

The official journal of the NSW SES Volunteers Association

the

Volunteer

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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

NSW SES VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION COORDINATORS

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Member Benefits Coordinator

Teddy Haryjanto
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Anthorr Nomchong
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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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These scenes are reminders of the tireless work of our SES volunteers who keep our communities safe.



JIHAD DIB MP
MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Exactly one year ago, I reflected that the SES are always on hand to support the NSW communities during challenging times. Time and time again this has proven to be true. The bright orange colour of SES is familiar and, for me, is synonymous with volunteering service. During times of crises, spotting the orange SES jackets is a comfort to many that help is on the way.

This was especially true for the devastating 2022 floods in the Northern Rivers, when the response efforts of volunteers were invaluable. It continues to be the case during the ongoing long recovery.

During National Volunteer Week, on Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW Day) 17 May, it was NSW's turn to wear orange and pay special tribute to the incredible work of the SES volunteers. I deeply acknowledge the various work and contributions of the volunteers. Whether its raising community awareness through education programs, providing on the ground rescue support, providing corporate support, clearing debris or undertaking damage assessments, the SES represents the best of community. On behalf of the NSW Government and as the Minister for Emergency Service, I extend heartfelt appreciation for your tireless volunteering work and say thank you. It is your dedication and skills that are crucial in keeping our communities safe. I also want to say thank you to your families and



employers for their support as you dedicate your time to assist others.

On WOW Day, I had the great pleasure to visit the SES State Headquarters in Wollongong, proudly sporting my orange tie as a small sign of my gratitude. This was my first trip to the home of the SES and it was incredible to talk with members and better understand what it means to be an SES volunteer.

Over the past years, I have had the good fortune to meet SES volunteers across NSW, to listen to their stories and personally say thank you. From my local Canterbury Unit to the Murwillumbah and Lismore Units I met during my latest trip to the Northern Rivers just this past month, every volunteer has shown kindness and a dedicated commitment to serve their local communities.

It is a privilege and an honour to be your Minister for Emergency Services. I often reflect, what can we do better? What can we do to better prevent the risk of emergencies, prepare local communities to face the inevitable, support the emergency service organisations, including the SES, to respond and recover quicker and build back better? It is not always an easy question to answer and a harder one to action, but I am committed to continually listen, to learn and do what is best to improve our great State.

I am pleased to recognise that what the SES is doing great in is being united by the common purpose of supporting communities in times of need. It is my honour to be your Minister.



CARLENE YORK APM
NSW SES COMMISSIONER

It's hard to believe it's nearly the middle of the year, and Wear Orange Wednesday has come around already. It was a pleasure to see your stories reach so many people and your hard work and dedication to serving the community acknowledged. Not only did you feature in the news, but it was great to see community groups, schools and businesses say 'thanks' and spend time with you. From the photos I have seen, a lot of fun was had dressing up and decorating SES spaces in creative ways.

On WOW Day, it was a pleasure to welcome our new Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Jihad Dib MP, to SES State Headquarters where he thanked volunteers personally. As part of his visit, I had the opportunity to brief him on and the great work of our members and many of the current capability enhancement initiatives. I can report his eagerness, and I look forward to building a strong working relationship with him. I'd like to acknowledge the work undertaken by outgoing Emergency Services Minister for Resilience and Flood Recovery, the Honourable Steph Cooke MP, particularly in securing record funding for our service. I am also very excited to welcome Debbie Platz, who has started with NSW SES in the role of Deputy Commissioner Operations.

In the operations world, our members have been putting their storm-response skills to good use throughout these past windy and wet Autumn months - including the Easter weekend on the Central Coast, Southern Highlands and Greater Sydney. In May, we also received a marine threat tsunami warning for Lord Howe Island. This was an important

In May, we also received a marine threat tsunami warning for Lord Howe Island.



reminder that tsunami remains one of our core combat roles. Members from Northern Zone and our State Operations Centre quickly jumped into action and were able to successfully use the tsunami warning capability on Hazard Watch for the first time.

Moving on to competitions, eight of our units recently challenged teams from across Australia in the Road Crash Rescue Challenge in Coffs Harbour. Well done to our participants who put their skills to the test, and a special congratulations to our award-winners including Port Stephens (Hunter Valley Rescue team), Coffs Harbour and Kiama Units.

Speaking of awards, I'd like to acknowledge four members from Blacktown and Bankstown Units who were awarded for their bravery and service at a special Government House ceremony by the NSW Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC. In separate award ceremonies, more than 250 of our Metro and Illawarra members were honoured with a range of accolades. It's wonderful to see members recognised for the selfless service. Please make sure you nominate your peers for their work in the 2023 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.



Nominations close on 16 June and you can find out more about the nomination process by visiting 'The Centre of Volunteering 2023 Awards' website.

Another recent announcement was our new partnership with AAMI Insurance, who will invest in programs and education campaigns so we can build resilience in our communities. AAMI has partnered with Victoria SES since 2003, and the overarching Suncorp Group has partnered with Queensland SES since 2020. We are confident that our partnership will achieve the

same levels of success and allow for consistent engagement and awareness campaigns across the three states.

There has been further progress with the Member Availability Solution with the vendor engaged and the project continuing well. Based on the current timelines, we anticipate it to be in place by the end of the year. This will allow members to manage their availability, assists with resource planning and operational readiness and helps us quickly respond to the needs of the public. For communities, we released new

flood awareness videos translated into 18 languages for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities. This is an important advancement to empower all community members to prepare for flooding and make safe decisions.

As a final note, there is a new phone number for members to reach free, around-the-clock counselling services. We have appointed a new provider for our Member Assistance Program, so make sure you update the number in your phone to **1300 361 008**.

Stay safe



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

would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new volunteers who have joined the VA this quarter. As volunteers, we come together with a common purpose: to safeguard and support our fellow citizens during times of crisis and need. Whether it's responding to floods, storms, or other emergencies, your selflessness and commitment

make a significant difference in the lives of those affected.

Within our association, you will find a vibrant and diverse community of like-minded individuals who share your passion for serving others. Together, we form a network of individuals who are driven by a sense of duty and a desire to make a positive impact.

Not yet a member? Join today

www.nswsesva.org.au

During the month of May we celebrated National Volunteer week which coincided with WOW Day (Wear Orange Wednesday) This was an opportunity for our communities to wear orange to express their gratitude to the dedicated volunteers of the NSW SES. It was great to see everyone get involved!



ONLINE STORE

Stay warm this winter and grab one of our thick, quality Eat Sleep Respond hoodies! We have a variety of winter apparel and merchandise available through our online store such as hoodies, jumpers, beanies, rigger gloves, umbrellas etc. Enjoy 25% off for the month of June using the discount code.

Code: **Winter23**

EMPOWERMENT TO CONNECT

Designed to empower and support our dedicated first responders and community members, this program aims to equip individuals with the necessary tools to navigate the challenges of today's demanding world. With a focus on fostering mental and emotional well-being, our First Responder Resilience Program offers a range of transformative resources and activities—all completely free of charge

for first responders and community members. Through this program, we strive to strengthen connections, promote resilience, and provide a safe space for personal growth.

Join us on this empowering journey as we come together to build a stronger, more resilient community. Together, we can thrive amidst any adversity.

Register to attend one of our upcoming courses at

www.sesvaevents.com

ARE YOUR DETAILS UP TO DATE?

Stay connected and never miss out on important updates! Take a moment to review and update your contact information to ensure you receive the latest news and announcements directly. If you need to update any of your contact details – please email office@nswsesva.org.au or login to your member portal on our website.

Thankyou to the individuals who contributed articles for this edition of our magazine - your insights, knowledge, and unique perspectives are appreciated.

As we reflect on the success of this edition, we are also excited to invite others to join us in contributing articles for our upcoming September edition. Your voice matters, and we encourage you to seize this opportunity

to showcase your experiences, expertise & shout out the amazing efforts of your units & fellow first responders.

If you would like to contribute an article in our September edition, please send content to editor@nswsesva.org.au by the 15th August 2023.

Stay safe in your volunteering.

Carlee Maccoll

RESILIENCE PROGRAM

Empowerment to Connect

June

Armistide - 17th
Shellharbour - 24th
Narrabri - 24th

July

Metro - 22nd
Wagga Wagga - 22nd
Newcastle - 29th

August

Hawkesbury - 5th
Wollondilly - 17th
Casino - 19th
Taree - 26th

September

Ballina - 16th
Mudgee - 16th
Braidwood - 16th

October

Tenterfield - 14th
Shoalhaven - 26th
Kempsey - 26th

November

Lithgow - 11th
Cooma - 18th
Coffs Harbour - 18th
Glen Innes - 25th

December

TBC
TBC
TBC

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FIRST RESPONDER RESILIENCE PROGRAM:

I can guarantee that investing your time in one of these days will give you a tool kit full of valuable skills and learnings, which will positively impact all facets of your life - personal and professional as well as volunteering.

