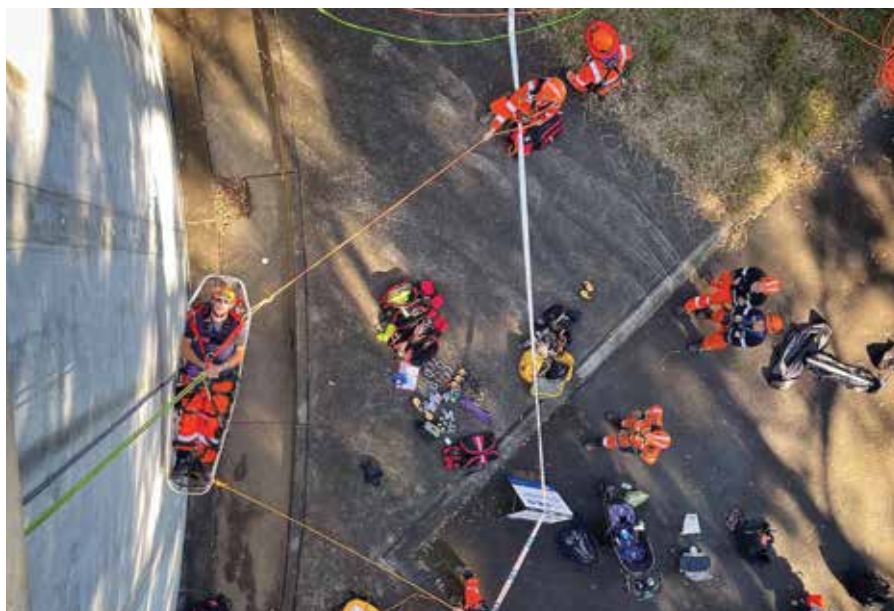
Fortunately for us VR is a relatively small, specialized capability with only 29 of our Units accredited for VR along with a few more who train in it for a supporting role. That said, NSW SES has more VR accredited Units than any other agency so we're a major player in this space, which is even more reason why we need to ensure our VR Units are well trained.

In December 2020 we ran a pilot workshop in Wollongong for our three busiest VR Units, and based on the feedback from this we decided to run a number of similar workshops in various locations around the State to provide the same PD opportunity for all our VR Units.

Around the same time we became aware that a number of our GLR Units were receiving an Arizona Vortex to replace their Arachnipod frames that were approaching their end of life. Given that the Arizona Vortex is probably our most complex piece of VR equipment and there was no plan to provide any training in their use to these GLR Units we decided to include these Units in our PD workshops.

We have run two workshops so far this year (in Queanbeyan and Port Macquarie), with more planned for other areas. The feedback has been really positive:

"PD workshops are essential to gain skills and update our operational capability and effectiveness! Thank you for coming



up, sharing your expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm. We all learnt a lot."

"Great to see the inclusion of so many units"

"PD workshops are a must for capability improvement and networking. Thanks for great learning opportunity"

"Thanks team, was a great day of learning and refreshing!!!"

Like the SESVA motto "Volunteers supporting volunteers" these workshops are being organised and run by the volunteer members of the VRCDG but we've also had some valuable support from the staff in Operational Capability and Zones we've run them in.

Steve Cliffe

VRCDG Chair





Western Australia Deployment

NSW Task Force 001 – Tropical Cyclone Seroja

On the 5 April 2021 Tropical cyclone Seroja formed in the Timor Sea and moved in a south-west direction well offshore but parallel to the Kimberley and Pilbara coast. It interacted with another tropical low (which briefly intensified into Tropical Cyclone Odette) then changed direction and headed south-east towards the Western Australian Coast.

TC Seroja intensified to a category 3 cyclone on the 11th of April and made landfall just south of Kalbarri

in the Central West District in the evening. This was a rare occurrence of a severe cyclone tracking so far south, and the significance of this is that building standards in communities this far south are not required to build to cyclone ratings.

Wind gusts over 100 km/h to 120 km/h were recorded in locations between Carnarvon in the Gascoyne coast to Dalwallinu in the Central Wheat Belt on the 11th and 12th of April; and the Meanarra Tower east of Kalbarri,

a non-bureau site, recorded a gust of 170 km/h (92 knots) on the 11th.

Kalbarri and the nearby town of Northampton sustained significant damage, with 70% buildings with roofs lost or structures destroyed. (Meteorology, 2021)

On Monday the 12th of April, the Western Australian Department of Fire & Emergency Services (DFES) formally requested interstate assistance in response to the effects of TC Seroja. New South Wales agreed to provide



immediate support and formed a joint task force consisting of three NSWSES teams, one NSW Fire Rescue team and one NSWRFs Team. This task force was to be joined by a Victorian SES task force being formed concurrently.

At 0700 on Tuesday the 13th of April, the task force assembled at Sydney Airport and departed for Western Australia. On arrival to Perth we were greeted by the DFES Deputy Commissioner and driven to the DFES Training Academy a short distance away for our situation briefing and updated deployment instructions.

Our deployment concept of operations was to drive a mix of 10 DFES and hire vehicles from Perth to Geraldton, meet up with the Victorian SES task force that evening and commence tasking on Wednesday the 14th, staging out of Geraldton. Our area of operations was to be working within the isolated towns between Geraldton and Perth and that we

would work our way south back to Perth being supported by the ADF who would set up camps ahead of us as we progressed back down the coast.

