

the
Volunteer

Issue 65 | September 2023
ISSN 1445-3886 | PP 100018972





Mayoral message

Councillor Tony Bleasdale OAM
Mayor Blacktown City



Pictured: Mayor Tony Bleasdale OAM and Cr Julie Griffiths AM visit volunteers from Blacktown NSW SES Unit, March 2023

On behalf of Blacktown City, I extend a huge thank you to all our SES volunteers for their tireless efforts during the major flooding events which have hit our City over a number of years.

During this time, our local Blacktown and Mount Druitt SES crews were required to work around the clock, as well as SES crews from other areas, RFS, Australian Defence Force personnel, surf lifesavers, and Fire and Rescue crews, coming together in a time of crisis.

Your amazing efforts are recognised and appreciated by everyone at Blacktown City Council and all the residents and businesses in Blacktown City.

the Volunteer

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**Thank you to all the SES
volunteers in my electorate
of Bankstown and around
NSW who go above and
beyond to assist communities
during trying times.**

At any given time, we can always be assured that our NSW SES volunteers are there to keep us safe. Your commitment and dedication are outstanding, and I thank you for your selfless contributions to our community, particularly in our most difficult times.



The Hon. Jihad Dib MP

Member for Bankstown
Minister for Customer Service and
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after yourselves.



JIHAD DIB MP
MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

It is hard to believe that it has already been 3 months since my last message in the Volunteer Magazine. We have certainly been keeping busy. NSW SES has standardised cutting edge satellite-based Wi-Fi technology in all their new vehicles, hosted a Land Based Flood Rescue course in Beechwood, hosted Australia's largest search and rescue training exercise in the Goulburn River National Park, and is continuing to support the ongoing wildfires emergency in Canada.

In these busy periods, we have also found the time to recognise members for their valiant efforts and selfless contributions.

I had the honour of attending the 2023 NSW Rotary Emergency Service Awards on Saturday 12 August. Congratulations to the SES finalists, Hayden Doolan Chief Inspector of Kyogle/Richmond Valley and Tenterfield, Dayna Ingram Unit Commander of the Hurstville Unit, Hayden Tarran Operator at Port Stephens and to the other finalists who were or still are SES members. A massive congratulations to the winner of the State Emergency Service Office of the Year Award Yasmin Jimmieson, Acting Deputy Unit Commander, Armidale. I was already impressed listening to all her achievements as a member of SES, but to also hear about her involvement in numerous youth organisations was truly outstanding. What struck me most about Yasmin was in how she found creative ways to spread the message of storm



awareness and preparations in her role as Community Capability Officer.

With Storm season now upon us, it is time to start preparing again and be on ready alert for what increased chances of strong wind and heavy rain may bring.

Over these past months, I have had the chance to visit some of the State's most flood impacted regions in recent years, including the Northern Rivers, Central West, and the Hawkesbury. While there is unfortunately a level of anxiety among local communities

on the potential increased disaster risk, whether it be flood or fires, I am confident that the SES is on hand when help is required. At the end of the day, our greatest asset is our volunteers and members. It is your dedication in putting your hands up and offering help that NSW can always count on.

I am continuously impressed and proud of the incredible work you have done for your local communities. Stay safe. Look after your community, look after your mates and look after yourselves.



CARLENE YORK APM
NSW SES COMMISSIONER

The ongoing requests for assistance from our international partners shows the value of our volunteers' skills in emergencies.



As we near the end of winter, members are preparing for the start of storm season, which officially runs from October to March. During this period, we typically respond to greater operational events as the frequency of storms, strong winds and heavy rain increases. Flash flooding is a real and serious risk during large storm events, and our highly skilled flood rescue operators are often called upon to retrieve people trapped in flood waters.

Operationally, our members have been kept busy with flood response in the south of the State as the Murray River continues to see the impacts of flooding. For much of the past month, flood warnings of various levels have been in place around the areas of Bahram and Torrumbarry.

We've also responded to flash flooding, State-wide damaging winds and a multi-day search for a missing woman. The number of storm incidents we continue to respond to

highlights the need for everyone to be prepared 365 days a year.

Our volunteers continued to be deployed to Canada to help firefighters battle wildfires burning in Alberta and British Columbia. More than 15 volunteers have now represented the Service in Canada, supporting in finance, logistics, supply and operational roles. The ongoing requests for assistance from our international partners shows the value of our volunteers' skills in emergencies.

Meanwhile, in the training space, it's been great to see members from around the State undertake important training across various capabilities. For example, the Alpine Search and Rescue team led a four-day course to upskill NSW SES volunteers and NSW Ambulance paramedics in search and rescue techniques in Perisher. Operating in the Snowy Mountains terrain is unlike any other environment in the State and it's great to see our members lead this crucial training during the snow season.

We also added to our 1000+ trained flood rescue operators, with several cohorts of Land Based Flood Rescue Operators completing training at Beechwood, near Port Macquarie. The exercise saw our experienced trainers pass on their expansive knowledge to not only NSW SES volunteers, but members of the NSW Police Force, and volunteers from key flood rescue support agencies, including Marine Rescue, Surf Life Saving NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service.

As the lead agency for flood rescue in NSW, our Service's provision of consistent and high-standard training to emergency service partners is crucial to the safety of our personnel and the community. The opportunity for agencies to train together also builds interoperability, which is vital in the field during real life emergencies.

In July, it was great to see more than 500 competitors taking part in this year's Australian Emergency Services Wilderness Navigation Shield

(better known as Navshield). Thanks to the Bush Search and Rescue Unit for organising the event, and well done to all our members for your efforts navigating the tasks, the shrub and the cold. In its 34th year, the event was also an opportunity to build relationships with other agencies and members of the public with a passion for land search and bushwalking.

Earlier this month we launched our agency-wide and member-informed Being Well Strategy 2023-2024, which builds on our previous strategy and long and proud history of supporting the wellbeing of our members. This new approach provides enhanced holistic health and wellbeing systems, initiatives, and services tailored to our diverse membership by:

- » Enhancing our systems and approach to effectively and proactively prevent and manage risks to wellbeing.
- » Preparing our members, leaders, and agency to understand and support member wellbeing.
- » Actively promoting a healthy culture that enables our members



to thrive, across all domains of holistic wellbeing.

- » Delivering both new and enhanced wellbeing services that are accessible to all members.

And, on that note I would like to again remind members that 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 contact details in your phone to 1300 361 008.

Stay safe, and thank you for your continued service to the people of NSW.

As Mayor of Hornsby Shire, it is my absolute pleasure to pay tribute to and thank the men and women of the NSW State Emergency Service.



Mayor Ruddock witnessing the NSW SES response, Wisemans Ferry, July 2022.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the entire team at NSW SES for their unwavering dedication and service to the community.

The NSW SES work all year round, day and night to protect us at our most vulnerable. Hornsby Shire has experienced several extreme weather events over the past few years, challenging residents immensely through floods and widespread damage.

We are incredibly grateful for all that you do for us. The efforts of SES personnel certainly do not go unnoticed. We thank you so much, as you go above and beyond in ensuring the safety of the community.

In times of need, it is reassuring to know that we can rely on the NSW State Emergency Service. We know we can count on you during emergency situations as you provide vital support.

The expertise, bravery and commitment of the NSW SES team exemplifies the true spirit of service. We are so proud and extremely grateful for the countless hours of hard work and sacrifice.

On behalf of the people of Hornsby Shire, I salute you all and acknowledge the significant contribution you make to our community.

The Hon Philip Ruddock AO,
Mayor, Hornsby Shire Council



It is with immense pride and joy that we extend our heartfelt congratulations to the exceptional individuals who have been recognized as recipients of the 2023 Rotary Awards. Your dedication, tireless efforts, and outstanding contributions have not only made a significant impact within our organization but have also extended far beyond, touching the lives of those you serve. Your commitment to service, compassion, and unwavering dedication are a true inspiration to us all.

A resounding applause goes to our very own Managing Director, Erin Pogmore, who has earned the distinction of being the 2023 Rotary Awards winner for Fire and Rescue NSW. Erin's journey is a testament to resilience and determination. Her role as a Leading Firefighter and water rescue instructor with Fire & Rescue saw her facing unexpected adversity when her own home was tragically consumed by fire. Yet, in the face of personal disaster, Erin exemplified remarkable strength, returning to duty the very next day. Her 19 years of service with the SES and 11 years as a firefighter have fortified her skills, making her an invaluable asset to our team. Erin's recognition extends beyond our shores, being the first and only Australian to receive the Higgins & Langley Special Commendation for her contributions to rescuer training and safety. Moreover, Erin's recognition as a Rotary Rural Inspirational Women's Award recipient and her affiliation with the Mental Health Foundation Australia further underline her dedication to the well-being of others.

Equally deserving of accolades is Yasmin Jimmieson, the Acting



The VA has been a sponsor of the NSW Rotary awards since its inception and we were proud to once again attend this year to support and congratulate all the finalists.

Unit Deputy Commander of the Armidale Unit, who claims the title of the 2023 NSW State Emergency Service Winner. Yasmin's multifaceted role as a full-time university student and dedicated NSW SES volunteer showcases her unwavering commitment. With roles ranging from acting deputy unit commander to administration officer, training coordinator, and Community Capability Officer, Yasmin embodies versatility and dedication. Her involvement

extends beyond immediate response to emergencies; she devotes her time to mentoring, organizing unit training, engaging the community, and participating in training courses. Her training as a General Land and Swift-Water Rescue operator showcases her preparedness to provide assistance in critical situations. Yasmin's commitment to community engagement is further highlighted by her involvement with numerous youth organizations, where she leads by example.

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A special thankyou to the dedicated co-facilitators who have played an integral role in the success of our Program. Your unwavering commitment and invaluable support have significantly enriched the training experience for our participants. Your presence and expertise have been instrumental in ensuring the seamless flow of each FRRP training event - maintaining relatable and engaging

content have not gone unnoticed. Your efforts have contributed to a learning environment that resonates deeply with our NSW SES Volunteers.

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THE VOLUNTEER MAGAZINE DECEMBER EDITION:

In the spirit of shared achievements and shared aspirations, we invite you to contribute to our quarterly Magazine. This platform serves as a celebration of your stories & accomplishments - share your experiences, highlight remarkable volunteers, and illuminate moments of excellence that inspire us all. We are here to support your efforts and can assist with editing, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Deadline for submissions:

15th November 2023

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Stay safe in your Volunteering!

Carlee Maccoll



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Our people are part of the regional communities in which they work.

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Land use planning

Fire v flood

Land use planning is one of the most important tools available to mitigate risk and protect populations from hazards.

Two of Australia's biggest risks that can be mitigated by land use planning are bushfire and flood. This paper will review land use planning arrangements for fire versus flood and comment on the role of the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service in land use planning decisions.

LAND USE PLANNING

Land use planning in New South Wales is regulated by the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW). Under that Act the State can make state planning policies that affect decisions on how land can be used, what can be built, how the environment is to be managed. At local level, local governments make Local Environmental Plans. Within those plans land is zoned for use. For each zone there are some uses that are permitted without consent, some uses that are prohibited, and some uses that need the consent of the local council. Overlaying land use zoning maps are hazard maps to indicate whether land is flood or bushfire prone.

Homeowners would be aware that building a home or making significant renovations require the filing of a development application. Applications can be approved subject to conditions. Conditions may be imposed to make the property more resistant to fire, flood or other hazards.

If inappropriate development is allowed, it is the emergency services that have to respond when the property or people are put at risk. In other words, 'the job of emergency management and disaster policy is to prepare for, and then cope with, problems caused by vulnerabilities created by other policy sectors'.¹ It is developers and councils who propose and approve risky developments, but it is the owners and the fire and emergency services that must live with the risk.

BUSHFIRE

Where land is mapped as bushfire prone, certain restrictions apply. In particular a plan to subdivide the land, or build on the land, must comply with design requirements published in the document *Planning for Bush Fire Protection*, published by the Rural Fire Service.² If the development does not meet those requirements, it may still be approved but only if the council consults with the rural fire service concerning the proposed development and any necessary bush fire safety measures that are or must be incorporated into the design.³ These rules do not apply to developments that are identified as 'state significant developments'.

As many people, including this author, have discovered, building in bush fire prone land can add

significantly to the cost of any development because of the need to incorporate bush fire safety measures such as window shutters and build in non-flammable material for example steel instead of timber frames.

A significant issue is the role of the Rural Fire Service in planning and managing fire risk. One of the functions of the Rural Fire Service is to 'provide advisory services (whether within or outside the State) relating to fire fighting and other matters with respect to which it has expertise'.⁴ It is the Rural Fire Service that publishes mandatory standards in *Planning for Bush Fire Protection* and the RFS must be consulted on developments that seek to approach the risk outside those prescriptions. It is the RFS that is to designate 'a place as a place that may be suitable for people to shelter from a bush fire (a "neighbourhood safer place")'.⁵

The *Rural Fires Act* is as the name suggests, and Act about rural fires and their management. The Rural Fire Service is part of those risk management arrangements but the Act deals with much more than just the service.

FLOODING

The situation with flooding is not the same. The State Emergency Service Act is an Act about the State Emergency Service. It is not a 'flood' Act. There is no

statutory function for the State Emergency Service to provide advisory services relating to flood management or other matters with respect to which it has expertise, to publish guidelines on building on flood prone land nor do developers or councils need to consult with the SES when development applications are submitted. There is no power for the SES to designate appropriate local places to shelter during a flood. Guidelines on floodplain development are published by the Department of Planning and the terms of local environmental plans are made by the local authority subject to state planning instruments.

With respect to building on the floodplain, development consent must not be given unless the council or other consent authority:

- ... is satisfied the development—
- a.** is compatible with the flood function and behaviour on the land, and
- b.** will not adversely affect flood behaviour in a way that results in detrimental increases in the potential flood affectation of other development or properties, and
- c.** will not adversely affect the safe occupation and efficient evacuation of people or exceed the capacity of existing evacuation routes for the surrounding area in the event of a flood, and
- d.** incorporates appropriate measures to manage risk to life in the event of a flood, and
- e.** will not adversely affect the environment or cause avoidable

erosion, siltation, destruction of riparian vegetation or a reduction in the stability of river banks or watercourses.⁶

Whether a development meets the criteria for approval, or not, can be subject to disagreement and often comes down to a battle of the experts, where the developer calls their experts to say the development will not have an adverse impact on the flood behaviour or environment and is designed to ensure safety, and the council or an objector calls their experts to give a contrary opinion. The council must resolve those issues to decide whether to grant consent or not. And having made a decision the parties can appeal to the Land and Environment Court.