FRRP is a Commonwealth Government funded program that offers a new and very different approach to mental health training. It is tailored by frontline leaders, for frontline leaders to fill an important gap in first response safety by providing 'psychological armoury' to emergency workers, be they volunteers or service employees.

FRRP came about because our team here at NSW SES Volunteers Association (SESVA), also a not-for-profit, wanted to do something to address the psychological toll that the past four years of bushfires and floods have taken on frontline workers and their communities.

To quote leading academic psychiatrist Professor Samuel Harvey:

"Emergency workers fill a hugely important role in our society, but unfortunately ... they are regularly exposed to different types of trauma, from witnessing distressing events to having their own lives in significant danger."

We partnered with leading mental health workplace consultancy Ordinary Courage, which is headed by AFSM recipients Jim Smith and Mark Dobson, to develop and deliver FRRP.



The program aims to give back to those who have given so much, with a vision that no first responder suffers, usually in silence, from mental ill-health in the future. The keys to realising this vision are empowered leadership and the prevention, rather than treatment, of psychological injury.

We've probably all seen it - the volunteer who doesn't laugh as much, who's still great on the job, but maybe struggling at home. Sometimes, it's the person who quits the volunteer service that he or she loves. It's sad and we want to help, but often we don't know how.

FRRP is not about training you to be 'amateur psychologists', rather to become

even better leaders, and to nurture our frontline leaders of the future.

Our training will empower you to 'reach in' when your fellow volunteers are not 'reaching out'. It will give you - and your emerging leaders - simple, yet effective, tools to connect with people and recognise if someone's not travelling well so you can manage psychological injury and guide anyone who opts to seek professional help to the appropriate clinicians.

The upcoming sessions include practical workshops, which mimic real life scenarios, and give you the skills to start that often hard conversation about 'are you ok'. Once you've done it a few times, armed with our easy-to-



use tool kit, you'll discover the difficult talks are easier than you may think.

The program is delivered by experts who have decades of leadership experience in first response, mental health and volunteering. It is grounded in leading research and developed from programs that are proven to significantly reduce the incidence of mental ill-health, and change the 'culture of stigma', in frontline organisations.

A valuable spin-off of FRRP, with its leadership focus and 'prevent rather than cure' approach, is the 'ripple effect' that the program will create as its benefits flow through and strengthen our communities.

After all, caring for community is why we do what we do.

When you take your easy-to-use FRRP tool box back to your teams, we expect you to start using these techniques fairly quickly and feel confident in the process within a few months. And, you won't be travelling solo - we'll be with you every step of the way, offering follow up tips, insights and contacts through an equally user-friendly app, which you can download on your smart phone or computer.

Importantly, we know your time is precious and we want you to enjoy the training so we've designed FRRP to be fun, friendly and a rare opportunity to

connect with fellow first responders away from the stresses of the frontline.

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

We do hope you can join us and ask you to please spread the word among current and emerging leaders in your community. If you have any queries, feel free to reach out to Gary Emmerton on mobile 0417 281 294 **gary@ordinarycourage.com.au** or Carlee Maccoll on mobile **0406 925 962** or email **carlee.maccoll@nswsesva.org.au**.

Accessing government information

GIPA v PIPPA

The NSW State Emergency Service¹ is a government service as such it is bound by important legislation dealing with the collection and sharing of information.

Two of those Acts are the GIPA – the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW); and the PIPPA – the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW).

In this article I compare and contrast these two Acts to give guidance on when volunteers may use them to get access to information from the SES.

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009 (GIPA)

Government information means 'information contained in a record held by an agency'² which includes the SES.

This Act is intended to allow anyone to get information from the government. It is based on the assumption that making information available will 'advance a system of responsible and representative democratic Government that is open, accountable, fair and effective'. To do that the Act provides for



an 'enforceable right' to access information and says that 'access to government information is restricted only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure'.³ There is a presumption that government information is to be made available⁴ or, in other words, the starting point is that if requested information will

be released and if it is not released it is up to the agency to be satisfied that there is an overriding public interest. It is not up to the person seeking the information to show that they have good reason to seek that information.

To access information an applicant must make an access application. An access application must:



- a. Be in writing;
- b. Clearly indicate that it is an 'access application' ie that term should be used in the letter;
- c. Be accompanied by the prescribed fee (currently \$30);
- d. Give the applicant's name and address; and
- e. 'include such information as is reasonably necessary to enable the government information applied for to be identified'.⁵

On receipt of a valid access application, the agency must decide whether to grant access to the requested information within 20 days (which can in certain circumstances be extended to 35 days). If no decision is made within that time, the application is deemed to have been refused.

An agency is not required to provide information that is 'already available' that is the information is already published on a website, there is a process in place under an agency

policy or Act to allow inspection of the document or it is published in an agency document that is available for free or for purchase.⁶

An agency can refuse to deal with an application if responding would require 'an unreasonable and substantial diversion of the agency's resources'. It can also refuse to deal with an application if the applicant is a part to court proceedings and could use the court's processes (eg discovery or subpoena) to access the information.⁷

The agency can refuse to release information where there is an overriding public interest against disclosure. When considering the public interest, there are a number of factors that the agency must consider. Importantly in the context of this discussion there is a public interest against disclosing information that affects 'Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice'. In particular there is:

... a public interest consideration against disclosure of information if disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to

- a. reveal an individual's personal information,
- b. contravene an information protection principle under the Privacy and *Personal Information Protection Act 1998* ...
- c. prejudice any court proceedings by revealing matter prepared for the purposes of or in relation to current or future proceedings,
- d. prejudice the fair trial of any person, the impartial adjudication of any case or a person's right to procedural fairness,
- e. reveal false or unsubstantiated allegations about a person that are defamatory, [or]
- f. expose a person to a risk of harm or of serious harassment or serious intimidation...⁸

» continued on page 14

If a application is refused the applicant can:

1. Seek an internal review;⁹ If the application is still refused they may:
2. Seek a review by the Information Commissioner;¹⁰ or
3. Seek a review by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).¹¹

PRIVACY AND PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT 1998 (PIPPA)

The PIPPA has much to say about the acquisition, use of and release of personal information. Personal information means 'information or an opinion ... about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion'.¹²

Whereas the GIPA is intended to facilitate the release of information, the PIPPA is intended to secure information and limit its release. What follows is limited to a discussion on the right of a person to access and correct personal information held about them. The Act says:

A public sector agency that holds personal information must, at the request of the individual to whom the information relates and without excessive delay or expense, provide the individual with access to the information.¹³

Where a person thinks that the information held is inaccurate, out of date or misleading they can request the agency to correct their record. The agency must correct their record of, if they are not prepared to do so (eg if they disagree that the information is inaccurate or misleading) they must put with the record a statement by the applicant setting out what corrections they wanted made.¹⁴

DISCUSSION

In this discussion I am going to assume that a person wants to access information held by the SES because they have been the subject of a complaint or disciplinary processes, or they are an unsuccessful applicant for a position or promotion. This discussion is also limited to volunteers as staff members may have other remedies under industrial or workplace laws.

Where a person has been the subject of a complaint, they may want to access the information held by the agency in order to better understand

the background of the complaint and, sometimes, to identify who made the complaint. We can see that the complaint file would be 'government information' and may be accessible under GIPA. Any finding against the individual may be information about that person; and information about their conduct or what happened may be an 'opinion' about them and therefore may be available under PIPPA.

With respect to GIPA there may be a strong public interest in not disclosing all the details of a complaint or investigation. To do so may prejudice any investigation and may put the complainant at risk of 'serious harassment or serious intimidation'. An applicant cannot make a GIPA application to find out about allegations against other members where that would reveal 'false or unsubstantiated allegations about a person that are defamatory'.

In *Speer v NSW State Emergency*¹⁵ Service a former deputy region controller sought access to information held by the SES in relation to complaints that had been made about his performance and the subsequent investigation. The SES released some heavily redacted material. It argued that release of the redacted or withheld information would or could:

- » prejudice the supply of confidential information that facilitates the effective exercise of the SES' functions;
- » reveal a deliberation or consultation conducted, or an opinion, advice or recommendation given, in such a way as to prejudice a deliberative process of the government or the SES;
- » prejudice the effective exercise by the SES of its functions;
- » result in the disclosure of information provided to the SES in confidence;
- » reveal an individual's personal information; and/or
- » contravene an information protection principle under the PIPPA.