Shortly after midday we departed Perth in convoy and headed north to Geraldton, 420km north. The only thing that's consistent with any disaster response is that the plan is always subject to change and this deployment would keep its end of the bargain. At our halfway refuel stop in Cataby we met up with the ADF team that had been deployed to establish the base camp. In a general conversation they let us know that the camp equipment was yet to leave Perth, and it was unlikely to be ready for tonight.

It was at this point I saw something remarkable with the team that had deployed. Even after hearing that they didn't have anywhere to sleep for the night, they wanted to take their chances and keep heading north. Their energy and determination to get into

the affected communities as soon as they could and start work was inspiring.

After we left Cataby the effects of the Cyclone started to emerge. Power failure and supply limitations of essential goods pushed affected communities out of Geraldton to southerly towns for supplies and fuel. Adding additional demand to fuel and essential supplies was the tourist population that were returning from school holidays.

As we continued north we drove through the town of Dongara (70km south of Geraldton) where travelers and evacuees were attempting to resupply to either return to Geraldton or continue to Perth resulting in queues 200m long for fuel and the majority of essentials sold out or not available.

On dusk we arrived in Geraldton to be greeted by the DFES Incident Controller and provided with an

» continued on page 28



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updated brief. Our accommodation issues had been resolved but the fog of war continued and the Operations Officer was under the impression that we were bringing response equipment up with us – we now encounter glitch number 2 – 5 storm teams, empty hire cars and 5 roof safety kits. Some creative thinking, a \$25 000 adjustment to our liaison officers purchasing card and a trip to bunnings later and glitch number 2 disappeared as quickly as it presented itself.

The interstate task force also consisted of 5 teams from the Victorian SES. A change to their travel arrangements delayed their arrival until midday Wednesday

the 14th of April. On arrival, glitch number 2 reared its ugly head again and the Victorian Teams were in the same position we were 6 hours earlier. By this point both elements of the interstate task force had been deployed for 30 hours and wanted to get our hands dirty so the Victorian SES teams partnered with the NSW teams and we set off with what equipment we could get our hands on to a town called Mingenew 100km to the South East of Geraldton.

The interstate task force arrived in Mingenew around 13:00 and met the local DFES commander who had been assessing the damage in the town and provided us with a list of RFA's. After a short discussion we set up an operations cell and commenced our taskings. Damage in the town

was consistent with a strong east coast low pressure system, with a lot of the severe structural damage you would associate with a cyclone absent but the standard infrastructure failures of mobile reception and power loss.

The task force spent a day and a half at Mingenew, repairing damage that ranged from slight roof damage through to homes requiring full roof tarping. At the end of the day on Thursday the 15th of April the interstate task force completed 92 requests for assistance with very basic tools and equipment.

Having completed our tasking at Mingenew, we returned to Geraldton and were tasked to the town of Northampton, 50km north of Geraldton. Northampton had



more substantial damage than what we saw at Mingenew. Most of the town had been severely affected by the cyclone and 70% of the homes sustained substantial roof and structural damage. The issues encountered were also more significant with some homes being beyond repair and unfortunately most homes also containing asbestos of one form or another and couldn't be repaired. At the completion of our Northampton operation, the teams completed 24 requests for assistance.

For their hard work, the task force was rewarded with a well-earned meal at the Geraldton Hogs Breath and a return flight back to Perth on an RAAF C-130J.

I would personally like to recognize and thank the team consisting of:

- » Thomas Jory (SEZ) – NSW SES Joint Liaison Officer
- » Elliot Davis – NSW SES Bungendore
- » Paul Davis – NSW SES Bungendore
- » Lily Bokulic – NSW SES Bungendore
- » Sean Henry – NSW SES Bungendore
- » Brad Jacobs – NSW SES Sutherland
- » Julian Weaver – NSW SES Cronulla
- » Anne Davies – NSW SES Menai
- » Taylor Kerewaro – NSW SES Heathcote
- » Robert Cooper – NSW SES City of Sydney
- » Stephen Nielson – NSW SES City of Sydney
- » Patrick Owen – NSW SES City of Sydney
- » Regina Bohler – NSW SES Randwick
- » Chris Nelson – NSW SES Canterbury.

The team learnt a great deal and has taken away a lot about disaster response from their deployment to

Western Australia. Most significantly were 1. The plan will constantly change so be prepared for changes, 2. Be personally prepared – the same consumable items that you need will be the same things the community needs and probably won't be available to you. 3. Infrastructure failure goes hand in hand with disasters – family and friends should be prepared not to hear from you regularly. 4. Accommodation will be basic base camp style accommodation. 5. Food options will be limited. If you can be prepared to accept those take away points you will be one step ahead for the next disaster we find ourselves in.

Barry Griffiths

Deputy Zone Commander



Basecamp.

WA Deployment

Four Volunteers from NSW SES Canterbury Unit were deployed in April to support Western Australia, who had been hit hard by Tropical Cyclone Seroja.

Canterbury Deputy Unit Commander Chris Nelson, who was deployed as Deputy Taskforce Commander in rotation Alpha, said this was an opportunity to use our storm damage and incident management skills to support more than just our local community.