It is in this process that the SES can play a significant role by providing expert witnesses on the impact of the development and the appropriateness of any proposed flood safety measures. This is particularly important where the developer argues that there are 'appropriate measures to manage risk to life in the event of a flood' because sometimes those 'appropriate measures' assume there will be, or depend on, a response from the SES or assumes that residents will listen to flood warnings and will be prepared to 'shelter in place' in the event of a flood.

In one application that was rejected, Commissioner Bish said: The amended application relies too heavily on the SES to provide appropriate and timely response,

which the SES themselves recognise may not be feasible when needed. The site is not prioritised for evacuation by the SES Local Plan, therefore residents may not get the help needed in a timely manner. Residents will likely have to rely on their own resources and that of the local community, such as occurred in recent flooding in northern NSW (and considered in the Inquiry)...⁷

In another case the developer wanted to rely on the ability of occupants to shelter in place. The problem was the development was a childcare centre. The Land and Environment Court agreed with the Council, supported by evidence from the SES, that this was:

... an example of a plan of management being unacceptable because it relies on measures about which there is doubtful confidence – because they require people to act in a manner that may be unlikely in the circumstances; and fundamentally, the plan requires absolute compliance to achieve an acceptable outcome.

One can imagine that parents with children in a flood affected childcare centre may take risks to get to their children, or to get their children out. Nowhere was it discussed that the children won't have read the plan and may not behave in complete conformity with the directions of the child care workers when being asked to shelter in a car park.⁸

» continued on page 15



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The most recent case along these lines is *Ward v Port Stephens Council* decided on 4 August 2023. The application was to build a house on rural land, on top of a flood mound to take it above the 1:100-year flood level. Council rejected the application in part because it 'would place additional people at risk during floods, ... [and] would place extra burden on the State Emergency Services...' ¹⁰

In this case the council did seek advice from the SES but the SES responded: Unless there is some critical factor indicating otherwise the NSW SES does not generally involve itself in individual development applications. This is because the NSW SES is not resourced to do so.¹¹ This development included a Flood Evacuation Response Plan (FERP). It said that the occupiers:

... should pay attention to any Flood Watch or flood warnings. They should follow instructions, they should be prepared to respond to a flood emergency without assistance. They should set themselves up to receive RSS feeds from the Bureau of Meteorology. They should actively monitor gauge levels. They should be organised and prepared for the flood, they should have an emergency kit, they should turn the power off; the electricity at the switchboard, the gas at the metre, the water at the metre, block toilet bowls with strong plastic bags.¹²

Not surprisingly it was argued that this relied too much on individual compliance, the property may be rented or on-sold so the occupiers may not know of the plan. The court recognised that concern but said:

... the Court must assume the mandatory requirements within conditions will be observed, and that any future owners will have carried out due diligence investigation for conditions which continue to apply to a property, and if not discovered by themselves should be discovered during the conveyancing process.¹³

Ultimately the development was approved subject to conditions including the provision of a attic refuge, a requirement to clearly signpost the capacity of the refuge and 'a requirement that the number

of occupants in the dwelling house be reduced to a maximum of five (5)' the evacuation of any disabled person (who could not access the refuge) immediately a flood warning is issued. It was a condition that the development is not used for short term rentals, such as an AirBnB, as occupants would not know the flood evacuation plans.

CONCLUSION

The paper began with a quote from Professor Dovers about the disjoint between the creation of risk and the management of its outcomes. That is true whether the risk is bushfire or flood. This paper has briefly identified some differences between the role of the RFS and the SES. It has indeed been brief, and has overlooked that both agencies, as combat agencies, are responsible for the development of hazard specific emergency sub-plans and for working with their communities to address the risks.

What has been identified is that the RFS has particular statutory functions with respect to planning for and advice on bushfire risk that the SES does not share with respect to flood risk. The SES has been invited to comment on some flood plain developments, but it does that as an expert witness rather than as part of its statutory functions. Because it is not a function of the SES to be consulted on flood plain developments it is not 'resourced to do so'.¹⁴ Presumably, given the terms of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*, the RFS is resourced to consult on proposals on bush fire prone land.

The court's assumption that people will read a plan that is included as part of a development consent, understand it and apply it is a worry. This sounds reminiscent of reliance on the 'stay or go' policy that was a fundamental part of bushfire planning before the Black Saturday fires of 2009. As the Royal Commission into that fire event said 'the best plans may fail. A plan or attempt to leave early may become impossible. A plan or attempt to defend may have to be abandoned ...'¹⁵ Equally a flood plan may fail, plans to evacuate may become impossible and plans to shelter in place may be abandoned. As Acting Commissioner Adam said 'we can only appeal to commonsense [sic], although knowing

that this is a virtue not possessed by all'.¹⁶ Common-sense tells us that an assumption that future owners will have discovered a plan, understood it and will apply it because it was a mandatory requirement of the development application that they did not make, is unduly hopeful.

1. Stephen Dovers 'Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction, seriously?' (2022) Vol 37(2) Australian Journal of Emergency Management 20-23, p. 20.
2. Available from the RFS website - <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/building-in-a-bush-fire-area>
3. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW) s 4.14.
4. Rural Fires Act 1997 (NSW) s 9(1) (c).
5. Ibid s 62C.
6. Standard Instrument—Principal Local Environmental Plan (2006 EPI 155a), [5.21].
7. *Lensing v Snowy Valley Council* [2022] NSWLEC 1486
8. *Zaki Property Pty Ltd v Wollongong City Council* [2022] NSWLEC 1526, [72].
9. The terms of the Standard Local Environmental Plan quoted above did not apply to this particular development, but the court still considered the impact of flood on the property and the risk to occupants. The legal reasons why that standard did not apply are complex, technical and beyond the scope of this paper.
10. *Ward v Port Stephens Council* [2023] NSWLEC 1423, [8].
11. Ibid [69].
12. Ibid [134].
13. Ibid [135].
14. Ibid [69].
15. 2009 Victorian Bush Fires Royal Commission, Interim Report (2009), [7.45]
16. *Ward v Port Stephens Council* [2023] NSWLEC 1423, [296].

Michael Eburn
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Inaugural Industrial Domestic Rescue Challenge Cements Place at Australasian Rescue Challenge with Cutting Edge Scenarios

From the 29th of June to the 2nd of July, the Adelaide Showgrounds played host to the Australasian Rescue Challenge.

This is an annual event run under the auspices of the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation and hosted by State based rescue agencies on a rotating basis. This years hosts were South Australia Metropolitan Fire Service and South Australia State Emergency Service.

The first day of the event is a learning symposium with this years focus on heavy vehicle extrication and stabilisation. The symposium also featured some excellent speakers on medical considerations for protracted rescues and detailed case study on the Urban Search and Rescue response to Turkey by the Hampshire and Isle of White Fire Service.

Traditionally ARRO has had a strong focus on the technical and medical response to motor vehicle extrication, with a stated purpose, as the peak body in Australasia is to act as the capability learning hub for knowledge, skills and equipment development in Road Crash Rescue. Over time the

Organisation has grown to include a Trauma challenge and CPR challenge as both of these skill sets are recognised as core skills within extrication teams. The changing technology within vehicles and enormous advances seen in prehospital care have driven change in both disciplines that have now matured into well respected challenges that test the capabilities of the rescue teams that attend.

ARRO also has goals to contribute to community safety and the saving of life. Through the promotion of diversity of thought, gather and provide innovative ideas and technical information to the industry. Research towards these goals has led to recognition that the rescue landscape is rapidly changing with State Based and Mines teams facing an increasingly diverse range of entrapments that don't involve motor vehicle or other road based transportation vehicles. One of the biggest increases in entrapment has been in Industrial and

Domestic rescue, sometimes referred to as person vs machine. This style of work has grown to account for nearly 25% of rescue calls within some agencies.

This increasing demand on rescuers has led ARRO to diversify and include another challenge element this year with the Inaugural Industrial and Domestic Rescue Challenge. The basis for this challenge has been trialled over the previous two years at the NSW State Road Crash Rescue Challenge with great success, and the lessons learned from those two events incorporated into the National challenge.

The IDR Challenge is a technical challenge only with no scoring for medical techniques. The team is comprised of the four members identified as the rescuers with a time limit this year of 20 minutes. The scenarios are carefully designed to test of the teams in a consistent manner but with different task. The task that

have been utilised at both the State and National challenges are all taken from either actual scenarios the author has attended or carefully researched case studies for around the world to ensure that urban legend type calls were not included.

Typical scenario types include impalements, crush injuries caused by rollers or gears, entrapments in augers, digit entrapments in floor or shower wastes, jewellery removal, animals caught in pipes or similar and even children in washing machines. Each of the scenarios is designed to be solved in several ways, with teams free to select the methods and tools they believe will best achieve the task.

Scoring for the scenarios is designed to reinforce good on road behaviours with points awarded for scene size up, stabilising the scene, entrapment and patient, deciding on a briefing a rescue plan along with at least one alternate plan. Further marks are awarded for following the preferred process of Manipulation, Disassembly, Displacement and Cutting. Following this process ensure that rescuers are working from the lowest risk and least invasive technique up until the rescue is achieved.

Much like the previous 30 years of extrication challenges has demonstrated, realistic scenario based challenges with live patients and moulage that replicate actual jobs provide powerful learning opportunities in a time critical environment. The recognition pictures that rescuers develop strengthen on road performance and can assist with reducing the instances of PTSD by better preparing rescuers for what they face.

Most importantly the scenarios lift the overall skills of the teams that compete through an increased training tempo. This flows onto their Organisations as a whole as these learnings are taken back and disseminated throughout their peers. The net benefit is that communities around Australia are provided with better trained and more experience rescue operators.

Tony Hine

Command Specialist
Australasian Road Rescue Organisation
www.arro.org.au



Girls on Fire

I have been a SES volunteer for many years now. When I first joined, as a young 17-year-old, I had no idea what to expect and what I was capable of.

All these years later, I now look back at what I have achieved and how far I have come. I think that is what draws me to the Girls on Fire program. And when I saw that it was coming to my area, I just had to join in.

Girls on Fire is an action pack program that inspires girls aged 13 to 18 to give new things a go, see what it is like to be a part of an emergency service and maybe consider joining as a volunteer or for a career.

In July, for the first time, Girls on Fire presented a one-day school holiday's program on the Mid North Coast. The programs were held at three separate locations on the 11th, 12th and 13th July 2023, at Kempsey, Wauchope and Laurieton fire stations.

After talking to some of the other members in the Port Macquarie unit, two other ladies decided to participate as well. I joined in for the day at Kempsey and Carol and Zanthie went to Laurieton. Across the three days about 18 girls from the community participated in the program.

Amongst the other activities of teambuilding and firefighting, we showed the young girls what it is like to be a part of the SES and some of the roles we do. In Kempsey I showed the girls how to set up a simple Z-rig with the ropes and pulleys. They seemed to be engaged and had fun hauling their friends in harness. Carol and Zanthie showed the girls in Laurieton the swift water throw bags and how to carry a person in the stretcher.

Throughout the day the girls were encouraged to support and cheer each other on. The leaders pointed out the benefits of working together in a team and highlighted the mateship and collaborative mentality of working in an emergency service.



It was great to see the girls grow and develop their confidence and teamwork over the day. Having started out as the same age as some of the girls participating, I can easily relate to that. I think most of them had never done anything like this before. Never put out a fire or played the role of a rescuer before.

Personally, I have seen firsthand the benefits of joining an emergency service and challenging myself to try things outside my comfort zone. In doing so I have learnt a lot of

skills that are not only useful in SES but in all areas of my life. I hope we were able to share that experience with them.

It would be great to see Girls on Fire back on the Mid North Coast again and hopefully more SES people can be involved. If there is ever one in your area, put your hand up to help, the young girls will benefit, and you will have a fun day.

By Sereena Ward

Port Macquarie NSW SES unit





NSW SES Shellharbour City Unit Open Day

On June 17th this year, the NSW SES Shellharbour City Unit held its first Community Open Day.

The Shellharbour City Unit has not held such a large event for a very long time, and we wanted to ensure the day was one to remember. The aim of the day was to:

- » To create a family friendly event of the whole family
- » Bring people into our Unit, to meet our members and learn what it is we do.
- » Engage the Community to help build emergency preparedness and resilience.
- » Recruit new members into the organisation.

We had a glorious sunny day for our event that ran from 10:30am to 2:30pm. To best showcase what we do as NSW SES Volunteers, we set up a live Height safety Kit (HSK) display and a live chainsaw display, both of which ran at set times throughout the event. At both

stands we had members available to explain what was being done whilst the displays were active and explain some of the equipment we use to ensure the safety of the team and the community. We also had information stands where our flood rescue techs had a “show and tell” about their equipment, the dangers of flood waters and why you should never enter flood water. Other stands included our information stand on how to prepare your home for storms, discussing steps community members should be taking to minimise damage to their homes and property during storms. We had a recruitment stand, where interested community members could learn about volunteering and then could apply on the day. We even had a mock IMT set up in our Incident Control Centre, where the public could learn what these invaluable members

of our team do to support the community during bigger events.

Naturally we had various vehicles on display, not only our storm vehicles but also one of our UNIMOG's and a CoW! These generated a huge amount of interest with the small kids and big kids alike! Our biggest showstopper was our new kids' truck - SHE01. This replica storm truck was designed and built by our members in the lead up to the open day and was literally completed around midnight the day before. With working lights, siren, horn and radio, SHE01 was a crowd favorite amongst the little ones and will no doubt be a showstopper at future community events.