Senior Member Montgomery, sitting as NCAT agreed with the SES. He said:

I have considered the contents of the letters and the other information that is available to Mr Speer. Given the extent of the available information, it is my view that the release of the withheld information i.e. the authors' details and specific details of their complaints, would not

assist Mr Speer greatly in his quest to achieve procedural fairness. I note that Mr Speer is no longer employed by the SES and there are no ongoing disciplinary matters involving him. In these circumstances greater weight should be given to the public interest considerations against disclosure than those considerations in favour of release.

In other documents material that would identify witnesses and their phone numbers had been redacted. Senior Member Montgomery confirmed the decision to withhold that information. He said:

I accept that there is a public interest consideration in favour of release of this information because it would allow Mr Speer to ascertain the identities of those who were prepared to give evidence in relation to him... However, I accept that if this information were released, it may mean that witnesses would be more reluctant to give evidence in the future. In the circumstances, given that most of the information contained within these documents has been released, it is my view that the public interest consideration against disclosure should be given greater weight than those in favour of release.

What follows is that the GIPA cannot be used to reveal all information. An agency like the SES may receive information that it does not act upon or which triggers an investigation but it does not want to release all that information because, if it did, others would be reluctant to report perceived misbehaviour. Even if it turns out that a report was wrong or misguided it does not mean that the agency does not have an interest in encouraging people to report and in assuring people that their disclosure will be kept confidential. A confidential report may start an investigation that discovers misconduct but, at any disciplinary proceedings, that initial report may not be relied upon as there is sufficient evidence from other sources to establish the alleged misconduct. In those circumstances, as in Speer's case, the agency may resist an application to release all the information revealing instead only the information it intends to rely on.

If there are disciplinary proceedings and that is recorded in a member's personal file, the member may access



that file under PIPPA. They may also lodge their own statement if they think the information recorded is 'inaccurate' but that is not a chance to relitigate the issue. If for example an officer finds that alleged misconduct has been proved, that is an accurate record even if the member thinks the finding should not have been made. A record that the finding was made is accurate so an agency would be correct to refuse to remove that finding just because the member thinks the finding itself was inaccurate. Equally if a member applied for an appointment and was refused because a senior officer recorded an opinion that the member was not the best applicant, the record of that 'opinion' would be 'personal information' but it would not be inaccurate if it was a genuinely held opinion.

CONCLUSION

The GIPA and PIPPA are important Acts that, on the one hand, facilitate the release of information whilst, on the other hand, protect personal information.

Members of the SES can rely on both Acts to access information held by the SES. With respect to GIPA that may be information directly relevant to them and their service or it may be any information held by the SES. There are limits on what must be released and information that may prejudice the wellbeing of others or prejudice the operations of the SES may be withheld.

With respect to PIPPA the right to access information is guaranteed but the type of information that may be access is limited to personal information about the applicant only. There is a right to have information on file corrected or, if not corrected, to at least allow the applicant to record what they think should be recorded so any person who has access to the record can see what the applicant wanted to say about the recorded information.

Michael Eburn

Australian Emergency Law

www.australianemergencylaw.com

REFERENCES

1. State Emergency Service Act 1989 (NSW) s 9; Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (NSW) Sch 1, Part 2.
2. Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) s 4.
3. Ibid., s 3.
4. Ibid., s 5.
5. Ibid., s 41.
6. Ibid., s 59.
7. Ibid., s 60.
8. Ibid., s 14.
9. Ibid., s 82.
10. Ibid., s 83.
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12. Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) s 4.
13. Ibid., s 14.
14. Ibid., s 15.
15. [2018] NSWCATAD 226.



Randwick Unit community engagement

On Sunday, 7th May 2023 the Randwick Unit conducted our first community engagement event for 2023.

Held at the Reconciliation Catholic Church at Phillip Bay, we greeted parishioners as they left Sunday service.

The aim of the event was to:

- » Build trust between indigenous communities and the SES.
- » Develop collaborative relationships and partnerships between community members and SES.

The weather on the day was a mixture of heavy rains and sunny skies and helped demonstrate that the SES are out in any kind of weather.

We provided SES toolkits made up of various storm and flood information, gave reminders on the importance to check gutters and also provided community members an opportunity to have a look around our SES truck. We were greeted warmly by all who visited, and the packs were well received.

There were many thanks from the community for all the work the SES does in the community.

As you can see from the top photo, the parishioners helped get into the spirit of spreading the message to never drive, ride or walk through floodwaters, turn around at a flooded road and get ready for storms and trim overhanging trees.

Kelly Crawford





How I became the Medic for the State Road Rescue Challenge

At the start of 2023 an expression of interest was issued for the State Road Rescue Challenge to be held in Coffs Harbour over the first weekend in May.

In response to this I contacted all our members that are on our General Land Rescue callout list to determine if we had sufficient interest in attending the event. I actively encouraged members to apply as it is a great learning experience and the training/professional development that members experience over the weekend is unmatched.

In addition to encouraging members to apply I challenged people to think about the role that they would like to play within the team. The rescue team comprises of the Team Leader, Primary and Secondary Medic/First Aider, Primary and Secondary Tool Operator with the sixth member an allrounder. Additionally, we needed a reserve (in case of illness or injury) and a Team Manager to ensure we were where we needed to be.

For the past several years I have been the Team Leader for challenges and was keen to step back into a more mentoring/coaching role to enable others to gain experience in this role and receive feedback from knowledgeable peers in how they perform under pressure. I was pleased that enough members expressed an interest in all of the roles with the exception of primary medic. In the interest of ensuring we were able to participate and to also put myself out of my comfort zone I agreed to be the medic for the team.

The final team (after a few changes) consisted of Katie Blake as Team Leader, Alfred Portenschlager and myself as medics, Kevin Sherwood and Scott Witchard as Tool Operators and Brendon as all-rounder.

Will Stegall was our Team Manager and Sereena Ward our Reserve.

I have never been the primary medic for either the Disaster Rescue Challenges or the State Road Rescue Challenges and have always had members that have undertaken this role to a high standard. Whilst I have participated in numerous challenges I was nervous in preparation for the event and due to operational and training activity we were unable to schedule any dedicated first aid training that was targeted specifically to the event.

Armed with the knowledge I had recently completed my CPR and advanced resuscitation and oxygen therapy and my trusty notepad we packed our bags and headed to Coffs Harbour.

» continued on page 18



The Port Macquarie Team has definitely a family-based team with Sereena and myself bringing our two boys, Scotty bringing Kelly and Abby (Wife and daughter) and over the course of the weekend Alfred's extended family and Kev's family also attended.

Friday consisted of a Learning Symposium where we juggled family to ensure we actively participated in all activities and I had the change to tryout some new first aid / trauma skills and techniques and Katie decided who was going to compete in each of the challenge events over the weekend. Our first activity was a learning pit where unfortunately Brendon was injured (biggest injury was to his pride) which prevented him from competing in the remaining activities. A quick team change later and Sereena was slotted in the all-rounder position and we continued on.

After some members completed the rescue challenge and Industrial and Domestic Rescue we came together as a full team for our first simulated road crash rescue. Suddenly I found myself crawling into a car on its side to gain access to the two casualties and commence treatment. Luckily Alfred was not too far behind to take over management of one casualty and away we went. I am not sure where the next 30 minutes went however the team successfully extricated the first casualty and were in the process of releasing my casualty when time was called. Unlike a genuine rescue where you continue until everyone is released from the vehicles these are time based. The feedback from the judges was valued and learning outcomes reviewed and discussed with the team – we had survived the first day mostly intact!

We commenced the Sunday with another learning pit, moved on to an advanced resuscitation scenario where the entire team had to undertake CPR for 12 minutes rotating through all of the rolls and then continued onto our second simulated road rescue. For some reason once again the biggest member of the team (me) ends up in the vehicle with the casualty whilst the team worked around us to release a significant entrapment. Unfortunately, time was not on our side and we probably needed another 3-5 minutes to complete the rescue. We were fortunate to have some awesome feedback from the judges and some productive discussion around what we could have done to reduce the time taken. I was given some healthy feedback with my role as medic – being the first time in the role it was easy to



get distracted with the rescue around me and not have my entire attention on the casualty.