"As the first taskforce on the ground we ended up being the first emergency personnel that the town had seen in 3 days since the cyclone had impacted, the work the teams started really helped set up for the rest of the rotations" said Chris.

Canterbury Volunteer Alexander Christoforidis, who was deployed on rotation Bravo with Simon Tabakanaca and Joe Gebaily, said that the experience had been really rewarding, especially after seeing the resilience of the towns they had worked in.



A team from rotation Bravo inspecting a damaged building.

Only one week after being deemed competent in the trim and cut felled trees chainsaw course, Alexander said "having the opportunity to deploy to such a highly impacted area was a great chance to use my new skills while working closely with a number of other interstate agencies."

"I am extremely proud of my members and the work they did in WA,

even under very arduous situations, there was great collaboration between all emergency services to help the residents affected by the cyclone. They worked tirelessly every day. "

Lenore Nelson

Inspector
Unit Commander, Canterbury



Outdoor mobile tasking setup.



Rotation Bravo multiagency team.



Return flight for rotation Bravo with canterbury members (L-R) Joe Gebaily, Alexander Christoforidis and Simon Tabakanaca.



Chris Nelson (left) from rotation Alpha.

Kempsey Unit Community Reading Group



Three members of the Kempsey Unit who are members of the Community Reading Group read books to the children at Scribbly Gum Dalia Preschool on Thursday 6th May 2021. This is the seventeenth year the Community Reading group have been reading books to children at local

schools and preschools and we read to over seven hundred children each year. The Kempsey Unit members have been involved with the group since its inception and we currently have five members involved who read to the children when they are available on the reading days



Condobolin Unit

Condobolin is a small rural town situated in the heart of NSW and is home to approximately 3500 people. Nestled on the banks of the Lachlan River the town attracts visitors and heavy vehicles passing through on their way to other destinations.

The town is home to several emergency response organisations including Fire & Rescue, RFS, Ambulance NSW, NSW Police and the State Emergency Service.

The SES is the prime first response team for storm, tsunami, flood rescue, road crash rescue and more recently Ambulance Assist through the PAD Program. The team also responds to requests for assistance from other agencies and participate in general land search and rescue, Industrial and Domestic Rescue operations, Police assist and support for the Rural Fireys.

Covid-19 impacted on all SES Units across the country and now that we are back to face to face training Condo Unit has stormed into the "new normal" with training days and nights for the local team, teams from other towns and volunteers from around NSW including greater Sydney.

Most recently Condobolin hosted a training weekend which saw members from Lake Cargelligo, Forbes, Parkes, Cootamundra, Ku-ring-gai, The Hills and The Snowys come together to complete the "Participate in a rescue operation (PIARO)" course which is the building block for almost all other courses offered to volunteers.

Members learnt how to safely remove a casualty from a number of situations and how to keep team members safe in the process.

Following on from this weekend the members of the Lake Cargelligo Unit

came across to Condo for a night of training on the hydraulic rescue tools including the "jaws of life" and had an opportunity to work with the Condo team who gave them an opportunity to use the equipment on a practice vehicle in the yard. Working together and learning together builds team spirit and confidence when coming together at a real incident and adds value to the Service by combining the strengths of 2 units when required.

Both Units are looking for new volunteers and welcome enquiries from interested people. Condobolin Unit Commander, Susan Bennett, said "anyone considering joining this amazing service should come along to training nights for a month to see how the Units operate, assess their suitability and determine if they are a good fit with the existing Unit members".

Flood Crisis

Personal recount

I had always wanted to help my community in some way but did not really know how to go about it. Since I was 5, I had wanted to be a police officer, but I know that I haven't grown and developed to my full potential yet in order to enter that field. 2020 was a shocker for everyone because of coronavirus. I, personally, was dealing with coronavirus, the death of a loved one and losing my job, all within the space of 6 months. I didn't really know what to do with myself and with my life, so I decided to join the SES in late 2020 to help others and to try to learn skills in resilience, communication, and leadership. However, I was absolutely not anticipating being on the frontline so soon with a natural disaster.

We were told in early March that we were anticipating heavy rain and there was a potential for flooding, but in the back of my mind, I had this naivety that 'she'll be right. It can't possibly be that bad, right?' I had never seen nor experienced a natural disaster firsthand, so going into the event, I had no idea what to expect physically, mentally or emotionally. I'm glad I was proven wrong - it was the kick in the bum I needed. It started with attending storm jobs and assisting wherever we could - slipped tiles in the pouring rain or entire ceilings collapsing etc.

Then it all changed. I remember the last job before it felt like it was hitting the fan at a rapid pace. We were tarping a resident's tin roof and using the environment as various anchor points, only to be radioed and told we were being redeployed for evacuations after our job. I could hear the constant screams of sirens every minute or two in the distance, and I had a gut feeling something terrible was happening. I started to panic because all I could think of was my family and called to check in and make sure they were going to be okay. My team also checked in with me to make sure my family was



okay and that I was okay and would constantly check in with me for the rest of the night. I'll always be grateful for that. It helped reduce the anxiety and fear of the unknown.