Children were a big focus on the day. Our bow loader was a smash hit with the young ones. Donning PFD's and helmets, the kids loved being able to get on board and experience what



it is like to sit inside such a cool looking boat. With all the flashing lights and cool gear, it was evident by all the smiles that we had a lot of budding SES volunteers in the making. We ran a rope bag throwing competition for the kids, with some brightly coloured targets made by our members, and those lucky enough to hit the target left with a cool prize.

Such a day is not possible without a lot of support. We were blessed to have the Rotary Club of Shellharbour attend for the day. These wonderful people cooked up a storm on the BBQ and kept people well fed. Our local Woolworths at Albion Park donated over 350 sausages for the day, allowing us to have a free sausage sizzle for everyone that came through our gate. i98FM, our local radio station, also attended and provided support

by way of social media crosses via their street fleet crew. Bunnings Shellharbour and Kembla Grange were also in attendance and provided us with some Home Emergency Kits that we were able to give away as lucky door prizes throughout the day. The Bar Pellegrini Coffee Van was on site to provide the all-important coffee! These organisations, along with the support we received from the NSW SES Volunteers Association, made this day special for so many people.

In total, we had 159 groups of people through our gates. Most of these were families or groups of friends. On the day, we had 10 applications made to become a NSW SES Volunteer at our unit, with the final number of new members joining the organisation for this intake equaling 14 people. We had 2 State Members

of Parliament attend - Anna Watson - Member for Shellharbour and Gareth Ward - Member for Kiama. Shellharbour City Council Deputy Mayor and Councilor Kellie Marsh also came along to show her support to our members.

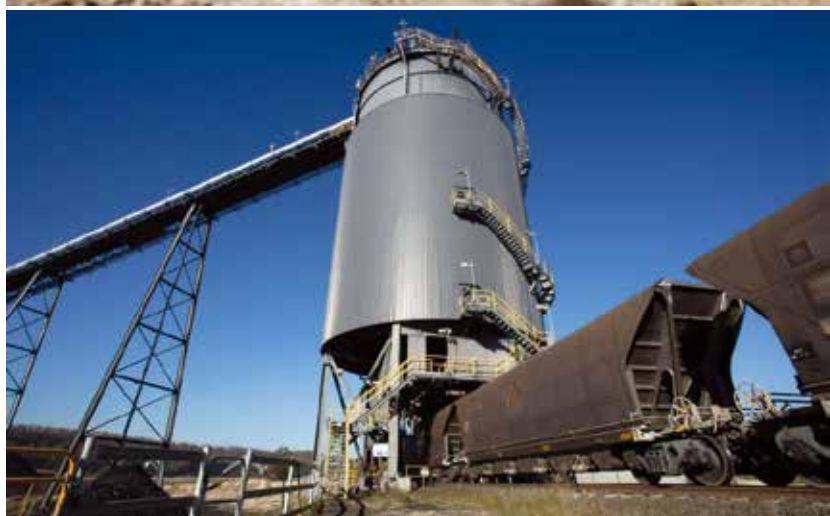
Preparing for such an event takes a lot of planning and time and we are lucky to have a strong Community Engagement team at our unit. Our Member and Volunteer Coordinator (Tim) was the driving force behind creating the day and with a lot of support from our Stakeholder Engagement and Media Coordinator (Nikki), they managed to ensure the event was well organised and promoted. However, the success of the day came down to all the Members of our Unit contributing in some way. They say volunteering brings out the best in people and in this instance... it really did!



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The Australasian Road Rescue Organisation Challenge Adelaide 2023

In the heart of Adelaide, a remarkable event unfolded that showcased the dedication, skill, and teamwork of emergency responders from across the Australasian region.

The Australasian Rescue Challenge 2023, jointly hosted by the South Australian Metro Fire Service, South Australian State Emergency Service and the South Australian County Fire Service, bringing together the best of the best in road rescue operations. Held amidst the picturesque backdrop of Adelaide's urban landscape, this event provided an extraordinary opportunity to witness firsthand the exceptional abilities of those who stand ready to save lives in the most challenging circumstances.

The Rescue Challenge is a premier event that brings together road rescue teams from various emergency service organisations in the Australasian region. These teams consist of highly trained professionals specialising in extricating individuals trapped in vehicles following accidents, often employing complex techniques and



tools to ensure the safety and well-being of both victims and responders. The theme of this year's event was **CHALLENGE** - yourself, your team and your skills **LEARN** - new techniques, new equipment and knowledge sharing and **REFINE** - your skills

and capabilities and improve our response to the community.

The Challenge is not just a competition; it's an arena where the true capabilities of these rescue teams

» continued on page 24



are put to the test. Participants face simulated accident scenarios that require them to deploy their expertise in swift, safe, and efficient extrication. The challenges are designed to mimic real-life situations in high fidelity, allowing teams to demonstrate their problem-solving skills, technical proficiency, and ability to work seamlessly as a unit. One of the most captivating aspects of the Rescue Challenge is the emphasis on teamwork. The challenge encourages participants to communicate effectively, allocate responsibilities, and make split-second decisions under pressure – all while keeping the safety of the victims and themselves as the top priority.

Attending the Rescue Challenge in 2023 also provided a glimpse into the cutting-edge techniques and tools on show for demonstration and evaluation at the Sponsor's day and stands during the event. From hydraulic tools to advanced medical equipment, the event showcased how technology continues to advance the field of emergency response, enabling responders to save lives more efficiently than ever before.

Beyond the competitive aspect, the Australasian Rescue Challenge serves as a platform for learning and collaboration. Participants and spectators alike have the opportunity

to exchange insights, strategies, and best practices with their counterparts from different regions. This cross-pollination of ideas contributes to the ongoing evolution of road rescue techniques and further elevates the capabilities of emergency responders across the Australasian region. This year 23 Extrication Teams tackled the three events of the Rescue Challenge - being time critical, entrapped and controlled rescue - including our own New South Wales State Emergency teams from Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Port Stephens, and international teams from Hong Kong Fire Services Department and Hampshire Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue. These teams also undertook an Industrial Rescue event, new to ARC in 2023, again based on real-life scenarios such as a washing machine entrapment, impalement or hand in a meat grinder. Six additional teams also took part in the Trauma Challenge, including our own Sofala CFR, who treated their patient with care, skill and precision.

The overall challenge winner for 2023 was the joint team from South Australia Metropolitan Fire Service and South Australian Ambulance Service, proving they are a very difficult team to match.

Witnessing the Australasian Rescue Challenge in Adelaide was an inspiring experience that highlighted the dedication and professionalism of those who put their lives on the line to protect and save others. The commitment displayed by the participating teams underscored the importance of continuous training, preparation, and a relentless pursuit of excellence in the realm of emergency response.

CONCLUSION

The Australasian Rescue Challenge 2023 in Adelaide was a resounding success that brought attention to the exceptional skills and teamwork of road rescue teams across the region. The event not only showcased the technical prowess and cutting-edge tools utilized in road rescue operations but also emphasized the significance of collaboration and communication in high-pressure situations.

All NSW SES participants would like to thank the Challenge Management Team for their exceptional efforts and dedication in successfully managing this event. NSW SES members also dedicate their time and expertise in the crucial roles as Assessors, Challenge Coordinators, patients and behind the scenes in media and safety. It is evident



the hard work and determination of individuals, have contributed to the success and positive outcomes achieved. The meticulous planning, coordination, and commitment have truly made a significant impact and seamless execution of the challenge is truly commendable, showcasing what can be accomplished when a group of talented individuals comes together with a common goal.

The volunteers of the NSW SES express our gratitude for NSW SES's support in facilitating our efforts through the financing of travel and accommodation expenses. This generosity not only demonstrates a commitment to our cause but has also significantly enhanced our ability to serve our communities effectively. The financial support provided has enabled us to participate in this challenge, expand our skills and knowledge and bring this back to our units. This support has strengthened our sense of unity and purpose within our teams and the impact of investment in our volunteers ripples through every successful operation, every life saved, every person helped and instills a sense of pride, motivation, and belonging among us all.

Written by Jane Huebner





NSESVA Memorial

Young Emerging Leaders

In May this year I had the privilege to represent NSW SES at the annual AFAC National Memorial Service in Canberra.

Our group of 13 individuals were selected by each of our state VAs, with representation from each state and territory. The National Memorial Service is a time to solemnly honor the courage and sacrifice of fire and emergency service personnel from Australia and New Zealand, both professional and volunteer, who have passed away in the line of duty. Families of those who have passed are presented with a Memorial Medallion, and the memorial wall in Canberra is updated with the names of those lost. Our responsibilities for the event included ushering distinguished guests, distributing programs and rosemary, as well as forming the guard of honor for the Governor General of Australia, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley.

Following the service, we visited Parliament House for a brief tour and had the opportunity to meet with Senator Murray Watts and Senator Tony Sheldon, both of whom work closely with emergency services across the country.

After Parliament House, we enjoyed a reception at Government House, with the Governor General and his wife, Her Excellency Linda Hurley. They both showed keen interest in the work of the SES and all our volunteers. Each of



us were presented with a Governor General's medallion as thanks for our service. We then headed out onto the vista lawn for a lunch in celebration of the coronation of King Charles III. Speeches were given by the Governor, his wife as well as the British High Commissioner, Vicki Treadle, all of whom spoke about the importance of community, and their gratitude for the hard work given by volunteers. We had the chance to mingle with other guests, who showed much interest in the SES and our roles as volunteers in the service. Following on from that

we left Yarralumla and headed to the headquarters of Geosciences Australia.

At Geosciences Australia, we learned about how they detected cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, and geomagnetic storms and well as how their mapping systems work to plot and detect these events. We also learned how Geographical Information Systems can be used to predict potential damages from severe weather events and how mitigation strategies can be implemented from this data. This data, used in conjunction with the Bureau of Meteorology,



is provided to emergency services such as SES and is a helpful way of knowing where to better position teams during these severe weather events.

Our weekend concluded with a formal dinner where we were presented with a trophy in acknowledgement of our service and heard from Sarah Wilson, the Director of Strategy from Volunteering Australia, who provided valuable insight into the importance and benefits of volunteering at all levels. Her and her team's findings have just been published in a report named the National Strategy for Volunteering.

Overall, it was an incredible experience, with the opportunity to meet a variety of people from both the SES and other agencies. I made many new friends and gained a better understanding of the various roles and responsibilities of government agencies and how they impact decision making in all emergency services to help us be better prepared and keep us safe out in the field. I thank the both the NSW SES VA for putting me forward for this opportunity and the NSESVA for the planning and sponsoring of this weekend.

Aidan Petersen
Hunters Hill Unit



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Bankstown's Pre School and Kindergarden Strike Team

A group of Retired Bankstown volunteers have been doing the rounds of our Pre Schools.



On our last visit we left a Paddy Platypus toy with the Paddy's story with the Pre School Centre.

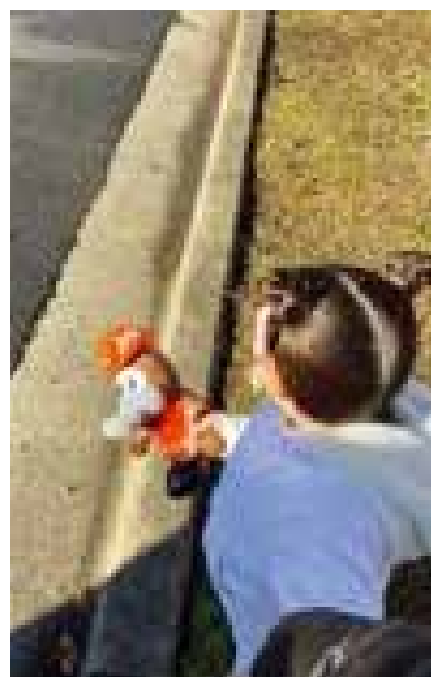
We received these photos with the following words from the Kidz Academy in Greenacre.

"Just wanted to let you all know that Paddy is slowly going to everyone's home and checking for safety and encouraging conversation and awareness in our community.

Thank you so much for the mascot he is doing his work. The families have really jumped onboard and have really been enjoying him. He has been behaving himself at all their homes.

Thanks again for all you guys do for our community."

Pat Johnson



THANK YOU SES VOLUNTEERS

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Bankstown Unit's New Member

Every Tuesday night, in a quiet corner of the kitchen at the Bankstown unit, volunteer Benjamin (better known as Woody) can be seen talking to other unit volunteers.

However, unlike most other conversations, Woody is accompanied by a constant companion - a loyal and friendly assistance dog named Asher (Ash) who is also devotedly listening in on the conversation. But Ash is more than just a companion to Woody; Ash is a loyal friend to all the members at the Bankstown unit.

Ash is a very special and well disciplined dog. Ash abides by all the rules of TARPS - speaks when spoken to, respectful to other volunteers and shakes hands when asked. The only problem, Ash falls asleep very easily during those less exciting, but important, SES training sessions.

Although Ash is very well loved by all the members, Ash was feeling a little bit left out, and not very 'equal' to the other

----- “ -----
The only problem, Ash falls asleep very easily during those less exciting, but important, SES training sessions.
 ----- ” -----

members. You see, Ash could not get a uniform from the online store. Poor Ash!

But that wasn't a problem for our resourceful SES volunteers with a 'can do' attitude.

Brett, one of our new volunteers is a very capable tailor. Using old uniforms returned by ex-volunteers, Brett meticulously measured up Ash and decided to sew a special SES uniform for Ash, an orange vest with an SES logo and reflective SES badge.



The new orange uniform would identify Ash as both an assistance dog and a special SES member, making Ash very distinguished and easily recognisable to others.

From the day Ash put on the new vest, Ash has worn the bright orange uniform proudly every Tuesday night.

Brett's thoughtful gift didn't just enhance Ash's visibility; it reinforced the comradery between our volunteers. The orange vest is a

reminder that kindness has the power to create ripples of positivity, touching lives in unexpected ways.

The future is bright for Ash and now has a special place at the Bankstown SES unit.

Tony Harb

Deputy Unit Commander
 Planning & Community Capability NSW
 State Emergency Service
 Bankstown Unit

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I want to say a special thanks to
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tirelessly to our local community
in times of disaster.