Our final stand of the day (and the event) was the Trauma Stand – this is a two-person event to test your first aid / medic skills with highly experienced judges watching your every move – little did I know what was to follow... Katie and myself walked out to the scene of an older gentleman having been gored by a bull at a rodeo. Before being completely overwhelmed I remembered some wise advice from a previous medical assessor:

“You don’t rise to the occasion your sink to your level of training – do the basics, do them well and do them again.”

After being assured that the bull had departed the arena of we went moving the gentleman into

the stable side position, ensured we had an ambulance on the way and commenced managing each of his (simulated) injuries as we went. These injuries included head trauma, limited consciousness and a wheezing chest wound due to the bull horn still imbedded. During this I was also able to take a series of observations (pulse rate, breathing etc) and manage our casualty until advanced care arrived.

Again, we were then debriefed by the judges into our performance and some learning outcomes. This is why we attend these challenges to learn and grow our members so that these learning outcomes can be taken back to the unit and passed on- we have already simulated some of the scenarios that were undertaken over the weekend back at the Unit. Personally I know I have learnt from

the weekend and I have witnessed our members confidence in their roles improve and this can only translate to a better outcome for our community when we are called to assist.

I wasn’t convinced that I had done particularly well with the Trauma however when the results were released Katie and myself were the top placed team in the Trauma Challenge. Port Macquarie was the third placed SES Team overall and our congratulations go to Coffs Harbour – First SES Team and Port Stephens – Second SES Team. A huge thanks also needs to go to everyone that assisted with the organisation and running of the event – without these people Challenges could not exist.

Michael Ward

Team Medic
Port Macquarie SES



The Ultimate Learner Log Book Run

NSW SES Shellharbour City Unit took part in the Shellharbour City Council Ultimate Learner Log Book Run on Sunday 19th March, 2023.

The event was held at Skiway Park, Oak Flats from around 11:00am through to 2:00pm, with two groups of approximately 20 learner drivers and their driving supervisors attending.

Volunteers from Shellharbour City Unit included Richard, Tim, Ray, Jesse and Tom. The team provided information to the learner drivers around the dangers of driving through floodwater and the implications of doing so. There was a strong focus around the risks of avoiding warning signs and continuing to drive down closed roads as well as what to do if they were find themselves in the unfortunate situation of being in a car in floodwater. Drivers learned that it takes a considerably small amount of water to enable a car to float with many not realising the power even slow moving water can have.

With generous support from the NSW SES Volunteers Association, learner drivers were each issued a take



home NSW SES tote bag with further information about the dangers of floodwater as well as information about driving in storm events. Each learner was also given a Paddy Platypus plush toy, which we said could be kept in their cars to remind them of their commitment to us to never drive through floodwater. This was very well received!

Attached are some photos from the days event and we look forward to being able to support the community and more your drivers with future Learner Log Book runs.

Timothy Lashbrook
Senior Operator, Shellharbour City





Unique collaboration combines art and emergency preparedness to build resilient communities

NSW SES City of Sydney Volunteers working with local artists.

The increasing number and intensity of weather events around the world have highlighted the importance of building resilient communities. One way to do this is by strengthening the bonds between neighbours and working together to adapt to changing conditions.

In time of crisis, neighbourhoods come together to provide vital support, whether it's through sharing resources, helping with clean-up efforts, or providing emotional support to those affected by disaster.

The recently held Hyperlocal – Emergence workshop series, led by artist Latai Taumoepeau involving volunteers of the NSW SES City of Sydney Unit, is an excellent example of how communities come

together to build resilience and prepare for emergencies.

Latai is a well-renowned and award-winning performance artist whose practice is strongly influenced by her homelands, the Kingdom of Tonga, and her birthplace of Sydney, Gadigal land.

Inspired by Latai's own climate change advocacy for Pacific Island Nations, the workshops fused live art with emergency preparedness, thus allowing young people and their guardians an opportunity to learn critical emergency response skills while also exploring the importance of community and local resources.

Working with Latai and emerging artist and educator Paris Taia, NSW SES City of Sydney Unit volunteers gave context to emergency preparedness and led discussions on flood safety and the

role of the NSW State Emergency Service in time of disasters. Teaching practical skills, such as knot tying, setting up tarps for shelter, and the use of a flood rescue throw-bag made the workshops highly interactive, as participants explored themes such as emergency events, access and shelter, food, and medicine as well as flood safety and awareness.

Participants also visited the NSW SES City of Sydney unit, viewed NSW SES Flood Safety videos, as well as being taught the dangers of playing in flood waters via the use of a 'dirty water' tub simulating contamination typically found in flood waters.

Through live art, the workshops gave voice to the concerns of young people about climate change and its impacts on their future. By exploring tough topics such as floods, heatwaves, and



emergency preparedness, participants learned critical emergency response skills and gained an understanding of the importance of community and local resources in times of crisis.

A big thank you to the PACT Centre for Emerging Artists hosting the event, and to Latai Taumoepeau for her inspiring work and for reaching out to the NSW SES City of Sydney Unit.

Thank you also to our fabulous SES volunteers, Leila, Pat, Cole, Nic, Rosie and Sione.

Photos by Sarah Malone

(PACT Centre for Emerging Artists) and Seini Taumoepeau

Regina Böhler

Manager, Community Preparedness,
NSW SES City of Sydney Unit



Being Well

Your Health, Our Team, Everyone's Wellbeing

In May 2023, the Being Well Program will celebrate a couple of milestones:

- » We introduced a new Member Assistance Program (MAP) on the 1st May to support all members health and wellbeing
- » In late May, the Minister will be launching our new Being Well Strategy 2023 -2024 and alongside it, our new brand - Being Well – Your Health. Our Team. Everyone's Wellbeing

NEW MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MAP)

Following a tender process in March 2023, NSW SES welcomed and onboarded a new Member Assistance Program provider, TELUS Health. TELUS Health will work with NSW SES to support member health and wellbeing by providing a confidential and free counselling services, information and resources, connections to community agencies and referrals to counselling (by video or in-person).

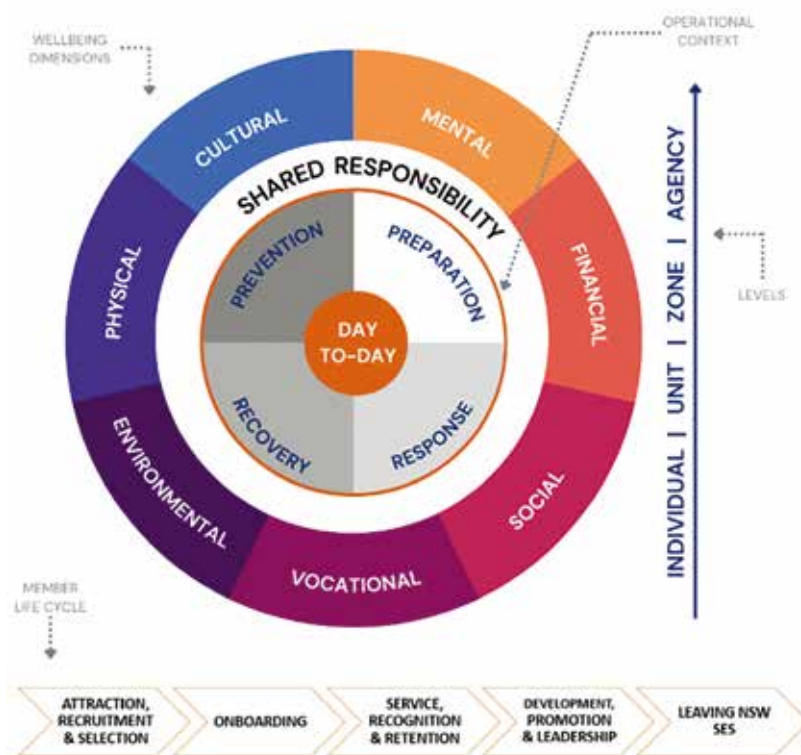
The service is available to all members, volunteers and staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling: **TELUS Health on 1300 361 008**

WHY ACCESS MAP?

At various times in our lives, we may need additional support to help manage adversities we face. Whether this is increased stress or pressure due to prolonged operational activity, a family matter, financial pressure, or personal conflict, our new MAP provider is here to provide members with compassionate support, resources to support holistic care and support members through counselling and other wellbeing services.

For managers, commanders and leaders, a new Manager Assist Service is also available for confidential coaching and advisory for all people management related matters.

When using the MAP service, you can speak with a qualified counsellor specifically selected to best support your situation.



WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO ME?