Over the coming two weeks after the floods hit, I was involved with Rapid Damage Assessment in the Penrith areas and helped the Hawkesbury unit in one of the deployments. I knew before getting into the trucks each day, that it was going to be tiring and emotionally draining. We were seeing the aftermath. In the back of my mind, I said to myself, I might not be doing much to assist those who have been affected, but if I can do whatever I can to provide some comfort, then I can be happy with that. And that is what I did. I stayed, listened and engaged with them as best as I could. I know that that is not my 'role', but I knew that it was something that needed to be done. I remember as I went to leave a resident, she grabbed me, hugged me, and said 'I don't know how I would've gotten through this without you guys. Thank you.'

I couldn't imagine what it would be like: waking up to water lapping



inside my caravan, diving through flood water to rescue my pets; having flood waters rise so high and rapidly, to the point there were tide marks on towels hanging on the line, with my elderly mother coming close to drowning had she not woken up in time; houses newly renovated and caravan parks destroyed; residents angry that they were forced to choose between insuring their houses for tens of thousands of dollars a year or going without. Many chose the latter and now they don't know how to restart.

I still think about these people and hope they are doing okay and that they are getting the financial and psychological help they need.

I hope that we don't experience another major event like this again. But at the same time, if we do, I can take the lessons and experience gained through this event and use it to my advantage to continue to help those in need.

Stephanie
Penrith Unit

Queanbeyan Unit

South Eastern Zone

Disaster Rescue Challenge

On the 1st of May the Queanbeyan Unit participated in the South Eastern Zone Disaster Rescue Challenge. The team consisted of members, Melissa Olin (TL), Kate Tabke (DTL), Stefan Buick, Daniel Bowron, Nicholas Hall, Emma Fowler and Jacob Dunne (and myself as team manager).

Over the weekend, the team participated in 5 rescue stands. The stands tested various skills including working at time in quite challenging terrain.

This year, due to operational activities across the State and team members travelling OOA, the Queanbeyan team only had 5 hours in total to train together. However, this team have competed together now in two-three different rescue comps, with various degrees of experience amongst them and a very strong sense of communication and team work.

The Queanbeyan team won three out of four awards at the challenge, which included:

- » **Best Team Leader – Melissa Olin**
- » **Best Team Safety**
- » **Winner of 2021 Local Disaster Rescue Challenge**

Well done to the other teams who competed and thank you to the training team for putting together the disaster rescue challenge.

Zakia Patel

Unit Commander Queanbeyan Unit





Since becoming a new member of the NSW SES in the Coffs Harbour City Unit, I haven't looked back.

It's a busy and experienced storm and GLR unit with plenty of learning opportunities and mentors. Since joining back in November 2020, I have enjoyed the regular and engaging training opportunities with likeminded volunteers as well as an introduction to Storm/water damage in some recent events which has really opened my eyes to the core roles of the NSW SES.

With experience in another volunteer organization (I'm still an active St John's Ambulance volunteer), it's great to see a different side of volunteering within an emergency service. There are unique challenges that volunteers face every day and it always amazes and inspires me that volunteers give up their time to attend these call outs and events, when they could be at home with family or out with friends. It truly takes a special kind of someone to play a part in the community like SES Volunteers.

There are of course some similarities between volunteer



organisations such as the level of dedication, friendship and constant learning and skills maintenance. Balancing both organisations is tricky, but with support from the people within both, it makes it easy to balance and make the most of each.

The great thing about volunteer organisations like NSW SES is that we have the chance to experience things

that you would just not get in any other type of organization. This has kept me coming back for more, and is what I like about the unique service – you just don't know what you could be doing on the next call out.

It's also great to be learning life skills that I will use in my professional career and personal life. I never would have thought I would be learning about working at heights for storm/water damage, or chain sawing, or cutting people out of cars. These skills set you up for life and make you appreciate the importance of team work and regular training.

Building relationships with members that create lifelong friendships is a valuable part of SES and already, I have made strong friendships with members that I know will have my back out in the field and we build on these relationships after each job, training or interaction.

I am grateful to be part of such an awesome organisation that is kicking goals, saving lives and creating safer communities!

Brodie Cowling

Ballina Unit



PORT MACQUARIE FLOODS

The Ballina team were deployed to Port Macquarie during the flood events and were tasked to conduct Welfare Checks using the Collector Program in the field for the first time in Zone North. The team were received with open arms by the flood affected victims but were only able to stay for two days as they were ordered back to Ballina to prepare for another rain event which was heading down from QLD.



ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICE

The Ballina team were up and ready for the Anzac Day Dawn service – a 4 am start providing tea & coffee to the Veterans. The Unit also provided members to assist the local RSL Veterans Association at the dawn service and the 11 am service, ensuring everyone was complying with the COVID requirements – all people entering the ceremony area had to complete a COVID check in via QR code or provide written details.

It was a big commitment from the team who handled themselves very professionally and were very well received by the Vets and general public.

I was very proud of our serving members.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR KIDS DAYOUT FUNDRAISER AT BALLINA SKATE PARK

Sunday 2nd May 2021

A great community engagement event under COVID conditions with the Ballina unit taking part in the "Our Kids Day Out" event with fellow emergency service personnel and many other businesses in attendance. 'Our Kids' more formally known as the Northern Rivers Children's

Health Fund was founded in 2001 by Dr Chris Ingall. The aim of 'Our Kids' is to improve the health services for children in the Northern Rivers area, by purchasing paediatric equipment for the Lismore Base Hospital and the surrounding satellite hospitals.

The Unit had all their vehicles and Flood Boat on display which was a big hit with the kids and general public and Blinky Bill even came for a look!