The Hon. Sonia Horner
State Member for Wallsend
Deputy Speaker



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FRRP Program Experience

Have you heard about the First Responder Resilience Program

<https://ordinarycourage.com.au/>

I am Troy Smolenaars (Smolly) from Dapto SES Unit and I had the privilege to take part in the initial stage of the FRRP course development back in December 2022. This involved constructing the course content with a diverse and inclusive group from several ESOs, NSW SES VA staff and the lead organization Ordinary Courage. SES Volunteers were invited to provide input & help create the course content so it was suitable to be delivered to Emergency volunteers and community leaders.

I found this process to be an empowering and enlightening task knowing that we were creating content that can make a real and tangible difference to others in the mental Health Space. Further to the FRRP journey, we partook in some online

Have you been to a session? Do you want to go to one?

<https://www.sesvaevents.com/>

learning to help us better understand the outcomes and intent of the FRRP journey and objectives.

I was the co-facilitator at the Shellharbour FRRP event in June where I worked with presenters Paul Scott and Jim Smith. This was a rewarding opportunity to assist others in their journey and meet some new people such as the SGB unit commander. I also had the opportunity to meet and network with others from surf lifesaving and Wires, as well as other SES members from Wollongong, Kiama, Shellharbour NSW SES Units.

Having courageous conversations with our mates is a good first step to helping a colleague get the help they need if they are not themselves. We all want to turn up to SES the best version

I want to tell you about my FRRP Journey to date.

of ourselves but sometimes other factors get in the way - that's where communication and conversation can help. I value My mental health just as much as my physical health ...because with out either one, we can't be the best version of ourselves to help out teammates & serve the communities in which we live.

Stay safe and awesome and reach out to someone.

Regards,

Troy Smolenaars

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June 2023

Communities-for-Communities Family Fun Day at Drummoyne Oval

A bit of history to set the scene. Drummoyne Oval is a Sydney suburban sports ground that has hosted many memorable events.



I saw the “little master” Sachin Tendulkar bat there in a warm-up to one India/Australia tour and watched the Indian women’s 20/20 cricket team play there on another occasion. Both the Sydney Sixers and Sydney Thunder have played at the ground - but the most memorable cricket, from an SES perspective, was a charity cricket match which our unit attended some years ago. Featuring celebrities with various skill sets it began with an ex-Rugby league prop opening the batting. Unfortunately, he slipped in the first over while executing a spinning hook shot, fell, and dislocated his shoulder. Why so memorable I hear you ask? Because it was our Canada Bay SES rescue team that carried him off on our stretcher to the St John’s First Aid Station to polite applause from the crowd - before a spectating doctor reduced the dislocation after obtaining informed consent. Being a prop forward, he was aptly described by the SES stretcher-bearers as a “**BIG** package” – but it was a great opportunity to showcase our

lesser-known casualty handling skills and cement our reputation as the Swiss army knife of emergency services.

Fast forward to June 2023 and under the command of CBSES Unit Commander (David), our Unit was again present at Drummoyne Oval – this time at the “Communities for Communities” (C4C) “Family Fun Day”. C4C was founded locally in 2002 after a meeting of friends at Drummoyne Swimming Centre, and since then, like Topsy, has just grown over the years to become bigger than Ben Hur. (*Trivia Fact: Did you know that “Topsy” is the name of a female character in Harriet Beacher Stowe’s novel “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” – while, with six degrees of separation, both “Uncle Tom” and “Ben Hur” were slaves – albeit in different centuries?*)

As can be seen from its website (<https://www.communitiesforcommunities.com.au>) C4C aims to sustain and grow communities in Australia and Overseas through fund-raisers and community events. Since being formed in 2002 it has hosted over 130 different

community events and created unique immersion experiences in Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Australia, with almost \$3 million raised.

In support of its work our Canada Bay Unit has participated in this event at Drummoyne Oval for several years now. And what a day it is – with live stage performances - including a NSW Corrective Services Band, Martial Arts Demo, an Opera Singer, Dancers, Drummers etc. All topped off with a wandering, wonderful, adorable Paddy Platypus. Stalls aplenty both inside and outside the Oval -with our SES fete stall prominently located between “NSW Police” and “Australian Red Cross”, and adjacent to a “Sailability” sailboat, and local “Men’s Shed” selling hand-made wooden toys. Meanwhile our newest Rescue Vehicle was also open for inspection, standing next to an NRMA Electric Car, NSW Police wagon, and joined briefly by a NSW Fire and Rescue truck.

CBSES Volunteer Jesse coordinated our participation as we helped other stall holders unpack and carry their



wares to their sites, set up our own display, and then with gratitude, took up the local Rotary Club offer of a free sausage sizzle snack (two sausages in sliced bread with our choice of brown, tomato, or mustard sauce – and onions of course). And then it was down to the serious business of community engagement – handing out printed info, talking to people about “who we are, what we do” (and how to join), and of course, engaging with the kids (and parents) via the ever-popular toy chainsaws and of course Paddy Platypus (led by CBSES Volunteer Jane). Now I am afraid that the identity of one of our two Canada Bay Paddy SES volunteers must remain shrouded in mystery. They are a serving “redacted” of “redacted” named “redacted” and as such disclosure

of their identity would require prior authorisation from “redacted” at “redacted”. I am pretty sure that the old adage that “I could tell you but then I would have to kill you” might be a step too far - but I am still glad that I checked with them before blabbing it out! The other Paddy SES volunteer was an off-duty paramedic (Adam) – so no disclosure issues there.

Paddy was not only a hit with the kids, but it also seems, at least from the photos, that the Corrective Services female vocalist took time out to serenade Paddy as he posed in front of the stage. CBSES Volunteer Jane did consider leading Paddy around to meet the other animals in the Petting Zoo – but thought it too great a risk that he might be mistaken for an exhibit and put in a holding pen.

As the day progressed, we gladly accepted an afternoon tea offer from Rotary of another sausage sandwich (this community engagement gig is hungry work), but then declined a late afternoon invitation for our volunteers to participate in a dragon dance and, as planned, vacated the site prior to the evening firework display.

The weather was marvellous (especially for Paddy) being cool with cloudless skies, and the crowds were certainly appreciative of the fun activities and of the cause being supported. And that cause again “Communities for Communities” – a 100% volunteer organisation building communities at home and abroad.

Bill Hoyles

Canada Bay SES Volunteer

NAIDOC Week

Bankstown State Emergency Service went along to help celebrate the significance of our First Nations heritage and the important contribution of Canterbury Bankstown’s Aboriginal make in our community and across our vibrant City.

The members took this opportunity to support the event and raise the community awareness of flood preparedness and to welcome any First Nation members to join into our SES family.

Pat Johnson





Concord Rotary Farmers Market

The phone call came from Ken Wright, Concord Rotarian, and Canada Bay Citizen of the Year for 2021.

Would our Canada Bay Unit like to run a stall at the twice-monthly Concord Rotary Farmers Market – perhaps on Sunday 20th August 2023?

My quick answer was a definite “no” to that date – as it coincided with our major annual “whole of unit” community event – Ferragosto Italian Festival in Five Dock. I suggested that we might be available two weeks earlier on Sunday 6th August 2023 - but with the proviso that I would have to go through due process” (i.e., check with Unit Commander, then Metro Zone mob and finally SHQ).

I must confess that I was keen, not only because this was another local opportunity to showcase the work of our Unit but also, because I had been a guest speaker at past Concord Rotary meetings. Thus, it was a connection worth preserving as well as an opportunity to spread the word even wider.

Then came a curve ball, would we be able to put on some sort of activity also – just to showcase our skills. For example, could we consider opening a Rotary “Shelter Box” on the day and setting up the contents as a display. It comes with instructions – and it’s just a suggestion.



I floated the idea with the Unit movers and shakers, but there was a lack of enthusiasm for the Shelter Box experiment, and then the “available” Shelter Box became unavailable anyway – so no worries after all.

And so it was that, after a night of heavy rain showers, our team of five arrived between 0700 and 0730 as planned and set up our community engagement display. We then took

time-out to inspect the wares on display at the other stalls. Some of us even made our selections early – with my own choice being sage, goats’ cheese and pumpkin ravioli, followed later by the purchase of a jar of blue gum honey. Others opted for an early Concord Rotary Bacon and egg roll, while coffee was a must for those that imbibe the stuff. Organic vegetables were in demand – but alas the baker sold out of

home baked crusty bread very early so I missed out.

Then it was on with engaging with the community via a simple stall – until the Concord Rotary Market Manager suggested it would have been a bonus if we could have brought a truck to display. Ever obliging, and with our LHQ reasonably close, we obliged – and added a Mercedes Sprinter rescue truck to our stall display.

It was a great morning with a really positive community atmosphere coupled with great food choices and finally the added bonus that Concord Rotary decided that the income from the day should go to the SES.

(Just as a postscript - the venue for the Farmers Market is adjacent to Concord High School – scene of one of my most unusual SES mishaps some years earlier. Asked to present the prizes at the school speech night I parked in the Council car park, stepped out onto the nature strip – and sank up to my knees in what I described at the



time as quicksand! Contacted Council and reported the “quicksand” danger, and then cleaned myself up and fulfilled my obligations to the school. The following day I passed the scene and saw Council workman responding. Stopped for a chat and met the foreman who had been first on scene, at what he expected to be a hoax call. That was until he stepped on

the nature strip and sank up to his knees! Seems someone had dug out the earth from the nature strip and then filled the hole they had created with leaf mulch – so that when it rained the surface of floating leaves looked solid until trodden on).

Bill Hoyles

Canada Bay SES Volunteer

Radio Night (LEGO)

Braidwood unit members decided to change training up by using LEGO to promote great radio skills.

Our members were given LEGO pieces and a radio they had to listen to the instruction on building it via radio only, from the member with the instructions in another part of the unit so members couldn't see the instructions to go off.

The members had lots of fun in changing the training around.

This improves the skill of our members using the radio by showing how important good radio communication is.



LESSON PLAN

- » **Teams of no more than 4**
- » **2 radio's per team**
- » **1 LEGO pack per team**
- » **Radio quick guide per team Resources**
- » **NSW SES call sign structure sheet**

Teams to nominate 1st radio officer who will then open LEGO take away instructions from team go to another room.

Teams will pick a call sign from structure sheet (can use local numbers but I find better if using different ones).

Radio office to read instructions over radio (make sure on FLD OPS chnl not main so don't interfere with BAU).

Teams to follow instructions and repeat back to radio.

After 2-4 pages team members to swap radio comes out to build and another takes place.

Note if you have good radio ops make them radio supervisor to make sure not reading ahead for when they go back into building LEGO.



Flood rescue training in a natural environment

It was a beautiful Saturday, although a little chilly, as we assembled on the banks of the Hastings River at Koree Island on the stunning Mid North Coast.

With some trepidation we chatted on the riverbank, SES, RFS, Police, Marine Rescue and Surf Life Saving all represented.

After introductions and a quick briefing, we were ushered down to the trailers that have been set up by the flood rescue training task force to find some gear and start to get dressed in the appropriate attire. As we debated exactly what size wetsuit was required and found a PFD, helmet and even boots, there was no question that the investment the SES has made into quality equipment was second to none, as we would find out in the not-too-distant future.

We started with land base rescue techniques, as this is the foundation of the course, but true to the Mid North Coast climate the sweat was soon running down our cheeks and the river was looking more and more inviting.

Next up we got to cool down as we were instructed to jump into the river, and, guided by our trainers, we started the in-water aspect of the course by

learning both defensive and aggressive swimming techniques. Although the water wasn't the warmest the cooling effect was welcome.

Round and round we went, doing multiple runs through the selected rapid, defensive swimming to avoid rocks and submerged tree trunks, then quickly swapping to an aggressive position and powering our way into the eddy.

Just as we are getting comfortable with the newly taught techniques, out came the strainer...

One of the most dangerous obstacles you could encounter, we are advised the best way to deal with a strainer is to avoid it, straight away followed by being told to swim aggressively towards it and push yourself over the strainer, off you go.

Once we had battled our way over the strainer a few times each, we split the group with some members on the bank refining their throw bag rescue techniques, following on from our morning practise. Being in the natural environment a few real-world hazards needed to be negotiated, low hanging

branches, and a tree trunk on the far bank, sometimes with varying success.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the multi-agency course was seeing the variety of coloured uniforms in the river. It's great to work with the people we see at incidents, in a less pressured environment, and have the time to get to know one another.

The hard work the Flood Rescue Training Task Force have put into developing, and now delivering, the flood rescue training courses in the natural environment was very evident. It meant all participants had a great time, whilst learning new skills which will hold us all in good stead when the next event arises, and we are called upon to step up and help our communities, as we all love to do.

If the opportunity arises for you to participate, or even help out with the delivery of one of the natural environment flood rescue courses, drop what you're doing and get involved.

Brendon Field
Port Macquarie Unit

Furthering WHS Skills as a SES HSR after a successful grant and study

My name is Troy Smolenaars I am a Volunteer Logistics Coordinator with Dapto SES Unit, Health, and Safety Representative (HSR) for Dapto Unit, HSR for Wollongong Unit.

REFERENCES

www.nswsesva.org.au/grants-program.html

I began my WHS Journey in NSW SES when I became a HSR in 2018 in the old ISR Region structure where I was mentored and supported by the zone team of the time. I gained a passion for WHS and safety because of my employment at Bluescope Steel where I was a WHS committee member and then Chairperson. I felt the desire to continue this passion at SES and looked for avenues to further my skills and knowledge to assist volunteers and staff in WHS matters in my capacity as Health and Safety Representative.

I decided to apply for a SESVA Grant to undertake my CERT 4 WHS Certificate at TAFE. I was nervous to apply but grateful

I was deemed worthy enough. I began my study journey during covid and in a digital format, I found this method of study hard and then covid came about as well as family situation changes. Knowing I was overwhelmed, I deferred my studies and sorted my family issues out to an effective outcome. In 2022 I resigned up with TAFE to study a class-based course at ST George TAFE which I found a good learning method in a class-based environment.