Areas of support include, but are not limited to:

- » Mental health and wellbeing, including stress, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, gambling or other addictions, grief and loss, crisis, and trauma.
- » Financial and legal topics including budgeting, financial worries, and reducing debt and legal matters.
- » Relationships and family matters including personal relationships, childcare and parenting, education and adoption.
- » Work and volunteering issues – stress, interpersonal conflict in your role, burnout, and workplace change.
- » Manager Assist- confidential coaching and advisory service for all people leaders (volunteers and staff), including commanders, team leaders, managers, and other leaders.

COUNSELLING SESSIONS

All members will have access to five (5) x 60-minute counselling sessions every year. Additional sessions may also be available upon request. All requests are managed confidentially by the Manager of Wellbeing Support.

If you currently use the existing MAP provider, Converge International, you may continue your sessions until you have exhausted your allocation. You will then have access to five (5) x 60 minutes sessions through the new provider.

WHY DID WE CHANGE?

As part of our Being Well Strategy 2023 -2024, we want to offer all members access to counselling and holistic wellbeing support and to encourage members to proactively manage their wellbeing. TELUS Health offers members counselling services and a range of other lifestyle and wellbeing services.

BEING WELL STRATEGY 2023-2024

In support of NSW SES's, agency-wide strategic goal to Embed our safe, inclusive and ethical culture, we have been working towards enhancing our existing health and wellbeing systems, initiatives, and services tailored to our diverse membership.

Through consultation workshops with volunteers, staff, Senior Leadership Team, and the SES Volunteer Association, we have developed an agency-wide and member-informed Being Well Strategy 2023-2024. It promotes holistic wellbeing of our members,

further equipping them to continue to support our communities across NSW.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

The NSW SES is committed to enhancing the holistic wellbeing of our members at all stages of their member journey. The Being Well Strategy 2023-2024 will assist us in creating a culture centred around wellbeing for all members. The Strategy benefits every member across the agency, and will be implemented by and for all Zones, Units and Directorates.

HOW WILL OUR MEMBERS BENEFIT FROM THE BEING WELL STRATEGY?

- » Owned by the whole agency, the Strategy outlines multiple programs of work that will benefit all members, leaders across the agency
- » The Strategy includes a compressive Being Well Framework – the way that we view and implement wellbeing practices at NSW SES
- » The Strategy provides strategic and cohesive goals and outcomes to promote wellbeing, prepare and equip leaders and members to support each other and themselves, and prevent risks and harm to our members wellbeing.

NSW SES Leadership Capability Framework

In the coming months NSW SES will be launching a Leadership Capability Framework.

The Framework has been developed to support all members in their leadership development and growth and aims to assist our people to recognise areas of strength and areas for further development.

The Leadership Capability Framework has been developed as part of the Leader and Commander Strategic Initiative.

The Framework, in combination with other projects as part of this initiative, seeks to:

- Strengthen leadership at every level, with a focus on working collaboratively to deliver quality outcomes
- » Develop leaders who model an inclusive culture through their behaviours and develop leadership capabilities in others
- » Improve clarity and alignment of roles and responsibilities to support common goals
- » Increase empowerment, decision-making, accountability, and authority
- » Support leaders to effectively lead and manage change
- » Build our organisational leadership as we nurture future leaders and map their progress.



The Leadership Capability Framework covers seven areas of leadership: Self, Relationships, Ethics, Influence, People, Strategic Agility and Results. NSW SES will be developing learning resources to support our members in further developing capabilities across these seven areas.

NSW SES recognises that leadership can be demonstrated by all our members. You do not need to have a specific title to be a leader and all members may need to take on leadership responsibilities

while being placed into challenging situations from time to time, especially when operational.

"Aspiring leaders often mistakenly believe that they should spend the bulk of their time trying to improve their weaknesses. While we all have areas we can improve, when it comes to building influence, your advantage will lie in discovering your strengths and using them to the best of your ability." (Wiley, 2023)

When the Framework is ready to be launched on mySES we will provide further information to all members. Our plan is to launch the Framework as a live document for the first twelve months to enable our members to let us know their thoughts, feedback and experience as they are using the document.

We would like to thank all our members that have already provided input into the design and content of the Framework. We would also like to thank AFAC (Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council) for supporting NSW SES in the development and execution of the NSW SES Leadership Capability Framework.

Zones take action on the Volunteer Voice Survey

The Volunteer Voice Survey is an important platform for you to have your say and tells us about your volunteering experience and how we can continually improve our service delivery.

Since the Commissioner released the State-wide results, Zone teams have been busy preparing action plans that will address some of the concerns raised in the Volunteer Voice Survey and we will work towards enhancing or improving the experience of all NSW SES members.

Zone reports have been shared with members for the first time and provide further insights around clusters, gender, age, tenure, and communication methods.

The Zone Action Plans will focus on developing initiatives that facilitate

stronger engagement between Zone staff and members, while also driving positive outcomes in areas like communication, development, targeted recruitment, culture, safety, health and wellbeing.

MEMBER CONSULTATION

As part of this process, Zones have begun engaging with members around the Survey results, inviting feedback and involvement.

Some have chosen to establish volunteer Working Groups to help create and implement the action plans

and guide the initiatives to ensure they have constructive outcomes for members.

Please consider collaborating with your fellow Unit members and Zone leaders to identify areas and initiatives that will improve your experience with the agency.

We strongly encourage all members to participate in the next Volunteer Voice Survey which will open later this year.

If you have any questions about the survey results, please contact the Volunteer Strategy team at **experience@ses.nsw.gov.au**

Triple search and rescue at Bungonia

On 18th of March at approximately 1900 hrs I was requested (as a member of Windellama S.E.S.) to assist paramedics with the rescue of an injured bushwalker at Bungonia.

On arrival our team were advised that there were now 3 concurrent search and rescue operations underway.

The days temperature had been over 30°C, a cut off point for safe hiking in the canyons and gorge.

A member of the cave rescue group found an injured solo hiker in Slot Canyon and raised the initial emergency response. A group of experienced hikers then raised the alarm for a group including 4 children who had descended into the Shoalhaven Gorge. (despite specific warnings from the hiking group).

The hiking group assisted half of the Shoalhaven group up the Lookdown ridge. Earlier a Canberra rescue

helicopter had winched a paramedic and equipment into the Slot Canyon.

Meanwhile the cave rescue member led police rescue and paramedics into the canyon to extract the injured walker. Following this rescue the police rescue then proceeded into the Shoalhaven Gorge to rescue the last 4 hikers. Meanwhile we assisted paramedics and cave rescue to return into Slot Canyon and bring out the helicopter paramedic and his equipment. Cave rescue were then going to do a fourth descent after dawn to retrieve personal equipment.

Groups assisting were cave rescue, Canberra helicopter & paramedic,

Sydney paramedics, Crookwell & Goulburn ambulance crews, police rescue, Goulburn police, a hiking group and Windellama S.E.S.

Several people asked me where the national parks ranger was and were surprised to learn that the ranger station has been unmanned for many years.

Bungonia is an important recreational facility for people from Sydney & Canberra, but it must be treated with caution under changing weather conditions.

David Stenson

Windellama S.E.S.

Central West Speleological Society

Concord Carnival Sunday

2/4/2023

Previously held annually, but somewhat interrupted in the past by Covid and occasional adverse weather, this family fun day showcases all that is best in this Parkland Suburb of the City of Canada Bay.

This year's event was designed to revive memories of Concord's Halcyon Days from the 1920's to the late 1940's. Having myself been born in 1948 (albeit on another continent) I thought this Carnival would make me feel right at home – and I was to be proven correct – albeit for a far different reason.

Canada Bay SES Unit (previously known as Concord-Drummoyne SES before amalgamation) has an arrangement with Canada Bay Council – whereby we get a free fete stall and display space at community events, in exchange for assisting Council with the bump-in and bump-out of stallholders and responding to any relevant emergencies on the day. This year the Carnival was again to be sited in Greenlees Park – a short walk from my home – with 100 stalls booked and paid for.

It was the stock standard SES build up: get approval from Unit Commander, get agreement from Council for a freebie, fill in the stall holder's application form, submit form to Council together with evidence of public liability insurance, receive Council approval, add to SES State Calendar, get SES approvals, then get on with the job of organising the event.