Chris Leddy

Ballina Unit Ambassador





Taskforce Charlie in NSWSES Port Macquarie – Community Hub Restock.

SES NSW 2021 Flood Deployment

Taskforce Charlie

Story brought to you by the Queensland State Emergency Service Volunteer Association Media Unit.

When the storm hit New South Wales and floodwaters rose, the Queensland State Emergency Service answered the call to help our friends across the border.

With homes and communities under threat 157 volunteers and staff from across Queensland mobilized. Initially, flood boats and crew travelled south to begin assisting with evacuations, welfare checks, resupplying and helping the local authorities with the immediate threat to lives and property. In the following days, specialist heights and chainsaw

teams were deployed from across the state to help with roof repairs, tarping exposed areas and completing land-based welfare checks, reconnaissance, resupplying of community hubs and clearing access points from debris.

The journey to the disaster areas was not an easy one with some convoys travelling 15 hours to reach their destination, a trip that would normally take 7 – 8 hours. When on the ground the teams worked long days in a diverse range of weather conditions, at first, they endured pouring rain and

later the hot humid conditions that followed the floods, the dedication and commitment never faulted.

It became extremely apparent that the communities the taskforce came to help were deeply grateful for the generosity and support from the Queensland State Emergency Service with many locals reaching out with their own thanks and support along the way. One local business owner in Port Macquarie saying, “We are so thankful you have come to help us; we couldn’t have done it without you.”



Taskforce Charlie in NSWSES Port Macquarie – Restock.



Taskforce Charlie in NSWSES Taree.



Taskforce Charlie in NSWSES Taree – Completing assessments.



Taskforce Charlie in NSWSES Taree – A team preparing for the day ahead.



Taskforce Charlie in NSWSES Port Macquarie – reconnaissance.

In the subsequent weeks additional reinforcements were deployed from as far away as Cairns joining the immense effort assisting the communities of NSW that will spend months, if not years enduring a recovery.

In the true spirit of the SES, taskforce members developed amazing friendships not only amongst themselves but with the NSW SES, friendships that will continue long after the floodwaters have receded.

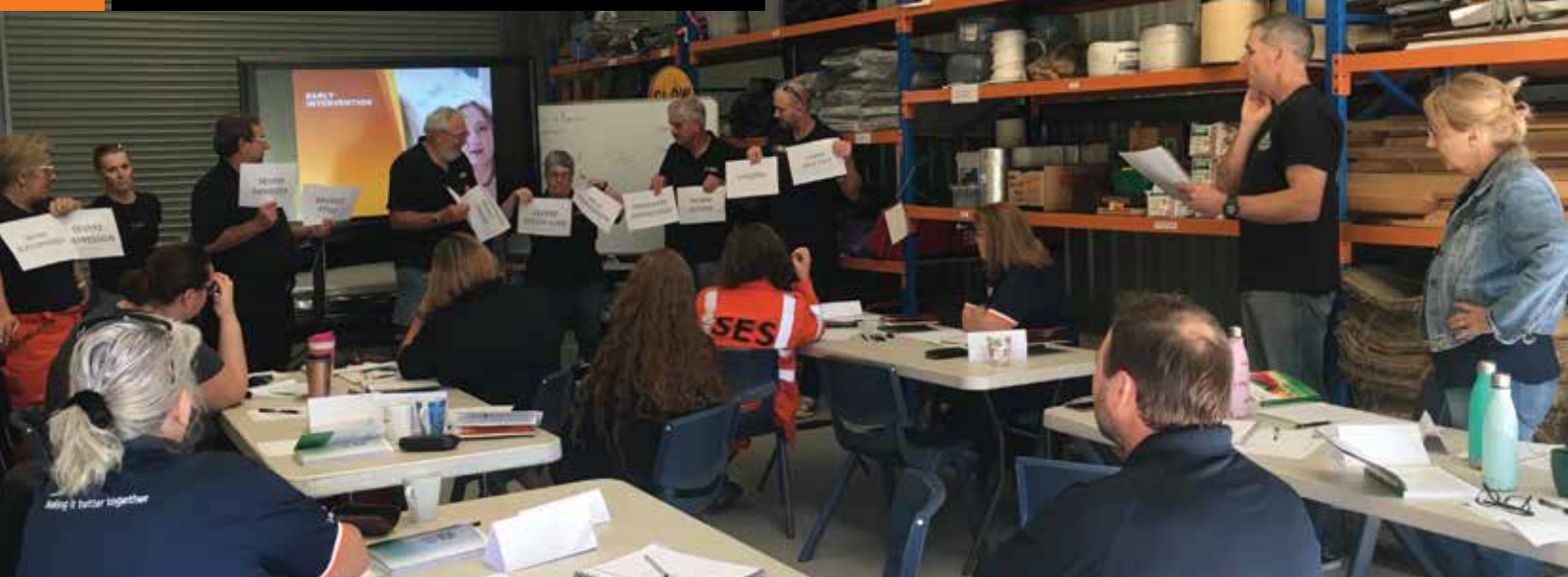
Kahlila Lehtonen recalls how well we all worked together. “Considering

that most of us had never met or worked together before, everyone being exhausted, all the challenges that kept occurring and that it wasn't about who had the highest rank. Our goal was the same, to help the NSW community and the best way for us to do that was to work together. When day two started and the jobs were allocated, our teams hit the ground running having a positive mindset and attitude no matter what we had to deal with. We would get it done together and keep each

other in good spirits. I am sure we all took a turn at getting grumpy due to being overly tired, but the team's attitude not only made it an enjoyable experience but saw us completing the remainder of the jobs in Taree within a day and a half. An awesome deployment, go team!”