In April 2023, I completed my TAFE Course and have received my Cert 4 in WHS of which I'm both humbled and proud. I look forward to continuing my WHS Journey in NSW SES as HSR, welcoming new HSRS and assisting

volunteers and staff in our organisational WHS Journey. I enjoy Attending SES Zone leadership meetings as a HSR, and feel empowered that volunteer and staff leaders value WHS representation.

Lastly, I'm eternally grateful to the SESVA Grant Team for providing the opportunity to further my WHS Skills which will assist me to help SES volunteers and Staff in the WHS journey.

Feel free to drop me a line on MS Teams if you ever want to talk about safety.

Regards,

Troy Smolenaars

Dapto SES
HSR WOL/DPT Units

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Adam Marshall MP
your Member for Northern Tablelands

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Authorised by Adam Marshall MP, Member for Northern Tablelands. Funded using parliamentary entitlements. September 2023



Tanya THOMPSON MP
Member for Myall Lakes

Thank You
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**We appreciate your
ongoing sacrifices to keep our
community safe through your
dedicated service.**

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 tanyathompson.com.au

Authorised by Tanya Thompson MP, 1-9 Manning Street, Tuncurry NSW 2428, funded using Parliamentary Entitlements July 2023.



Thank you!

Thank you to local SES volunteer members as well as all emergency service organisations.

In recent years our community has been challenged in unprecedented ways - from **bushfires**, to significant **flooding and natural disasters**.

Along with the rest of the world, we have also faced the challenges associated with **COVID-19**.

Throughout these extraordinary times, our community has been lifted by you - our City's many volunteers.

You choose to give your time to help, over and over again, and we say 'thank you'.

Council is a proud supporter of the New South Wales State Emergency Service Volunteers Association, and all emergency service agencies.



Council is providing local information on weather warnings, emergency contacts and road closures via the Emergency Dashboard. emergency.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/

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Thank you...

To all Newcastle SES volunteers for keeping the community safe during times of emergency including storm, flood, and rescue operations.

newcastle.nsw.gov.au




Tina Ayyad MP
Member for
HOLSWORTHY

On behalf of the people of
Holsworthy, I would like to thank you
for your continued service to keep
our community safe.

60 Walder Road, Hammondville NSW 2170 | holsworthy@parliament.nsw.gov.au | 0321 9825 3653
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Authorised by Tina Ayyad MP, 60 Walder Rd Hammondville NSW 2170, with Parliamentary Entitlements (July 2023)



**Milparinka
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and Caravan Park
(run by volunteers)**

**Loftus Street,
Milparinka 2880**

Website: Milparinka > Corner Country > Outback NSW
(visitcornercountry.com.au)

Email: visitcornercountry@bigpond.com

Telephone: 08 80913862

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*Thank you to all past and current serving
volunteers in the Parkes electorate who
have gone above and beyond to assist
our community during trying times.*



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Authorised by M. Coulton, National Party of Australia, Shop 3, 153 Brisbane St, Dubbo NSW 2830.

Marrickville Festiville

In May this year, members from the NSW SES - Marrickville Unit were invited to attend the Marrickville Metro 'Festiville' alongside other organisations such as Red Cross Life Blood, Pharmacy4Less, and Bluey, from the popular children's cartoon.



High fives with Paddy Platypus

The event was held by Marrickville Metro Shopping Centre, in celebration of 2 years since the development of the second half of the centre.

In recent times, the Inner West has experienced some damaging weather. During Festiville, the NSW SES - Marrickville Unit volunteers highlighted the importance of flood and storm awareness, provided valuable tips on how to prepare emergency kits, and stay informed through the State's new Australian Warning System via the HazardsWatch app. There were also some flood maps on display to help them identify flood risks.

Adding a touch of fun and excitement for the children, the NSW SES's mascot - Paddy Platypus also made an appearance. The loveable animal was an instant hit with the children and their parents, spreading joy and enthusiasm while educating the community about the NSW SES. Many of the young children were also very taken with the red and blue flashing lights of the SES truck and were excited to see and learn about some of the tools in the truck.

The Marrickville Festiville was an amazing event for NSW SES volunteers. We had a great time and we think our community did too!

By Ben Tomkins and edited by Hash Chand and Julie Powell.



Young boy with Paddy Platypus in front of SES truck

Putting your Wellbeing First



At the beginning of August 2023, the NSW SES officially launched the NSW SES Being Well Strategy 2023-2024 with our members at the Canterbury Unit.

Being Well' builds on the previous strategy and our long history of supporting the wellbeing of our members. It is an innovative approach to looking after our wellbeing by providing enhanced holistic health and wellbeing systems, initiatives, and services tailored to our diverse membership.

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT YOU?

This enhanced approach to wellbeing at NSW SES will increase the drive and support of wellbeing for all members, by:

- » Enhancing our systems and approach to prevent and manage risks to wellbeing effectively and proactively.
- » Preparing our members, leaders, and agency to understand and support member wellbeing.
- » Actively promoting a healthy culture that enables our members to thrive, across all domains of holistic wellbeing.
- » Delivering both new and enhanced wellbeing services that are accessible to members.

Amongst others, our strategy goals focus on providing holistic wellbeing initiatives, as well as continuing to deliver frontline wellbeing support for members.

In support of these goals, we continue to offer all members access to our Peer Support, Chaplaincy and Member Assistance Program (MAP) through **Telus Health**. We also launched a new **Wellbeing Portal** powered by our MAP provider TELUS Health and created a new Being Well mySES site that is available once you log into MYSES.

Read on to find out more about how these initiatives can help you put your wellbeing first.

PEER SUPPORT

It is a confidential 24/7 service that provides all members with someone to talk to; an empathetic and non-judgmental "listening ear". Peer Support Officers are members who are trained in Psychological First Aid and can help members access mental health professionals. They can also provide on-scene support during and after

critical incidents and events and deliver My5 Seminars - NSW SES' training about stress, coping and mental health.

To contact Peer Support call 1800 626 800

CHAPLAINCY

Is a confidential 24/7 service available to all members and their families to advise on cultural, spiritual, and pastoral matters, as well as supporting and encouraging the spirituality of members and their families through the provision of ceremonial and religious services.

Chaplains are members from a range of faiths who are ordained or licensed ministers and have been endorsed by their own religious bodies. They provide spiritual and pastoral care, and they are trained in Psychological First Aid to provide support to all members. They can also provide on-scene support during and after critical incidents and events.

To contact our Chaplains, call 1800 626 800

MAP - MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

It is free and confidential 24/7 counselling support for all members and their immediate families. Qualified and experienced counsellors provide support across a range of work, volunteering, and personal issues. All members and their immediate families can access **5 x 60 minutes counselling sessions every year**.

Our MAP also provides Manager Assist, a confidential coaching and advisory service for all people leaders (including volunteer leaders), including unit commanders, team leaders and managers.

To contact MAP call 1300 361 008

MANAGER ASSIST

This is a free and confidential service to assist our leaders with people management inquiries.

Support is available for any questions regarding difficult conversations with members, advice on how to navigate members' wellbeing or how to better manage your team. Depending on the issue, a normal support session is booked for a 30-minute consultation.

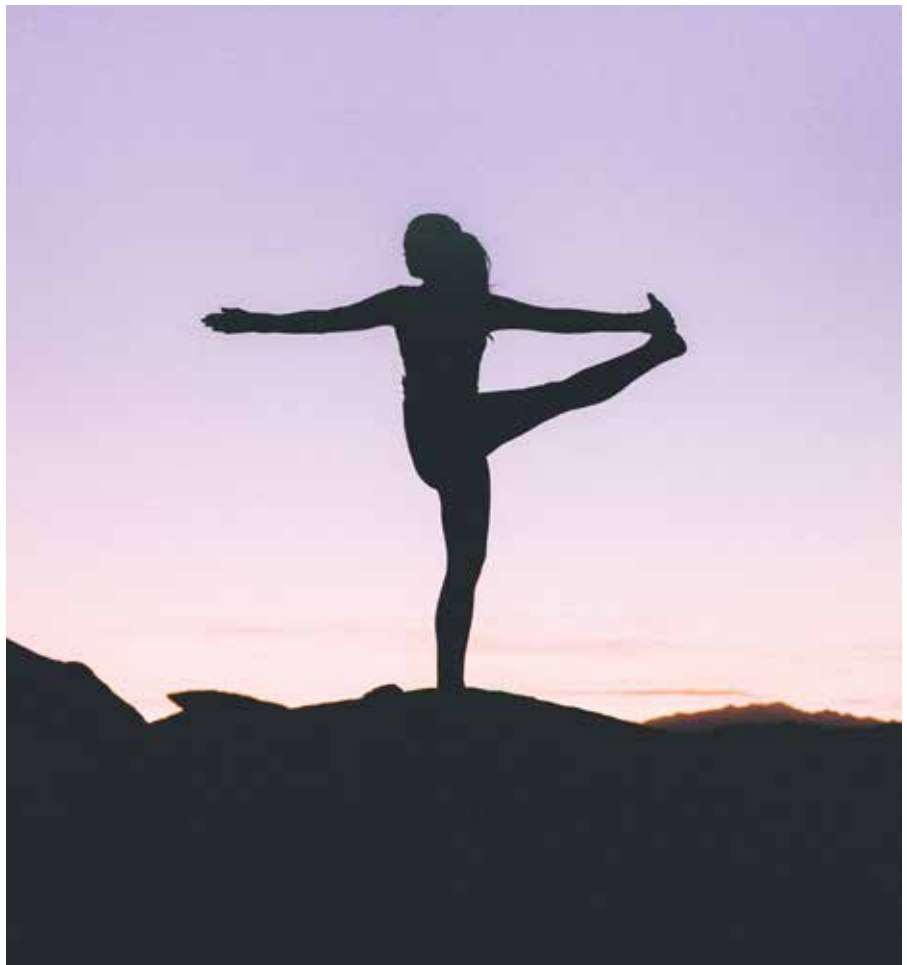
You can access the Manager Assist service as many times as you need, and it is a free and confidential service for all people leaders (volunteers and staff).

To contact Manager Assist call 1300 361 008

WELLBEING PORTAL

The Wellbeing Portal is powered by TELUS Health, our MAP provider. It provides holistic wellbeing support for all members, including:

- » 24/7 access to counselling and support as well as use of live-chat function
- » Online programs and self-assessments for members on topics such as how to quit smoking, eating for health, work wellbeing, avoiding burnout, depression, and work-life balance
- » Articles, short videos, toolkits, audio recordings and more on topics like ageing well, keeping kids safe online, stress management, change and resilience, mindfulness, financial wellbeing, diversity, and inclusion at work and much more.



How do I access the Wellbeing Portal?

To access the Wellbeing Portal:

- » Find the Wellbeing Portal on the NSW SES user dashboard
- » Log in using your NSW SES email address

BEING WELL MYSES SITE

MySES also has a dedicated page for all wellbeing-related matters for our members. The page is titled **Being Well at NSW SES**.

We encourage all members to visit the site and gain access to wellbeing services and additional wellbeing resources and information. You can also see what the Wellbeing Services & Support team are up to or request their services for your zone, unit, or team.

BEING WELL NETWORK

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

To join the Network of fellow members who are passionate about wellbeing please contact our Wellbeing Coordinator by emailing **wellbeingandsupport@ses.nsw.gov.au**

WELLBEING IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Wellbeing is everyone's responsibility that requires every member to engage in a collaborative way to prioritise wellbeing and is fundamental to the health and success of our agency.

Just as NSW SES culture and practices impact the wellbeing of individuals, leaders, units, zones, and teams, so do we all have a role to play in supporting our own and others' mental health and wellbeing. As it is a shared responsibility, it is our duty to talk about mental health and wellbeing, to break down stigma, and to take proactive action to improve our wellbeing at all levels.

For more information, we encourage all members to review the full **Being Well Strategy 2023-2024** by on MySES or request a printed copy for your unit or team by contacting the Wellbeing Services & Support team on **wellbeingandsupport@ses.nsw.gov.au**

Leadership Development at the NSW SES

At the NSW SES we understand that members come from all walks of life and bring unique strengths to the organisation.

To recognise and harness the capabilities across the agency a Leadership Capability Framework was recently launched to support all members growth across 7 key capabilities.

To bring the framework to life the NSW SES has developed a series of virtual webinars. The first one was held on the 10 August 2023 and was attended by almost 200 members across the two sessions. Alongside the webinars is the development of a series of Leadership Development pages. These pages have bite size learning, professional readings and video storytelling series from our own members.

The NSW SES is developing a series of learning tools to support the lifecycle of our members.



We are aiming to gain a clear understanding of why members are attracted to the NSW SES, their recruitment and onboarding experience, their development and retention experience and why members choose to leave the NSW SES. Using the lifecycle of members at the



core of understanding our members will ensure that we continue to offer learning that suits our members experience at the NSW SES.

For more information log on to MySES and visit the Leadership Development pages under the heading Training.

Project LIFT Program

Following the significant \$132.7 million investment by the NSW Government in June 2022, the Project Local Investment program for Facilities and Teams (LIFT) has seen the addition of 80 new staff roles to better support our volunteers in zones.

The recruitment of Project LIFT roles was a unique opportunity for the NSW SES to expand its diversity footprint. Creative recruitment talent strategies resulted in a more gender balanced Zone leadership team, significant increase of applications for typically hard to fill roles and a diverse range of backgrounds and skills brought to the agency.

With the conclusion of the People stream of Project LIFT, the increased number of zone based staff has created the opportunity for the NSW SES to provide more support to volunteers and communities at a local level.

PROJECT ELEVATE PROGRAM

Significant work has been undertaken in the People and Development stream of Project ELEVATE, with the ELEVATE

change management process and consultation recently concluding.

These change plan, list of additional interim roles and new organisational structures are available on the **mySES Program Elevate – People Intranet site.**

Advertising of these interim roles commenced on Friday 3 August 2023. Roles will be phased across the coming weeks and months to minimise disruption to our members and community.

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

To support our members during this unique time, four Writing Job Application and Interview Skills training sessions have been organised throughout August.