Stock standard organising of event then followed: find volunteers, develop a plan for getting a vehicle there and back (so find an authorised driver), check current resources (handouts and information stuff), confirm volunteers, prepare joining instructions, get site map from Council, get Council's event rules and regulations, get bump-in time for SES vehicle, print vehicle admission sticker for display on the day, conduct event on-site inspection (to check out stall site and tree-heights for our vehicle to fit under), confirm with individual volunteers that they are still available, arrange load-up of vehicle with event stuff, load up personal vehicle with optional extras (tent poles, rope, lightweight tarp, PPE, wet weathers as forecast of probable heavy showers). Locate an antique SES uniform (my fur



Advertising article in City of Canada Bay News March 2023 p4.

Advertising article in City of Canada Bay News March 2023 p5.

lined bomber jacket for "halcyon days" Carnival theme), plus gaffa tape and SES tape to claim our site area.

Plan was for a fete stall with information, display vehicle, and our easiest event exercise – a dummy on a blue tarpaulin, targeted with throw bags which the kids can use to "rescue" the "person from the river". Kids love it, and the only downside is having to restuff the throw bags as fast as kids can throw them.

Time frame finalised: Activity Manager to be onsite at 0700, SES Vehicle bump-in at 0725, SES volunteers on-site 0800, event opens 1000, event ends 1600, bump-out 1700.

I arrive at 0645 (having remembered to put my clocks back that morning) in torrential rain with flash flooding in local roads and surface water on park. Quickly becomes apparent that the Carnival will have issues with water and electrical equipment, some stalls have collapsed, vehicles are likely to become bogged, obvious slip and fall risk to public, parkland likely to be badly churned up by vehicles, carnival rides unsafe to operate, and probability that the attendance will be minimal. Site safety officer and Council organisers deem it clearly unsafe (and I agree), and so Carnival cancelled at 0715. I call off the SES Volunteers and remain on site until 0815 for any eventualities.

They say every cloud has a silver lining – and for this weather event it was arguably our Unit's most rapid Sunday morning response to jobs, as pumping and leaking roof RFA's start to flow in (pun intended). Within minutes our first rescue team (ex-Carnival volunteers) was on the road to a pumping job, to be followed in quick order by a second rescue team (ex-Carnival volunteers plus a.n.other). Truly a "Silver Linings Playbook" moment (Trivia Question: Who starred in the movie of that name?)

A second silver lining was completing the State Calendar After Action Review. After all - there are only so many ways that one can document: "Event Cancelled – No Action"!

There is one final twist to this tale. By birth "I am an Englishman" (Trivia Question: From which Gilbert and Sullivan Musical is that a quote?). Messaging my Unit Commander that "The Carnival is Over" (Trivia question: who sang that song?) I get this warm-hearted reply from him "go home and have a hot shower".

I think my reply was culturally appropriate: "Shower? Today? But I'm English and it's not my birthday!!!!"

Bill Hoyles,
Volunteer, Canada Bay SES Unit



Road Crash Rescue Challenge

Congratulations to all the teams that competed in this years NSW State Road Crash Rescue Challenge. A special shout out to the Port Stephens Unit who placed 1st in the SES overall.





Finding the next generation of SES volunteers

Anyone that has walked into a SES volunteer unit knows that part of what makes them so special is the huge variety of members of all ages and backgrounds, working together towards a common goal.

For our young SES members, being a volunteer gives them a chance to gain skills they might never have expected, or it may even influence their future career ambitions, giving them exposure to the world of emergency services.

For the SES Ballina Unit, attracting and recruiting young volunteers has been a top priority.

In 2016 Ballina Unit started a 10 week youth program called 'Yetties'. This ran once a year up until Covid. This program was so successful, involving NSW SES, Police, FRNSW, AAARF (airport fire services) and ANSW. Consisted of 3 students from each of the 5 high schools within the Shire, selected by the schools. This year the unit is running a trial of a Youth Internship Program in the second half of 2023 to help with this goal. The program is a 10-week program for year 9 and 10 students in the area, which introduces the students to the role and tasks of emergency services

in a hands-on way. It gives them a chance to experience the personal and professional benefits of being an SES volunteer, whilst having a lot of fun along the way.

Having run a similar program in the past, the unit knows how successful they can be, with some of the previous school-intern based programs introducing some of their most valued members to the SES.

Lauren, now 22, joined the Ballina Unit after completing the program through her school when she was 17. Lauren said she found a sense of belonging within the unit, and the experience of being an SES volunteer helped her grow into a person with a clear direction of where her life was going. Lauren is now a fully qualified paramedic, as well as an SES volunteer, and credits her volunteer experience for allowing her to pursue a path she hadn't previously considered, as well as allowing her to develop into a person with empathy and a drive

to help people experiencing some of their scariest moments.

Kyle, 21, also joined the SES after completing his school-based program, and is also now working in an emergency services role, within the NSW Police Force, alongside his SES volunteering. Kyle has gained many skills within his capacity as an SES volunteer that he says have helped him both personally and professionally.

Another member who came to the Ballina Unit through the Youth Internship Program is Zeke. At just 22, Zeke is now the Flood Rescue Section Head for the Ballina Unit, and is a great example of the types of opportunities that exist for young people as a volunteer with the SES.

The program is expected to be trialled in term 3 of this year, and will be conducted in 8 units across the state. If the past experience of the Ballina Unit is anything to go by, these 8 units can expect to meet some wonderful young future members in the near future.

Fellows Status Awarded

In the last 18 months three members of the NSW SES have been elevated to the status of Fellows of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services. All are long serving members of the SES.

CRAIG RONAN ESM FAIES

Craig has been a member of the AIES since 1996. Craig has been a member of the NSW State Emergency Service both a volunteer and paid staff for over 34 years. Craig currently holds the role of the Coordinator of Hazard Planning for both SES Western Zone and SES Southern Zone NSW.



GREG SNAPE FAIES

Greg has been a member of the AIES since 1991, a member of the SES since 1980 a member of the RFS since 2014. Greg started his emergency management career at Ashfield SES and now serves with Stroud Unit as Deputy Local Commander.



GRAEME CRAIG ESM FAIES

Graeme has been a member of the AIES since 1996. Graeme joined the NSW State Emergency Service at Ryde in 1993. He was appointed Local Controller in December 1995, appointed Deputy Far West Region Controller in 2007 and appointed Manager – Business Service Support, Northern Zone in 2018.



These awards recognise the good standing and long-term commitment made by the individuals to their communities.

David Parsons

President
NSW / ACT / International Division
AIES



Do our volunteers really bleed *orange*? Heck yes we do!

Tuesday 2 May, 7 unit members headed to the Wollongong Lifeblood centre to donate life saving blood and plasma.

Our members have been donating regularly, and now we have set ourselves a goal to fill the entire donation room with orange.

Plasma can be used in 18 different ways from treating immune deficiencies, bone marrow transplants, burns, and even treating newborn babies. And it can be donated every two weeks. Blood donations can be used to save up to three lives.

"My personal experience of seeing my mother benefit from a blood transfusion has instilled in me a deep appreciation for the impact that donating blood can have on someone's life, and as a result, I feel compelled to donate regularly to help others in need." Jesse Gameiro

"I was never able to donate due to restrictions in place around UK residents. The rule banning people who had resided for 6 months or more in the UK between 1980 and



1996 was lifted late 2022. It's an easy way to make a difference and help people in need. Blood/Plasma is used to help people with surgeries, cancer treatment, kidney diseases and trauma incidents. Without donations, people would not get the help they need. Since November, I have become quite passionate about donating and I

have championed a Lifeblood Team for our SES unit, and actively encourage the team to donate when they can." Tim Lashbrook

We would encourage all members to donate, and when you do, make sure you are apart of the NSW SES team, which can be found in your lifeblood app.



From left to right: Paddy the Platypus, Kat Staples, Nathan Pearce and Ian Winter group shot with pre school students

Mt Druitt Unit

Like many other SES units, the Mt Druitt Unit has a hectic couple of years involved in the storm and flood events we have faced in NSW.

Performing flood boat operations, conducting flood rescues, keeping residents updated on current flood warnings and giving advice to evacuate when required..

When the members of the Mount Druitt unit are not operational or training, they are involved in planning and attending community engagement events and activities. This is a great opportunity for our volunteers to build a relationship with members of the community and also a team building opportunity for the unit. We plan different types of fun and creative events in which the community can interact and participate in as well.

Some of these activities include

- » Members of Mount Druitt participating in the running Santa runs,

- » Participating in personal development days such as 'Who Let The Boats Out',
- » Visiting Pre-Schools to educate the next generation of little minds on what the people in Orange do.
- » The volunteers of Mount Druitt Unit teach groups of new drivers regarding the dangers of driving through flood water which is a part B Street Smart.