The initial convoys returned to Brisbane 5 days after they departed feeling pleased for the opportunity to help others.

Amazing people doing amazing things.



Mental Health First Aid

Ballina State Emergency Service (SES) unit, recently hosted a two day accredited Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course, across a delightfully sunny May weekend. Motivated participants included neighbouring SES friends from Lismore City, Coraki, Kyogle and Northern Rivers Capability units, who accrued a checklist of strategies, applied to provide appropriate first aid care for persons experiencing mental health challenges.

An initiative of Superintendent Commander (SUPT CDR) Northern Rivers Command, Mark Elm, the MHFA course was deemed a priority after SUPT CDR Elm recognised the importance of providing mental health training for members in the Northern Rivers Command, *'in response to many months of back-to-back severe weather operations and recognition of the effect of cumulative fatigue and the effect it was having on volunteers'*.

Facilitated by NSW SES Volunteers Association (SESVA) accredited trainers, Shannon Crofton and Erin Pogmore, the dynamic MHFA program highlighted the *ALGEE Action Plan*. *ALGEE* represents the combined techniques of Approach, Listening, Giving support and information, Encouraging professional help and Encouraging other supports. MHFA course objectives also included; recognising the signs of persons experiencing mental health



problems; simple MHFA scripting recommendations; assisting in the mitigation of mental health crises; and monitoring persons engaged in continuous recovery practices.

Participants comfortably contributed to a broad range of discussions and activities, and positive feedback responses clearly indicated an overall valuable experience. Upon course completion, participants also have the opportunity to complete an online assessment and receive

a *Certificate of Accreditation*, valid for a period of three years.

The combined SES members in attendance, gratefully acknowledge the SESVA for sponsoring the course and highly commend Shannon and Erin for their exceptional delivery and commitment to supporting SES volunteers.

Susan Morrison

Deputy Unit Commander & Peer,
Ballina



Hunters Hill & Scouts

Members from Hunters Hill Unit have been assisting Cubs and Joeys from First East Ryde Scouts in obtaining their State Emergency Service badges.

These badges were an initiative of Western Australian Assistant Scout Leader and SES Volunteer, Sarah Hamilton and Scouts WA, winning the 2019 National Award of the prestigious Resilient Australia Awards, organised by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience.

Youth members in all sections of scouts can earn the badge, which was designed to increase youth members' awareness and disaster resilience. Not only does the badge encourage development of practical skills in natural emergencies, it has also been recognised at the highest

levels around Australia. The badge introduces youth members to the SES and its importance in the community. Completing the requirements helps youth members gain the basics for dealing with emergency situations and understand how the skills they learn in Scouts can help their community when disasters happen.

Our Members Phil and Aidan introduced the East Ryde Scouts to who the SES is and how they assist in the community, before leading the scouts through a range of activities and scenarios related to flood awareness and flood safety. As part of earning their badges, the scouts are making posters that reflect the roles of our volunteers and with the help of their families making up a

household survival kit. A highlight of the visit was a walkthrough of the Light Storm Vehicle.

Volunteer Phil Petersen said, "This is a fantastic opportunity for SES to engage in the community, not only with the scouts but with the extended scouting family having the opportunity to understand what we do and take away key messages about preparedness and resilience. I was amazed at how responsive these kids were and already what they know about the role of the SES and the work we have been doing supporting communities through recent periods of disaster. This is a great program, structured to build resilience and community capability to be safe and prepared for emergency events – and a lot of fun for everyone!"

Sand Bag Filling Kit

THE KIT

Summary of the benefits of the new Sand Bag Filling Kit (The Kit)

- » Easy to use
- » Its use delivers a dramatic ergonomic improvement for this task
- » WHS risk of fatigue and wrist/eye injury are significantly reduced
- » The bag size is consistent independent of the user(s)
- » The kit is readily used by "Instantaneous volunteers"
- » The kit is robust (extensive trialling)
- » Units cannot corrode
- » The kit provides a cost effective solution for the task of Sand Bagging.
- » Volunteer attendance increases as the "back breaking" task is removed
- » Auxiliary Benefit: a significant improvement in achieved in volunteer productivity

Benefits to the individual volunteer

Benefits from using the SBF Kit for a Volunteer include:

1. Easy and convenient to use
 2. Safer working
 3. Filling 6 sand bags at a time
 4. Faster / more efficient bag filling
 5. Same fill in all bags
 6. No carrying of filled sand bags
 7. Delivery of filled sand bags on The Cart
 8. Improved posture – no longer holding bags while filling
 9. Lower risk of fatigue
 10. No bag holding to fill
 11. No extended carrying of filled bags
 12. Lower risk of eye injury – eyes not near the filling operation
 13. Lower risk of wrist injury – wrists not near the filling operation
 14. Increased productivity – sense of achievement
 15. Can safely fill bags alone (1 man team), or in pairs (2 man team), etc
- Any of the trial equipment users will readily recommend use of this Kit !