WRITING JOB APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEW SKILLS

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

Please do not hesitate to contact if you require further information.

August 2023

Professional Standards and Workplace Relations Update

The NSW SES recognises that our members are at our core and remains committed to providing a safe, inclusive and values-based culture where all members feel able to raise concerns and have them heard and acted upon.

To help create this culture, the NSW SES partnered with KPMG last year to conduct a comprehensive review of our internal complaint handling Complaints Management area in probity and standards.

The primary aim of the review is to restore member confidence in the way in which complaints such as grievances and misconduct are managed.

A significant recommendation from the review is to streamline the complaints management processes and enhance our existing policies and procedures, ensuring an effective process for managing complaints.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: FOSTERING POSITIVE CHANGE

The review by KPMG offered valuable insights and recommendations to improve the NSW SES Complaints Management area.

As part of this initiative, the NSW SES has designed a robust implementation plan, comprising tangible actions for achieving improvements in complaints management.

A key specific action in this plan was the re-design of policies and procedures relating to Complaints Management. The aim was to provide clarity and transparency to the complaints management process, ensuring all members of the organisation understand their roles and responsibilities.

REVAMPING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In May 2023, KPMG's experts, in collaboration with the NSW SES Professional Standards team and NSW SES member, worked diligently



to review our existing policies and procedures. The objective was to create a more robust and comprehensive framework that addresses various types of complaints and provides clear steps for resolution.

DRAFT COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE: TOWARDS CONSULTATION

By incorporating best practices and insights from the review, a revamped policy is in its draft stages.

This document reflects the culmination of rigorous analysis, expert recommendations, and practical insights. It is based on the fundamental principles of respectfulness and fairness, accessibility, transparency, accountability and confidentiality.

The policy and procedure are set to be circulated to all members for consultation later this month.

IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATION AND MEMBER INSIGHTS

The consultation phase marks a crucial step in the implementation process. It provides an opportunity for all members of the NSW SES to contribute their perspectives, experiences, and suggestions. By involving stakeholders at all levels, the NSW SES hopes to foster

a sense of ownership and commitment to the revised policies, enhancing their effectiveness in practice.

The review by KPMG and creation of the draft policy would not have been possible without the valuable insights from our members who participated in initial focus groups to provide feedback during the review process. The NSW SES acknowledges and thanks our members for their contributions.

We also extend our thanks to the NSW SES Volunteer Association for participating in the review and sharing their insights and feedback to the review.

As the draft Internal Complaints Management Policy and Procedure enters the consultation phase, it is another opportunity for all members to contribute to the development of a stronger and more effective framework. By working together, the NSW SES can strengthen its commitment to professionalism, ethics, and exemplary service to the community. The road to positive change may be challenging, but the outcome promises a more resilient and inclusive agency for the benefit of our members and communities.

The VA has requested the KPMG report and is yet to receive a copy from the NSW SES.



A (new) team leaders view on ARRO 2023

Challenge, Learn & Refine.

After being in the service for nearly 15 years, competing in a number of competition teams, both at ARRO and the Disaster Rescue Challenges, this year I had the opportunity to lead a team of highly skilled and knowledgeable rescue operators.

After participating as a tool operator in the State Road Rescue, held at Coffs Harbour, we had a role shuffle within the team due to some booked holidays, and after some discussion the new line up was decided with me at the helm.

As I mentioned, I have been in the service for a little while now, I am a Leading Senior Operator, qualified in Vertical Rescue, Road Crash, Lvl 3 Flood, Lvl 1 IC, and much more. With all this experience under my belt I found myself wondering why I was so nervous in the lead up to this rescue challenge.

I wasn't nervous for the skills of the team, they were more than capable, and in some cases, far more experienced than me. I wasn't nervous because of the rescue scenarios we would come across, we trained on or seen similar rescues many times over. I eventually realised that I was nervous because I was afraid of standing in the pit, being looked on, by our peers and colleagues, across multiple agencies, under the microscope of the judges, hoping to make the right calls to direct our team to carry out a successful rescue.

This is the nature of competition, seeing which is performing at a greater level than you are, what can we learn from them and what techniques we are using that can be refined upon to affect a better rescue. Once over the first hurdle of the initial rescue scenario I found the euphoria of my years of training kicking in at the right time, allowing me to ask the right questions of my team and ultimately making the right judgement calls.

The scenarios at events like these are designed to be difficult, very, very rarely are you going to get a 'walk in the park' type of rescue. We saw and experienced everything from having lightly trapped casualties, capable of walking themselves out of a car, to casualties so severely impacted that we were left wanting another 30 minutes of the action phase to fully locate and release the entrapments.

It's very different environment in the rescue pit rather than an on the road rescue. An ARRO rescue team is generally comprised of a Team Leader, a Medic/First Aider, 3 Tool Operators and a combined Tool Operator/Second

first aider. Surrounding us is a team of 3 judges (4 depending upon the rescue stand), watching every movement like hawks. One judge is dedicated to evaluating the technical operations of the tool operators, another is evaluating the treatment being provided by the medic, whilst the other is following myself, the Team leader. In order to evaluate the team's success, each judge has a list of 'word pictures' that they will constantly evaluate the team against. How well we meet the description of these word pictures is how we are scored.

For the competitors this event was spread over 5 days. Two days of theory and practical symposiums and three days of competition. The first two days were centred around both the ARRO management team and exhibitors providing a range of case studies and learning scenarios to demonstrate techniques and equipment. Over these two days we saw and trained on equipment designed to lift trains, manoeuvre bariatric patients, automated rope access equipment and much more. We had guest speakers participating in the Hampshire & Isle



of Wight, Fire and Rescue Service, share their learnings from participating in recent large scale, international search and rescue operations across Europe. These symposium events provided a range of insight, knowledge, techniques that can be applied across a multitude of scenarios.

The three 'competition' days are a scheduling nightmare. Overall, the team competes in; three road crash rescue scenarios, two trauma scenarios, an Industrial Rescue scenario, a CPR challenge and four workshop scenarios. The road crash scenarios cover three main variations of vehicle crash disciplines and exhibit various levels of occupant entrapment. The scenarios delivered across the competition stands come from real world cases that the ARRO team has compiled from multiple rescue organisations. The two trauma stands are solely for the medical operators of the team. Once again mirroring real events and, the casualties are both excellent actors and made up with realistic moulage (prop lacerations, impalements, etc) making a very realistic rescue environment.

The Industrial Rescue scenario is tailored towards the command and technical members of the team to tackle some kind of technical entrapment or release of a casualties. The final competition stand is a CPR challenge evaluating how effective the team is in providing and managing a CPR focussed rescue.

Ultimately, I feel that my experience leading the team has bolstered my knowledge and confidence. I love the feeling, post event when you have a chance to reflect and appreciate, that the training you have received and the hard work you have put in refining your skills has fallen into place and allowed you to operate at such a high skill level and make safe and effective judgement calls. The event has also provided the whole team with new training ideas, scenarios and techniques to pass onto our unit and cluster members.

I also want to thank the SES and VA teams for their assistance in training, travel and equipment. Following on from previous Australian Rescue Challenges and State Road Rescue Challenges there have been various ruling around equipment provided and

what equipment teams are able to bring to the challenge. To avoid any issues, we successfully applied for a VA Grant to equip the team with 5.11 Tactical Maverik Belts. These belts are designed for fit and forget convenience and are also a riggers belt with rated attachment loop sewn in. When coupled with the 5.11 Tactical VTAC Belt it provides a simple to use system to carry rescue equipment operationally. Some of our members have been using these belts for several years and we are grateful for the VA in supplying these for the team. Whilst they were supplied for the challenge they are already being used operationally back at the unit.

I have to congratulate both, my team of highly dedicated rescuers who have over the years been both guides, mentors and colleagues. I especially want to thank them for the having faith in me to lead them safely and effectively on this journey and, likewise the team of rescuers that remained at home to maintain our units rescue capability whilst we were away.

The biggest thank you goes to the ARRO team for organising another successful and challenging event.



Youth in Shellharbour City

The Shellharbour City unit has been working on several initiatives to work with and engage the local youth of the Illawarra.

August will see us running our second High School Workshop, targeted at students in year 9 and 10 from local schools.

Our first workshop was so successful, several other schools have made enquiries to hold similar style workshops.

20 Students from various schools attend a one-day SES style workshop, learning various skills which our volunteers carry out - Learning about flood safety, sandbagging and valuable team building skills.

Partnering with RIEP - Regional Industry Employment Program, all 9 Shellharbour High Schools have been given the opportunity to have selected students attend this workshop.

Further to these workshops, our unit has been extremely lucky to have been selected to run a trial SES Internship Program.

The NSW SES Internship is a trial program that has been designed to provide selected students with training and education in teamwork and the Emergency Services over a 10-week period during term 3, 2023. The program is based upon a previously run program in Ballina.

The Shellharbour City SES has been hosting 20 local high school students as part of the NSW SES Youth Internship Trail.



Students have already participated in Sandbagging, water pumping, first aid and even mapping and navigation using and understanding what3words. With plenty more to cover over the coming weeks, and we look forward to sharing this with you in a later edition of this magazine.

These programs have inspired our members to showup weekly to further educate and pass on their wealth of knowledge to these students. Its a pleasure being a member of this unit, where we are working on community and membership growth.



Preparing for a Heavy Lift

Gilgandra is a country community located in the central west of NSW, around 75kms to the north of Dubbo. Situated at the intersection of 3 x highways (the Newell, Castlereagh and Oxley Highways), Gilgandra is in an ideal, central location for a road crash/industrial incident response requiring rescue.

We are surrounded by a large area of the farming country (wheat and canola production) which involves a myriad of heavy agricultural machinery (tractors, ploughs, harvesters and grain bins/silos). Gilgandra is also situated on the Dubbo to Coonamble rail line (used extensively for grain movements) and located adjacent to the National Inland Rail Project (Melbourne to Brisbane freight line). Crossing the northern part of the Gilgandra LGA is a major flight path for international air travel (Sydney to Asia) across which there are any number of flights each day.

In early 2023, the Gilgandra SES Unit received a call to a person hit by a train, at an isolated location some 30kms north of Gilgandra, at the village of Armatree (consisting of a hotel, grain silo and several houses) The only emergency/medical service presence in the Armatree village, is an RFS tanker.

On the activation of the rescue pagers, the immediate thoughts were, considering the isolated location of the call and time required to obtain backup resources, how would we lift a carriage, to release a patient, if this was required? We had never trained in such a heavy lift and we were not sure if we carried the required resources. This was *highly concerning* to our responders and left us feeling highly vulnerable.

As it turned out, the person escaped injury.....phew, we were off the hook, this time, at least.

This created on going conversations about our heavy lift capability – our training and our resources. The basis of these conversations, were our concerns that any backup e.g. heavy lift crane and medical rescue helicopter, carrying a doctor and blood was between **1.5hrs** and **2hrs away**. Would a trapped patient, survive such a delay?



These are typical types of road transport and agricultural machinery we have operating across our response area. Truck transports weighting in at over 100t and agricultural machines weighing in at around 30t.



Access Metal Recycling at work removing the car bodies from our road crash training area

Coming from these discussions we saw a mutli agency training day held in late May 2023, in a Dubbo railyard with a focus on incidents involving rail infrastructure. This day was a huge success with around 100 responders involved – NSW Ambulance Service, NSW SES, NSW VRA, NSW Fire + Rescue & NSW RFS, *A huge thank you must go to the NSW VRA for funding this great professional development day.*

As part of this, a demonstration was held on the methods used to lift a rail way carriage, should this be required, to release a trapped person. The lift involved the use of a 30t hydraulic ram, hand pump and cribbing. This was an un-laden tanker car, which is a reduced weight against a laden grain carriage – coming in at around 100t. An informative and interesting demonstration – thank you to NSW Fire + Rescue.

The Gilgandra SES Unit has a medium rescue truck holding standard LUKAS e-raulic lifting, cutting and spreading equipment along with 10t and 20t pneumatic lifting bags. In addition the local SES Unit had 40t pneumatic lifting bags donated but we still lacked capability in the area of a heavy lift hydraulic ram. The search was on to improve our heavy lift capability – funding was not available from standard SES sources. We settled upon the approved item from Enerpac, the RAC506, 50t capacity, 150 mm stroke, aluminium hydraulic ram. The idea of the aluminium ram and it's reduced weight sounded attractive to assist in getting it into smaller spaces.

As we saw it, the heavy lift project had three components –

- » Heavy hardwood timber cribbing, large enough and strong enough to provide for a base under a heavy lift hydraulic ram



Our multi agency, heavy lift, rail training day held in Dubbo in May 2023. A huge success with over 100 responders involved. Thank you to the NSW VRA for funding such a great event.



An example of the Enerpac, RAC506, 50t capacity, 150 mm stroke, aluminium hydraulic ram.



Our heavy timber, hardwood cribbing blocks. They were cut, oiled and painted to help preserve them and fitted with rope carry handles for ease of movement. The metal base plate for the ram can be seen lying on top of the timber.

- » A steel plate (15mm to 20mm thick), to place under the ram, as a base to help distribute the weight across a larger surface area
 - » Acquisition of a 50t, 150mm stroke, hydraulic ram and associated hand pump and hosing
- Funding, funding, funding, where could we get such funding???

An opportunity arose. A metal recycling company, working across central NSW, **Access Metal Recycling**, came to the rescue. **Access Metal Recycling** in conjunction with **Enerpac Australia** and **South West Hydraulics & Pneumatic Services** saw this as an opportunity to support our SES Unit. We had a number of old, car bodies we had used in our road crash rescue training and we needed to clean up the site. They assessed the car bodies and saw an opportunity – they take, what was

essentially rubbish from us and in return they would *donate a hydraulic ram, pump and high pressure hydraulic hose, back to the community and improve our heavy lift capability – a win, win scenario.*

Soon, **Access Metal Recycling** were on site and our ‘rubbish’, was gone and the plan came to fruition – the community would now have an additional heavy lift resource – **thank you, Access Metal Recycling.**

Our current timber cribbing would not handle this increased weight. Some old bridge, timber planking was located at a local Council holding site and we held a working bee to select and cut some suitable lengths of heavy, hardwood timber. We selected timber (120mm x 220mm) and cut it into lengths of around 900mm. This proved very heavy going on the chain saw, chains. These lengths were in turn, rough sanded, treated with several coats of preserving oil, ends

sealed and painted (in a hi-vis colour). Rope carry handles were applied to reduce manual handling risks associated with moving the heavy blocks.