We have a really warm and inclusive unit where every new member that walks through the doors are welcomed and become a part of our volunteer family. We have a diverse team with members ranging from 19 years of age up to War veterans and from all different backgrounds willing to do whatever it takes to help keep their community safe.

Hannah Staples



War veteran member



From left to right: Amelia Lockman and Hope-may Russell (Youngest Member), New female Member, Unit Commander Sue Flynn, Senior Member Kat Staples, Hannah Staples



Youngest Member Hope-May Russell at B Street Smart 2022



Flood Boat Operator Patrick Lockman participating in a Dog Rescue



From left to right: Peter Crossley, Nathaniel Wood participating in 'Who Let The Boats Out'



War veteran member



From left to right: Water Operator Anthony Lockman, Water Operator Richard Dunn, Flood Boat Operator Daniel Staples

SES - Always Ready

My team mate and I were delivering a new Command vehicle to Broken Hill during the floods.

We collected the vehicle from Moorebank and were heading via the M5 then M7 then M4 over the mountains. We were barely settled into the trip as we joined the peak hour morning traffic, the vehicles all slowed to a crawl and sometimes stopping in an 80km/h zone.

I was driving when suddenly I heard a loud bang and rumbling nearby. Looking around and checking my mirrors I could see dust and smoke from an overturned semi trailer sliding along the road, crossing through the dividing wires a few cars behind us. As the truck slid into the oncoming lanes, which were fortunately a lot quieter than our side of the road, I pulled to the shoulder and my team mate got out to take a look.

Recognising the seriousness he signaled to me and I activated my emergency lighting and negotiated my way through the dividing strip onto the other direction and closed the M7 south bound. By this stage the truck was stopped with its cab blocking one lane and debris blocking the other. My team mate grabbed a fire extinguisher to put out a small spot fire near the rig then communicated with the conscious driver still contained within the cab on its side. Meanwhile I was moving the crowd, that was gathering, backwards to a safer distance and ensuring police, fire and ambulance were all dispatched.

My team mate using a borrowed ladder from a tradies ute gained access to the door of the truck and assisted the driver safely out of the vehicle. During this I recognized it was



a B-double tanker and checked the placards for what type of load. I then called the emergency contacts on the placard. Whilst this was happening my team mate was providing first aid to the conscious but disorientated driver, moving him away and sitting him down.

I returned to again keep onlookers back and greet the first police officer on scene. She was happy for us to continue with what we were doing as other police soon arrived. Eventually there were multiple Highway Patrol and General Duties vehicles and officers on scene and we could see Ambulance and FRNSW approaching. Everything in order I handed over what we had witnessed to the officer and we departed the scene as we knew we had a lot more distance to travel that day.

To Country Units this may be a somewhat regular occurrence but for a Metro unit this was certainly something not encountered before by either of us. However I am proud of the way we reacted and action we took representing the SES. It demonstrated to me that with the quality training we get we can adapt that training to most circumstances we would come upon.

It also proved that you never know what may happen especially in a Service vehicle. We were expecting a quiet country drive not what we got to start with. I also loved that the NSW SES were the first Emergency Service on scene in something we normally don't do in Sydney.

John Rodger & Pierre Samia
Kogarah Unit, Metro Zone



The Are They Triple OK? Podcast

Building connection and comradery

R U OK? has launched a new podcast series to encourage life changing conversations, early intervention and supportive behaviour amongst the peers, family and friends of those who work and volunteer in the police and emergency services.

The 'Are They Triple OK? podcast' features personal stories and practical tools to increase social support for emergency services personnel and build a mentally healthy workplace. It also includes tips on how to ask, 'are you OK?' and navigate a conversation if someone is not OK.

Episode one features James Maskey, a retired front-line Queensland Police Officer. In 2013, James was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

"As first responders historically, we talk about everything except for mental health and, importantly, suicidal thoughts," said Mr Maskey. "Either because we didn't have the confidence to have that conversation, or we were worried about the impacts

of having that chat. And when I say we, I'm talking about me. Certainly, that was my experience."

Mr Maskey says frontline first responders, in the fire truck, in the ambulance, in the patrol car, have a unique opportunity to get to know their colleagues.

"You know what they like to eat, their coffee order and what their family and their children are up to," he said. "You know the intimate details of their lives because you've got a long time in the car sitting side by side to share so many experiences."

Mr Maskey is now the National Sector Specialist at Fortem Australia, and is passionate about enhancing the mental, physical and social well-being of the first responder community.

"My advice to the emergency services community is to learn how to have an R U OK? Conversation and start having them," he said. "If someone is struggling, reaching out for help can feel like a heavy thing to do, it can be a hard task and it can feel overwhelming.

"But when you take the time to ask someone how they're travelling, you can take some of the weight off and some of the burden away. People are often relieved to have a conversation and feel that level of camaraderie."

The 'Are They Triple OK? podcast' is hosted by Matt Newlands, R U OK? Community Ambassador and former police officer is one of a suite of free resources available from R U OK? for those who work in the police and emergency services, their families and

friends. The podcast and resources including a conversation guide and personal stories that demonstrate the life changing impact of an R U OK? conversation can be found at **ruok.org.au**. The **'Are They Triple OK? podcast'** will also be available for download on a range of streaming services, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Play and Audible.

'Are They Triple OK?' was developed in response to the Beyond Blue nationwide 'Answering the call' survey which found more than half of all police and emergency services employees indicated they had experienced a traumatic event that had deeply affected them during the course of their work. Positively, personnel with higher levels of social support and resilience reported lower levels of suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

"The results from 'Answering the Call' showed us that the support of peers, family and friends does make a difference for those who work in frontline services. It's OK to not be OK. It's OK to lean on each other, and it's OK to retire that unhelpful stereotype of being that six-foot bulletproof superhero," said Maskey.

"I would urge leaders to explore vulnerability to share their own story if they have one, or to support others to share their own story as well. We know that this helps in demystifying mental health."

If you're worried about someone and feel they need professional support, encourage them to contact their Employee Assistance Program (EAP), appropriate agency support service or connect with a trusted health professional, like their local doctor.

Pinnacle Charitable Foundation is a Funding Partner of R U OK? and is proud to fund the **'Are they Triple OK?'** campaign.

Specialised wellbeing and mental fitness support for first responders and their families can be accessed through Fortem Australia at **fortemaustralia.org.au**.

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

ABOUT 'ARE THEY TRIPLE OK?'

» 'Are They Triple OK?' is an R U OK? initiative that encourages higher levels of peer and social support for police and emergency services workers and volunteers nationwide.



- » The initiative responds to key recommendations in the Beyond Blue 'Answering the call' survey into the mental health and wellbeing of Australia's police and emergency services workers.
- » The initiative focuses on the support networks around our police and emergency services workers and volunteers, both at home and in the workplace e.g., supervisors, volunteers, friends and family.
- » 'Are They Triple OK?' provides free digital and printable resources.
- » Resources include storytelling from police, fire, ambulance, and SES employees and volunteers to ensure the voices of lived experience are heard and to model the life-changing impact of an R U OK? conversation.
- » Pinnacle Charitable Foundation is a Funding Partner of R U OK? and is proud to fund the 'Are they Triple OK?' campaign.
- » 'Are They Triple OK?' can be found on the R U OK? website at **ruok.org.au** and is distributed through the existing communication channels of each service.

ABOUT R U OK?

- » R U OK? is a public health promotion charity that aims to inspire and empower everyone to meaningfully connect with friends, family and colleagues who might be struggling with life.
- » A renowned suicide prevention theory is that of Dr Thomas Joiner. Joiner's theory describes three forces at play in someone at risk of suicide, one of which is a decreased sense of belonging. This lack of belonging and sense of connection is what R U OK? are working to prevent.
- » R U OK? Day is an annual National Day of Action; held on the second Thursday of September (14 September 2023) and a reminder that every day is a day to start a conversation that could change a life.
- » Throughout the year R U OK? delivers free resources that increase the willingness and confidence of all Australians to recognise the signs someone is struggling, start a genuine conversation and lend appropriate support. R U OK? also tailors these

resources to meet the needs of targeted population groups and settings.