Benefits to the SES

These include:

1. Improved WHS process for the volunteers (as the Employer)



The Sand Bagging Kit in use.



The Kit – 1 x SBF + 2 x Carts (with OMS).

2. Higher volunteer productivity – with fewer volunteers required for this task
3. Improved volunteer acceptance of the sand bagging task
4. More volunteers turning up during events to undertake the sand bagging task
5. Cost effective solution to the sandbagging task
6. Equipment assessed to AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009
7. Bags are no longer overfilled – dramatically reducing the risk of manual handling injury
8. More reliable results – the SBF won't block – ensuring continues productivity (Hoppers and chutes are prone to wet sand blockage)
9. Compact – no significant storage required between storm seasons
10. Consistency of sand bag filling between SES units (it used universally)
11. Common equipment and related training between SES units
12. The training is quite intuitive – minimising risk of misinterpretation of training
13. Consistent bag filling results by using The kit
14. Improved productivity in this task by using The Kit
15. The Kit cannot corrode
16. The Kit is robust – noting that the Volunteers are often fatigued during prolonged events with the range of duties undertaken
17. No auxiliary equipment is required (Hoppers require Front End Loaders or equivalent to feed them regularly)
18. The Kit is totally portable for remote deployment
19. No auxiliary power is required, no fuel consumed
20. No tyre flats as the tyres are "flat free" – non-pneumatic

Productivity using the SBF Kit (The Auxiliary Benefit)

With reference to productivity however, during the recent major storm event in the Lower Hunter Valley during March 2021, a team of 10 “instantaneous volunteers” (walking in off the street or phoning, then coming in to assist) achieved the following after 10 minutes training:

They filled, delivered or stacked (20m away), over 1,000 sand bags in a period of 3 hours using two Kits with no injuries – sustainably. They only stopped as they had created a sufficient inventory to start the next day! They delivered a productivity of 1.8 man-minutes per sand bag (including delivery). (Sincere thanks to them for their wonderful and unrewarded effort!)

BACKGROUND

A lifetime of filling sandbags by SES volunteers has seen numerous approaches trialled and most have been discarded. The approaches have included a variety of “home grown” manual filling techniques, a range of hopper fed approaches and various mechanised units.

Naturally, over the years, the equipment has ranged from minimal: such as the purchase of shovels and scoops to fill bags, up to \$50,000 each for sophisticated mechanised units.

All of the techniques have resulted in a significant variation in the bag fill, no matter how sophisticated they are.

Why is consistency (of bag fill) important?

The filled bags are used to build walls – in the SES cases – to exclude / divert / retain water. The bags need to be the same size so that these structures can be competently built using similar sized “bricks”. The effectiveness of the walls are compromised when they are built using a variety of sized bags.

The simplest equipment has been overwhelmingly the most reliable.

However, they carry with them the burden of volunteer fatigue, injury and low productivity.

At the other end of the cost spectrum, the sophisticated machines are exceptional for productivity when using dry sand, but do not improve the



Filled Sand Bag uses.



The sand bagging teams in action.



Manual Filling items (other than shovels).



Home Made Bag Filling Item.



Specialist Bag Filling Scoop.



Hopper Type Items.

consistency of bag filling. Also, when used with wet sand they invariably block up due to the poor flow characteristics of the wet sand.

A related consideration for any technique is the delivery of the sand bags to the “customer” which in the case of an SES Unit would usually be to the community member’s vehicle or trailer parked away from the sand



Sand bagging unit (mechanised).

pit – a distance usually of 10m or more. All of this delivery is manually handled (carried by the volunteers) from the pit to the vehicle.

In each of these scenarios, the volunteers are subject to fatigue (and potential injury) in a short period of time.

» **continued on page 44**

» continued from page 43

What re the fundamentals of this process (filling sand bags)?

These are simply listed in point form:

1. Receipt of delivered sand
2. Fill sand bags
3. Transport of filled bags to the customer's vehicle or to the "store"

For all sand bag filling options, people are the key to making the process work, but there is a strong possibility that the equipment used may impede their productivity, impacted by its design and the poor flow characteristics of wet sand.

What is the productivity range for (traditional) sand bag filling?

When using a machine, or a "funnel" as part of the system, the sand moisture level must be low to achieve success. Consequently, they are only effective on dry sand. The result is that this equipment and these techniques usually fail dramatically as most of the SES sand bagging applications use wet sand because of the storms or floods creating the events in the first instance.

So, returning to the simplest of sand bagging approaches: shovel directly into the sand bagging with a delivery distance of say 15m, the following productivity is estimated for each two man team, noting that the productivity may drop to 1/3 of this rate with fatigue:

Approx. 4 bags each 6 minutes (peak productivity) which is 3 man-minutes per sand bag fill and delivery.

Hence to fill say 1,000 bags, this would take (for 6 teams at peak filling rate continuously – implying numerous back up or relief teams to compensate for fatigue) a total of 12 ½ hours.

WHY CHANGE?

The existing system is cheap when manpower, productivity and WHS issues are not considered.

However, the following issues simply remain:

- a. Fatigue of volunteers
- b. Loss of productivity through fatigue
- c. High potential for back, wrist and eye injury from the process.
- d. Congestion at the sand pit face – with resultant loss in productivity and higher potential for injury
- e. WHS risk exposure of the SES management (as the volunteers are in fact employees of the SES, even though not paid.)