A local engineering company, **Castlereagh Engineering**, cut and donated a metal plate for us (16mm thick by 350mm in diameter), for use as a base plate for the ram. This was painted with a hi-vis, not slip, coating.

Our heavy lift project has been a true, win, win for all involved. We cleaned up our training site and got rid of the ‘rubbish’ and in return the community gained a significant enhancement in our rescue capability. A situation where a number of people and businesses, by working together, brought about community good.

Geoff Kiehne

Unit Commander
Gilgandra SES Rescue Unit

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**Thank you local
SES Volunteers**

On behalf of the City of Parramatta, thank you to all SES Volunteers for your ongoing commitment to keeping our City and the people that live, work and visit Parramatta safe.

Cr Sameer Pandey
Lord Mayor
City of Parramatta

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our heroes!**

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*"Thank you SES volunteers.
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lives and protecting our
community during emergencies"*

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**Thank you to our
SES workers for your
hard work, care and
dedication.**

Edmond Atalla MP
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Mission Command

Self Determination Theory in Camouflage?

INTRODUCTION

Mission Command is the exercise of authority and direction by a commander or leader using mission orders to enable **disciplined initiative** within the leader/commander's intent. This empowers agile and adaptive leaders to undertake the mission. Mission Command was born out of necessity in the 19th Century and enhanced by Prussian corps, division, and brigades to disperse their troops in battle, leaving the senior commanders unable to fully view or control their troops during battle. As a result, junior leaders were required to use judgment and initiative to act decisively in the absence of detailed orders from commanders. Today, the philosophy of Mission Command is used in many Western Defence Forces and corporations.

Mission command is guided by six principles: Build cohesive teams through mutual trust, create shared understanding, provide a clear commander's intent, exercise disciplined initiative, use mission orders, and accept prudent risk."

Self Determination Theory (SDT) is a macro theory of human motivation and personality, concerning people's inherent tendencies and their innate psychological needs. Edward L. Deci and Richard Ryan expanded on earlier work differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and proposed three main intrinsic needs involved in self-determination; **competence, autonomy**, and psychological **relatedness**¹.

THE PRINCIPLES OF MISSION COMMAND COMPARED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF SDT

The exercise of mission command is based on mutual trust, shared understanding, and purpose and applied through:

- » Building cohesive teams through mutual trust.
- » Creating shared understanding.
- » Providing a clear intent.
- » Using action plans.
- » Exercising disciplined initiative.
- » Accepting prudent risk

SDT in comparison argues that people try to satisfy three basic psychological needs; that is, the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

AUTONOMY

The need for autonomy is defined as a person's desire to experience ownership of his or her behaviour and to act with a sense of volition (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

COMPETENCE

The need for competence concerns the need of experiencing that one is able to successfully achieve desired outcomes, meet performance standards, and manage different challenges (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007).

RELATEDNESS (BELONGING)

The need for relatedness refers to connecting and caring for others, and to feel cared for by them (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007), which is related to a psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008).

SUMMARY

According to SDT, these three needs are complementary for optimal functioning, and their satisfaction is fuelled by the social context (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The benefits of satisfying an individual's basic psychological need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (belonging) are widely known. There is now recent evidence that shows that satisfaction of each of these needs leads to greater effort and dedication.

In a recent study by Bidee et al. (2013) the autonomous motivation created through the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs, was found to significantly increase the dedication and work effort from volunteers. These researchers explain that autonomous motivation generates far better levels of work effort from volunteers than those generated by controlled motivation. Their results indicate that leaders can positively influence the dedication of volunteers by creating an autonomy-stimulating work environment.

Consideration of the personal needs may be:

- » the provision of choice,
- » establishing a framework and encouraging initiative,
- » the provision of constructive feedback,
- » giving rationale for tasks,
- » the acknowledgment of personal feelings,
- » having a more personal and social leadership approach, and
- » the provision of training and development

¹ Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (Eds.), (2002). Handbook of self-determination research. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.

CORRELATING THE PRINCIPLES

MISSION COMMAND

Building cohesive teams through mutual trust

There are few shortcuts to gaining the trust of others. Trust takes time and must be earned.

It requires a personal and social form of leadership, the ability to acknowledge personal feelings that comes from experiences and common understanding. These may come work experiences or shared competency derived from training.

Cohesive teams have unity of purpose and unity of command that through mutual trust encourages choice, initiative and agreement in the rationale for tasks.

SELF DETERMINATION THEORY

- » the provision of choice,
- » establishing a framework and encouraging initiative,
- » the provision of constructive feedback,
- » giving rationale for tasks,
- » the acknowledgment of personal feelings,
- » having a more personal and social leadership approach, and
- » the provision of training and development

Creating shared understanding

Shared understanding can only occur when the rationale for tasks can be clearly articulated and 2 way communications is accepted so that constructive feedback can be applied to reach a unity of purpose. Collaborative exchange helps increase their situational understanding, resolve potential misunderstandings, and assess the progress of operations, projects or tasks.

Effective collaboration provides a forum. It allows dialogue in which participants exchange information, learn from one another, and create joint solutions.

Training in effective communication, exercising or practice to build and sustain competency to

raise trust, common lexicon, belonging and competency at sustaining effective communication skills.

- » the provision of constructive feedback,
- » giving rationale for tasks,
- » the acknowledgment of personal feelings,
- » the provision of training and development

Providing a clear intent

Intent is a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation, project or task and the desired **end state** that supports mission command.

It provides focus to team members, helps team leaders to be autonomous within a **disciplined initiative** created through mutual understanding, trust (relatedness) and training (competence).

- » the provision of choice,
- » establishing a framework and encouraging initiative,
- » giving rationale for tasks,
- » having a more personal and social leadership approach, and
- » the provision of training and development

Using action plans

Action plans to provide direction and guidance that focus the team and when constructed on objectives and strategies, that along with the competency of the team drawn from training and shared experiences, create a framework for initiative and choice.

- » the provision of choice,
- » establishing a framework and encouraging initiative,
- » giving rationale for tasks,

Exercising disciplined initiative

Disciplined initiative is action in the absence of directions, when existing direction no longer fit the situation, or when unforeseen opportunities or threats arise. It is reliant on clear policy, procedures, technical knowledge and the competency of the team.

Leaders and teams competent and confident to operation within

disciplined initiative can create and exploit opportunities and be more adaptive to change. Leaders of teams with strong relationships, competency and individual's readiness to act autonomously are able to respond more effective in a dynamic situation and thus more resilient. This willingness to act helps develop and maintain initiative that sets or dictates the tempo of an operation, project or task.

- » the provision of choice,
- » establishing a framework and encouraging initiative,
- » the provision of constructive feedback,
- » giving rationale for tasks,
- » the acknowledgment of personal feelings,
- » having a more personal and social leadership approach, and
- » the provision of training and development

Accepting prudent risk

Accepting prudent risk allows for the exploiting of opportunities, respond to the unforeseen within a shared understanding of reasonable estimates underpinned by reasoned logic and critical thinking.

Prudent risk taking is fundamental to mission command and thus is a critical competency.

- » the provision of choice,
- » establishing a framework and encouraging initiative,
- » the provision of training and development

CONCLUSION

Belonging, competence and autonomy, the underpinning elements of SDT creates the culture, competence and environment for autonomy, all of which build the quintessential element of Mission Command, trust.

If Mission Command is, as often simplified, as being three overlapping circles, these being firstly; leadership, secondly, command and finally, management. Where these three circles overlap is the trust centre and this can be created and sustained by SDT and lock the three functions into a cohesive command approach.

The title for this paper stated "Mission Command – Self Determination Theory in camouflage?" it is difficult to see Mission Command being achievable without subordinates

----- “ -----

Mission command is essentially about professional trust between commanders and Subordinates.... warfare has the effect of bringing the quality of this interaction into sharp and unrelenting focus.

----- ” -----

who have a relatedness and belief in the organisation, the competency and experience to be able to achieve the mission nor the confidence to exploit their autonomy within the Mission Command philosophy.

As quite rightly pointed out by Sir General Peter Cosgrove, AC MC:

"Mission command is essentially about professional trust between commanders and Subordinates.... warfare has the effect of bringing the quality of this interaction into sharp and unrelenting focus".

THE AUTHOR

Glenn Austin Jones ESM

BAdminLead UNE, Adv Dip PS (EM), Dip PS(EM), Dip VET, Dip T D&D, Dip QA Past A.F.A.I.M. A.F.A.I.T.D. F.A.I.E.S Chartered Manager

Glenn Jones ESM has over his 40-year military and corporate career experience and over 30 years in the emergency management space. He has extensive experience in senior executive management, emergency management vocational training (CQU), corporate systems development, strategic, operational and emergency management including the development of strategic frameworks, policies and procedures. He has held contract executive position and worked on strategic projects for a variety of small, medium and large organisations where he has facilitated strategic planning, developed governance management tools such as risk management frameworks, governance by laws and governance policy and procedures manuals.

Glenn's emergency management experience covers contract consultancies to various Government Departments such as Department of Community and Justice (WSFA), AMSA (development of critical incident escalation procedures), ACTESA (exercise development and conduct focused at Chief Officers), the Victorian Department of Sustainability and the Environment, the Victorian Department of Human Services Emergency Management Group and direct involvement in the development in incident management training, doctrine and conduct within the NSW State Emergency Service. He has over a decade as an active Level 3 Incident Controller in NSW and interstate, across floods, storms and biosecurity events. Glenn is a nationally certified Incident Controller with EMPS.

Glenn sits on the strategic advisory panel for a large private enterprise and undertakes work in acquisition, due diligence, mentoring new start-ups and review and leading corporate governance

improvements. He has undertaken reviews of emergency management response and training, capability development and incident management doctrine and processes. He has also developed emergency preparedness, business continuity framework and risk management frameworks for NGOs in the \$40 to \$85million size of operation.

RECOGNITION

- » **Emergency Service Medal.** Conspicuous leadership and contribution to the development of training and resources for Incident Management within NSW State Emergency Service
- » **NSW SES Life Member.** Conspicuous leadership and NSW State Emergency Service
- » **Commissioner's Commendation for Service NSW SES and Bar.** 2013 for excellent leadership and commitment in the developing of training and resources for Incident Management within NSW State Emergency Service and 2004, For dedication and leadership to Namoi region in the developing and implementing of incident management tools and references.
- » **NSW Bushfire Citation 2019-2020. NSW SES.** The NSW Premier's Bushfire Emergency Citation for participation as a SES Commander
- » **Queensland Flood and Cyclone Citation NSW SES 2013.** Incident Management Team Planning Officer for Taskforce Foxtrot from NSW State Emergency Service to Cyclone Yasi response.

Division Commander's Commendation, Australian Army 2008. For outstanding performance and demonstrated exceptional dedication and commitment to directly improve his unit's capability and efficiency. For innovation in establishing enduring protocols and management systems to coordinate logistic support to ensure the Regiment's training and tasking were achieved.



Going the distance

An experiential review of attending this year's Frontline Mental Health Conference, Australasian Rescue Challenge, First Responders Wellbeing Summit Series, and Disaster and Emergency Conference, on behalf of every dedicated Volunteer.

Over the last six months I have undertaken a 'tour de study' throughout two states and a territory in addition to our state of New South Wales, in which I attended various conference and events, interviewed numerous key personnel within the wellbeing and Emergency Services sector alike, as part of a research and evaluation endeavour on behalf of all dedicated Volunteers who actively serve their communities upon the frontline, day in day out. This article is a review of these endeavours, throughout which I have had the distinct honour of representing the NSW SES Volunteers Association, who sent me as an envoy to do so on behalf of all of us, all in the name of the best interests, genuine care and greater wellbeing of those who are the veritable "gift that keeps on giving".

In the process of doing so, I have been afforded many marvellous

opportunities. From being able to participate in various workshops; be there in person to engage in "Question and Answer" sessions and listen and learn from a wide range of presentations and panellist discussions; actively network and engage with numerous researchers and subject matter experts alike alongside staff members of the various Agencies, organisations and businesses who have a vested interest in the personnel

within the Emergency Services sector; and to meet and liaise with frontline personnel and staff of other agencies throughout Australia and New Zealand in a relaxed, yet appropriately professional and focused environment – including meeting one-on-one with a Commissioner or three along the way - yes, I have been blessed with to be afforded such, and I have considered it my privilege to represent all of you every step of the way.

**the compassionate mind is
the mind that transforms**

Professor Paul Gilbert



The impetus to do such came following years of operational experiences shared by the sides of many of you, as well as upon reflection of numerous private messages and telephone conversations that I have received from many of you good people that I have not yet met in person and yet whom have felt comfortable to reach out to me in confidence in some of their more challenging times. I proudly stand beside you all, 24/7/365, in and out of uniform.

As we can all no doubt relate, the last four years in particular have been significantly challenging for all First Responders throughout Australia, and indeed the world. With each day that passes, the real lived-experiences of First Responders who serve on the frontline - very much including Volunteer operators - are becoming widely recognised by qualified professionals and experts in the field of Mental Health as requiring greater attention, action plans for positive intervention and the provision of appropriate care and holistic support. Far from purely popular opinion, such is supported by the considerable volumes of evidence-based research that has been, and continues to be, undertaken by many of those same professionals and new students alike. The results are in, and cannot be denied.

It is my hope that the insights, information and resources garnered

from these endeavours will go on to be of assistance to many, and ultimately contribute to greater provisions of support for those who put service over self. You matter, and are deeply valued. Rock on, Pete.