- » R U OK? draws on the valuable lived experience of Australians in the development all campaigns.
- » R U OK?Day was founded in 2009 by adman Gavin Larkin who tragically lost his father to suicide in 1995. Larkin (who died of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2011) wanted to spare other families the grief his family endured.
- » A spark of an idea has since become a nationwide community movement that encourages everyone to genuinely ask the question and have a meaningful conversation with those in their world who might be struggling.
- » Conversation tips and crisis support contacts can be found at ruok.org.au

ABOUT FORTEM AUSTRALIA

- » Fortem Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that supports the mental fitness and wellbeing of first responder families - the people who protect and care for Australian communities.
- » As a result of their occupation, first responders in national security and emergency service roles experience high psychological distress, experience suicidal thoughts, and have suicide plans at rates significantly higher than the average Australian adult.
- » Tragically, first responder families are also impacted through 'spillover stress', with many experiencing secondary trauma and stresses that cascade from first responder employment.
- » Fortem Australia provides free evidence-based mental fitness and wellbeing support to the first responder community. We run wellbeing activities designed to connect families and build communities, provide psychology support to first responders and their families, as well as supporting those looking for new life and career opportunities following service.
- » Fortem Australia's wellbeing activities are making a difference in the lives of first responders across the country, increasing social

connectedness among the first responder community. Nearly all (97 per cent) of participants felt that the Fortem activity benefited their health and wellbeing.

- » Fortem's clinical support team are highly experienced in the challenges and traumas that first responders and their families go through. One in four psychology sessions are provided directly to family members of first responders.
- » Fortem Australia's Transition and Employment Program provides specialised career management support to transitioning first responders, delivered by an expert team with lived experience in various first responder agencies.
- » As we approach four years of operation, Fortem Australia has received over 23,500 wellbeing activity registrations and provided more than 3,600 psychology sessions to first responders and their families across the country.

More information can be found at <https://fortemaustralia.org.au/>

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From left to right: Ross Tout, Joe Bond, Lizzie Britt at Rotary Awards Dinner.

Vale for Lizzie Britt

I vividly remember the moment I met Lizzie Britt.

But a bit about me first... I was in a rollover when I was 17 years old, they said the Landcruiser rolled 5 times but I only remember two of the five. My mother and friend were critically injured. Though thankfully are now living full lives. Thinking back to that moment it's not the ambos or Police that I remember, it was the SES. That always stuck. The memories are long faded but I had always thought fondly about the SES since that time. It must be something about volunteers or maybe it's just the colour orange but the SES offer sanctuary and comfort when you're at your most vulnerable. I now know it's not a job to us, we want to be there in that moment by your side. Maybe that's what it is.

Back to Lizzie... so here I am, 15 years later, walking into the Gundagai shed. I'd seen an ad on Facebook inviting interested people to come down on training night. I was tentative, I didn't think it was something us girls really did. But the thought of being

involved was enough to override any fear of rejection.

So I arrive and there's Lizzie. It's hard to find the right words to describe such a person but she has a way of making you feel instantly at ease. In that moment I could sense her warmth and her gentle but strong and determined energy. I don't remember who else was there on my first night but I remember Lizzie. She eagerly took me on the Grande Royale tour of our shed starting with the truck, explaining the difference between the thingy-ma-jig and the thingy-ma-bob, showing off our pride and joy (the e-hydraulics), next the boats and finally the crew (the best bit).

With the tour done Lizzie was quick to ask when I was signing up. Straight away of course! I was quietly stoked. And I was completely in awe of Lizzie.

Over the short time I was privileged to know Lizzie she never ceased to amaze me. I learned her remarkable story, witnessed incredible moments and was constantly in awe by the

selfless things she did for others inside of SES and out. Lizzie was and is my mentor and hero.

Lizzie was only 8 years old when she lost her own mother in a motor vehicle accident. The SES were there to help her brother who was also involved and ensure her mother was comforted and given all the dignity afforded. When the time was right Lizzie joined the SES and was taken under the wing of Joe Bond. The same Joe Bond that attended her mother's accident many years before. Joe was Lizzie's mentor and hero and she set about learning as much as she could. Whether it was operating the big tools, driving the truck or offering comfort and dignity to road crash victims – Lizzie wanted to be the best she could be.

Despite her own hardships in life, Lizzie went about her life always giving to others. Even when she was sick, she was still giving so much to so many.

SES was just one part of Lizzie. If she wasn't helping cut people out



From left to right: Joe Bond, Megan King and Lizzie Britt at WOW Day covering the Dog on the Tuckerbox in orange.



Liz getting her commander Pips.

of cars, sitting with a patient offering comfort, or helping stranded drivers figure out how to get home she was sure to be volunteering down at the footy on a weekend (even after her own boys had long grown out of it), giving local kids a start at Hungry Jacks (even the hard ones) or maybe helping out with the CWA, RUOK, Can Assist or perhaps she'd be checking in on someone who was going through a time. But she didn't stop there, together with her soulmate Cas, she opened up her own home to numerous kids and young adults (and their babies and pets) over the years. There was always a comfortable bed, hot shower and hearty meal at Lizzie's and Cas's and a little subtle therapy offered by Sid the dog. Lizzie would give these kids (and all us grown ups) one of the best gifts there is, the ability to see that anything is possible and that dreams can come true. And of course to 'put your big girl/boy pants on' and just get it done!

Lizzie was a master of time. She had time for everyone and everything. Whether it was volunteering her time, running a busy business, spending time with her boys and family, mentoring others (me included) and checking in on people in our community. And she'd make you feel like she had all the time in the world for you. I still don't know how she found the time for everyone. And no matter what, if a job came through she wouldn't miss it for the world. Lizzie was usually the first at the shed and already had the truck started and unplugged ready to go. Lizzie's compassion and ability to comfort road trauma victims was awe inspiring. Lizzie was also the organiser, Ross's right hand (wo)man. Keeping everyone in line and making sure any job ran seamlessly.

It's some twisted irony that Lizzie was given so little time despite giving out so much. While it'll never sit right that she's gone there's some sort of weird comfort knowing she's lived a life worth ten of any other.

Lizzie passed away in October 2022 following a relatively short battle with cancer. Hundreds attended her funeral. Homering her wishes we attended proudly in oranges and blues and were closely supported by all our local emergency services teams, Firies, Police and Ambos - all who had worked closely with Lizzie at many an accident. Lizzie was sent off with lights and sirens through Gundagai.

Lizzie, we take comfort in that you will always inspire us to do more, help more and be more. We wish you were here. But with you gone we must all be a little more like you. We will do this and we will do our best to fill the holes that you've left. Even in death you keep giving to this town as you brought so many of us together. We find comfort in each other and we'll look out for each other. We love you always and will never forget all that you were, all that you are and all that you continue to be for you will live on until all that have known you have passed.



Vale Paul "Paddy" O'brien

18:6:64 - 30:4:23

Paddy started his service with SES in Wagga on 10 August 1993.

Upon moving to Sydney, he transferred to the Kogarah unit around the 2000s where he became a Team Leader and Trainer of the Unit in disaster, rescue, storm damage, chainsaw operations and roof safety systems.

During this time, he was involved with the New South Wales volunteers memorial at Lady Macquarie's Chair Medals and Regalia of Service - together with Warrick Carey his Unit controller at the time. He also took part in the Reserve Forces parades.

In the mid 2000s, Paddy began training in a wider area as trainer assessor for the Sydney southern region, & eastern suburbs (west to Wollondilly Shire and south to Sutherland shire) During this time, he conducted training workshops for trainers and assessed trainees. Paddy helped implement changes to training and gave feedback to region and state as to the strengths

and shortfalls within units training and assessment criteria.

Being a trainer assessor didn't stop Paddy being operational, quite the opposite - He would attend many operations state-wide to lead teams to assist and mentor leaders in the field and to assess operational requirements, equipment and training shortfalls.

To that end, Paddy received the following awards: the Director-Generals Award for Service, the SES State Medallion for Hunter Region Storms, the SES Commissioners Certificate of Appreciation and Queensland Citation for Cyclone Yazi.

For his time in service, he received the National Medal with clasps & the SES Long Service award with clasps.

Paddy Served the NSW SES during such operations as the Thredbo landslide, Cyclone Yazi, 1999 Hail storms in Sydney and numerous storm,

flood, searches and support to fire events across the state.

In short, while Paddy attended countless requests for assistance on operations, the Legacy he left within the service was to ensure that capable people were in place to provide assistance to their communities when most needed in times of crisis and for that experience and knowledge to be forwarded to volunteers moving forward..

While Paddy was at the Kogarah Unit, I was at the Sutherland unit where we went undefeated in the Division Rescue Competition. When he moved to the Sydney southern region and became a Judge - "We still won" But the level of judging was raised.

In-service, we gained a family - through common goals ,difficulties and experiences together.

So goodbye, my brother in service.
I'll see you at the debrief

Craig (Alo) Allerton



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