A reliable and cost effective solution

One of the SES volunteers with a background in mechanical engineering – and specifically bulk materials handling (albeit at a significantly different rate) sought to identify / create a more effective solution for this task.

He did this over a period of three years through a series of progressively improved designs using the feedback and experience gained over the period.

The resulting solution is a robust and the cost effective multi-bag filler, with the bags all filled the same and further, the filled bags are not required to be lifted until they are delivered to the customer. It is simply titled the "SAND BAG FILLING KIT".

This is the first time the **Sand Bag Filler Kit** has been "published".

The intellectual property for this equipment and all parts of this article are protected.

THE EQUIPMENT



The Sand Bag Filler (earlier version).



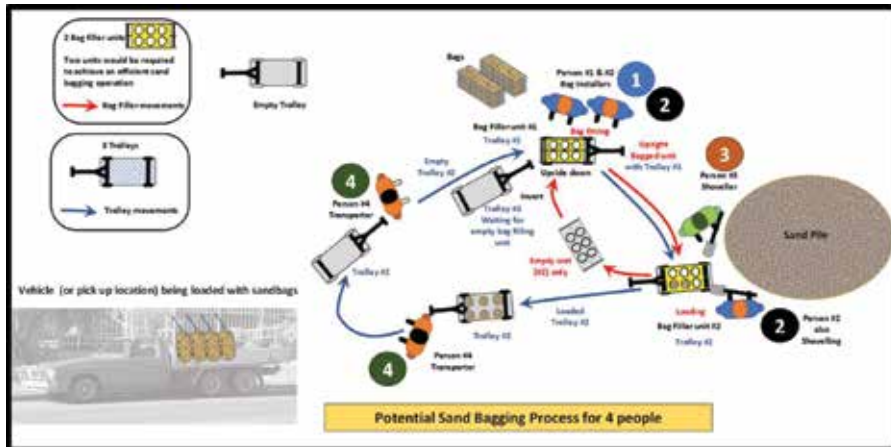
The Cart (earlier version).



The One Man Stand (earlier version)

THE PROCESS USING THE SAND BAG FILLER (SBF) KIT

The steps to use the sand bag filler kit are illustrated below:



One of the filling options for 4 people.

After inverting the SBF, the empty sand bags are fitted – refer to Step 1.

The SBF (with bags fitted) is turned over and placed on the Cart – refer to STEP 2

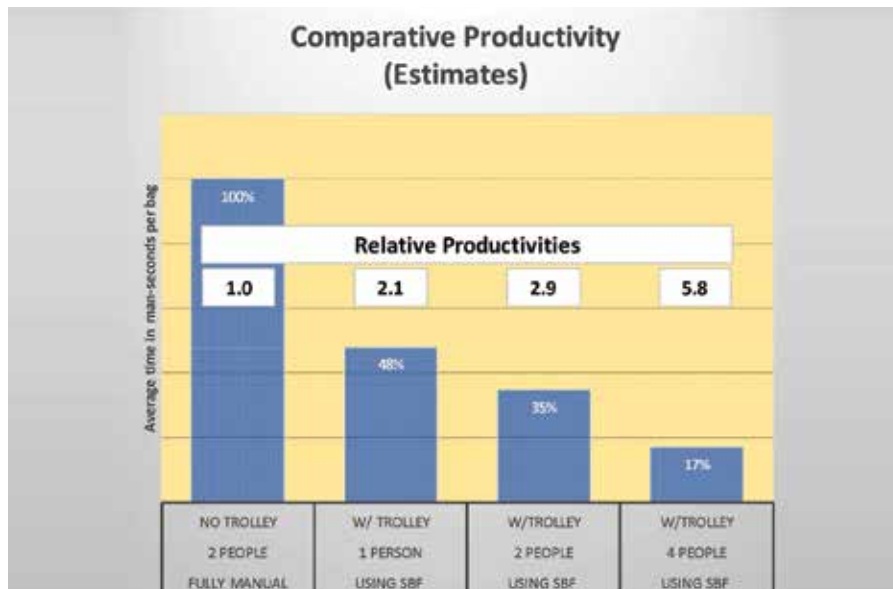
At this time, the SBF is ready to be filled – Refer to STEP 3.

The SBF is now lifted off the Cart (and off the filled bags) and placed on the second trolley ready for re-bagging. The Cart, carrying the filled sand bags is now ready to

transport them to the destination – refer to STEP 4.

The improvement in productivity is an auxiliary benefit to the ergonomic improvements.

These productivity gains are however considerable, and an estimate has been made in the following chart. Compared with the existing 2 man sand bagging operation, a 4 man operation using 2 Kits is over 5 times more productive.



STEP 1 – Empty bags on and “clipped” in place.



STEP 2 – SBF on Cart ready to fill.



STEP 3 – SBF filled and (roughly) levelled.



STEP 4 – ready for filled sand bag transport on Cart.

WHERE DO I BUY THIS KIT?

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



Website: www.tridentplastic.com.au

Email: info@tridentplastic.com.au

Telephone: (02) 4954 5455

Location: Cardiff, NSW

Not all heroes wear capes!

They wear jumpsuits, boots, protective gear, helmets and their hearts on their sleeves.

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