And so, aside from filling up hard-drives and notebooks with along the way, my ventures away from my office here at my farm in my VA attire this year saw me travel far and wide to:

- » Attend the 2023 Frontline Mental Health Conference hosted by the Australia and New Zealand Mental Health Association over 2 days in March of this year
- » Sit in on the latest session of the First Responders Wellbeing Summit Series facilitated by Kathryn Taylor from Wellbeing Australia held in Canberra, "Leadership – How to lead through crisis" – featuring the insights and experiences of ex-Commissioners Shane Fitzsimmons and Georgina Whelan, and the opportunity to consult them both as to what they consider may be of assistance in our roles as volunteer First Responders in times to come
- » Attend the Australasian Rescue Challenge in Adelaide in order to gather deeper insights into the realities directly experienced by Rescue Operators from throughout Australasia (and, indeed, further afield) by way of conducting confidential discussions/interviews,

surveys and professional research from which it is hoped will go some way towards assisting in enabling improved provisions of support for Rescue Operators (*NB: this ongoing research continues)

- » Attend the 2023 Disaster and Emergency Management Conference over 2 days in July, where I sat in as an SESVA representative as part of a four-person panel alongside Kathryn Taylor from Wellbeing Australia and Alana Singleton and Pia Schindler from Emerge And See, to present a 60 minute presentation entitled "Human Factors Beneath The Uniform – An All Hazards/All Agencies Approach Towards Holistic Care and Wellbeing".

While in Queensland for this latter conference I also accepted personal invitations from personnel of both Surf Life Saving Queensland and Queensland Fire and Emergency Service to visit their workplaces]

In all instances I have been proud to be present as part of ensuring that the Volunteer experience itself is well represented, and advocated for. On this very facet, I am quietly delighted to report that at the closing of the Frontline Mental Health conference, there was just enough time for one, singular question to be asked of Georgina Whelan, (then)

» continued on page 58

Commissioner of ACT Emergency Services Agency (ACT ESA) following her giving an incredibly insightful and equally powerful 30 minute keynote speech and presentation, *"Same same but different: The Challenges and Achievements in Establishing Mental Wellness Programs Across a Multi Discipline First Responder Agency"*.

I gratefully seized the opportunity to step up to the microphone in my NSW SESVA shirt to put my question to her on behalf of all dedicated Volo's, and was deeply heartened (and quite blown away!) by the response that Georgeina went on to provide to the two or three hundred of us who were in attendance, specifically with direct regard to the "Return On Investment" when it comes to that which Volunteers contribute.

In short, within her presentation Georgeina had spoken about how the ACT ESA had implemented the inclusion of a 4 week art therapy program for those First Responders that was designed to assist in improving their Mental Health, during which they continued to be paid, as part of the support options available to them. My question to her? Well:

Following thanking her for delivering what was an empowering presentation, steeped in compassion and considered awareness of the lived-experiences of the personnel beneath her command, I honed in on what she had mentioned about the costs involved, and "Return On Investment". Beginning by stating to her (and the room) that there is a saying among us Volunteers, "Volunteers are priceless" - which is certainly not a case of us putting ourselves above anyone else, simply a nod to the fact that we stand alongside all agencies upon the frontline as equals, united in performing the same tasks as part of the service we provide the community. We share the same experiences in the process of doing so, and are therefore by default directly exposed to the very same potential take-homes that may be of detriment to our own Mental Health and wellbeing (and its overflow in to our personal lives, including our work life, out of uniform). And so, I then simply asked Georgeina as to how she viewed the Return On Investment for the contributions made by Volunteers, and as to how that may

look with regard to attending such a 4 week program - considering such would require them to have time off from their jobs and commitments outside of the Service.

Georgeina expressed her gratitude for my bringing this point to light - and went on to state that in the case of Volunteers within the ACT ESA that may find the 4 week art therapy program of benefit to their Mental Health, the ACT ESA were introducing the opportunity for such candidates to be engaged as paid workers on a temporary contract for the duration of such a program, so as they received the help they required without such coming at further cost (or risk of their respective jobs and subsequent income) to themselves and/or their families.

Yes. WOW!!

After the close of her presentation, I approached Georgeina to thank her for her response to my question in person. She greeted me warmly, and asked me "when are you in Canberra next?". I replied that as it happened I was flying to Canberra the next day for personal reasons, and would be in town regularly as well. She was delighted to hear this, and extended her personal invitation to myself and the NSW SESVA to come to the ACT ESA Headquarters to undertake a full meet/greet tour of the facility, whereupon I could liaise with the Peer Support staff as to the various programs that they had available. I gratefully accepted the opportunity to do so and a few weeks later I dropped by her office to make an appointment that suited our schedules with her personal assistant. While there, Georgeina came out of her office, and I was again warmly welcomed with a smile, and by name. She expressed her delight in my lining up the date to coincide immediately after I returned from the Australasian Rescue Challenge, and wished me well in my endeavours over there in Adelaide. Sadly, when the time came for my visit, it was postponed due to Georgeina being ill that week and regretfully unable to attend. She resigned not long afterwards, however I am pleased to say we remain in contact, and it is hoped that the opportunity will still be afforded by the ACT ESA in the near future.

BACK TO THE 2023 FRONTLINE MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE, AND A SUMMARY REVIEW OF ALL THAT IT ENTAILED:

Now in its fourth year, this conference examines and analyses significant volumes of research as part of a continued inquiry into mental health issues for all frontline workers - absolutely, including Volunteers - all towards not only their improved mental health and greater wellbeing but also to break down associated barriers that hinder progress, such as stigmatisation; additional stress resulting from systemic processes and mountains of paperwork; fear of either having their lived-experiences minimised or, at the other end of the scale, being labelled as "broken".

All those attending the conference readily acknowledge that the search for answers, support, backup and relief for all those who are suffering from, or touched by, mental health issues is an ongoing process - as is validated by both qualitative and quantitative evidence-based research that has been, and continues to be, undertaken by numerous qualified professionals and experts far and wide. Unsurprisingly, again given the extensive events that have struck Australia and New Zealand throughout the last four years in particular, there has been no shortage of subject matter. The findings of the studies undertaken highlight a common denominator, that being:

it is a stark reality that the extensive lived experiences of frontline First Responders are in desperate need of the urgent attention of the agencies they serve - along with such being warranted of all levels of Government as an overarching Duty Of Care.

Recommendations from across the board call for active intervention that takes a "person-centred approach" - one that recognises and values the individuals themselves as a priority, and respectfully acknowledges the disruptive impact that their respective lived-experiences as frontline First Responders may have upon them. With such methodology having long been utilised by professionals in the areas of mental health, healthcare sector, schools and aged care services,

it has gone on to become widely used in teams and organisations to ensure that the focus remains upon what matters to the people receiving such support, whilst also paying attention to how to inform, train, support and guide the staff of the organisation itself.

Indeed, best practice acknowledges that collaborative endeavours conducted in this “person-centred” manner afford individuals at the heart of the matters offer the best possible assurance that they will be not simply listened to, but truly heard with respect, when it comes to recognising their lived-experiences – inclusive of the respective additional impacts that such can and does overflow in to their lives outside of uniform, and acknowledging of the effects encumbered by their loved ones, and the potential on-flow in to their workplaces. A key point here, is the empowerment that comes as a result of individuals concerned remaining at the helm and heart of the decision-making, when it comes to their respective journeys towards their healing.

Fortunately, (and especially considering the breadth and depth of potential experiential trauma that may impact those who serve on the frontline), it is also widely acknowledged that for best outcomes, such initiatives are best undertaken by suitably qualified professionals that have no vested interest in the workplace itself. In particular, this aids in preserving the big-picture integrity of the process so as it remains person-centred rather than systemic, or service centred. Such also ensures that such endeavours remain true to the genuine intent of providing prioritised quality care and holistic support to those on the frontline, in a safe and respectful environment, and exemplary of honouring trusted confidence.

Again, this facet of the process is crucial – reinforced by extensive volumes of evidence-based research that have found there to be an increasingly greater divide between frontline operators who respond to calls to work at all hours and those who “drive desks” as such. While not necessarily intended, it comes more from a standpoint of “if you have not supped from the same cup, you would not know the taste”. (Naturally, such relatability or lack thereof can be found in both directions). When it comes to provision of support upon a needs basis, this very point itself formed one of the key outcomes unanimously

agreed upon by those in attendance and the culmination of two very full days of the conference this year, that being:

*that it is essential for leaders of all agencies to listen to those boots on the ground frontline operators as to what they directly experience; the sensory exposure; the “take-homes”; the shortfalls; their respective, specific needs that cannot be generalised by a blanket approach; and much, much more. It is only by doing so that leaders are truly best informed and thus equipped to specifically instruct and structure their management accordingly as per this firsthand information, guided by best practice and evidence-based research - and throughout the process of carrying out those delegated duties, management themselves remain open to professional guidance at all times, regularly cross-checking that the programs and initiatives that they implement align with the such towards effecting sustainable positive improvements. Overall, by enacting such, Leaders themselves can look forward to steering their ship with due diligence, with the confidence that the best interests of those within their charge that serve at the frontline of operations are taken care of equally as well as they take care of the community they serve as a collective entity. (*NB: It is noted that the method for doing so was far from limited to conducting any form of survey alone - it requires a personal investment of engaging in discussions in real time, face-to-face with those upon the frontline. Doing so, along with affording an air of a welcoming “open door” environment, has been found to be considerably more conducive to people feeling valued as people, as opposed to simply a number that forms part of a statistic).*

[A pause here, to clarify that “frontline” does not only refer to those who are on the ground in the field of operations itself - those wonderful people who staff our communications and media centres and sit on the other end of support lines are every bit at risk of exposure to similar traumatic experiences as those who are out there “on scene”. Similarly, “First Responder” does not only apply to those in Emergency Service Organisations - we all benefit from mindfully considering that those who work in Corrective Services, unsworn officers that work in Police Forensics, Counsellors etc and so on, are essentially in the same space as us]

Irrespective of role, rank, title or pay-grade, no matter who we are, part of

the initial challenge for any human being when it comes to addressing their own respective Mental Health concerns begins with the individual themselves being self-aware and feeling able to reach out, safe in the trusted knowledge that those they open up to will be there for them - to stand by them, and walk with them, as they navigate their way through what can be some of the most confronting, distressing, confusing and disabling newly foreign territory. Such can indeed be overwhelming for the specific individual, just as it can be for their families, friends and loved ones. The relatability factor surfaces yet again here, as perhaps one of the most challenging aspects can be for the individual to feel understood by those who have not been directly exposed to that which they have - especially when they are flat-out trying to understand it themselves, and to do so without feeling as if they are a burden. After all, First Responders sign up to help others in their time of need, not to have it end up the other way around, right?

Thankfully, this aspect is well documented throughout many studies, and was openly acknowledged by the many speakers and panellists presenting at the conference. Similarly, it was no news to the representatives from various organisations that attended the conference as both sponsors and exhibitors. In fact, the level of genuine comprehension of the immensity of that which can come as part and parcel of any given day and/or night in the life of a frontline First Responder was quite something to behold. Considering many of those who featured in the conference proceedings had no direct firsthand experience whatsoever on the frontline of the Emergency Services, their ability to impart of their respective professional knowledge and experience whilst still holding space to actively listen to and learn from and with their audience denoted a distinctly refreshing level of humanity.

If only to be able to bottle the collective energy of all those who participated in the conference, with its vast ingredients of compassion, empathy and educated awareness right through to science, nutrition, mindfulness and yoga - in the hope to create the magical elixir that heals all. Sigh - such may as well be called *unobtainium*, as the reality that

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is fortunately also widely acknowledged as fact, is that that no one method or solution necessarily works for everyone. We are all unique, and we are ALL wired differently. Different things will work for different people. A variety of options, therefore, are only ever a good thing. It can be kind of like a "choose your own adventure", and above all else, one of the most exciting eventuations from the conference was the abundance of resources and workshops shared that were orientated at empowering the individual.

I found the following presentations in particular extremely relevant, fascinating, and of much worth:

Dr Sadhbh Joyce from Mindarma - *"Why Mindful Self-Compassion and Self-Care is Central to Replenishing Vital Resilience Responses Resources and Wellbeing Among First Responders"*

Dr Joyce explained how Self-Compassion reduces cortisol, and that kindness, gentleness, warmth and compassion are like vitamins for the mind. She went into detail as to Empathetic Distress Fatigue, and that while Resiliency fluctuates it CAN be buffered and protected. "Simple actions make the biggest change"

Nikki Butler from Nikki Butler Consultancy and Founding Director of 'Wellbeing And You' - *"Navigating Professional Dangerousness: Preventing risk of unsafe practice and burnout"*

Nikki explained that "Professional Dangerousness refers to a process whereby professionals behave in ways that increases dangerously when involved in highly emotional work. Dangerous dynamics can be increased within the individual, their family, their group/team, their Service and their community. It can be present in every professional context where risk, harm, threat to safety, violence and crisis occurs - whether it be within an individual emergency services agency, inter-agency or intra-agency alike."

Her presentation made it clear to those in the audience that Professional Dangerousness risk is present in ALL First Responders, workers and practitioners, and is more often present at an unconscious level. These unconscious defence mechanisms that take place within the individual, as a way of protecting themselves from strong emotions. She clarified the detriments of denial, rationalisation

and minimisation - and that as the risk/s increased, so to did the threat to mental, physical and psychosocial safety. When suppressed fear kicks in, it can lead to one going to either of two extremes, either they becoming overwhelmed and not able to think clearly, or they avoid being overwhelmed by becoming disassociated and/or disconnected. Therefore, personal vulnerability can, and is likely to impact our ability to perform our roles safely.

Over all, this presentation highlighted the importance of it becoming knowledgably understood that such defence mechanisms, internal conflicts and emotional responses that remain unaddressed can present harm or risk of harm to those exposed to such environments, along with all those around them.

Natalie Wild, from Redefine Life - *"Filling the gaps in Mental Health to make the inaccessible accessible"*

This brilliant presentation unpacked the realities that naturally come with dealing with the unique lived-experiences of individuals, and affirmed what truly should come as little surprise - that being: given we are all wired differently, so too there comes the requirement for different levels of support being required, due and according to the simple fact that different people have differing needs. This remains true, no matter how many people share the same (or even remotely similar) lived-experience.

Natalie went on to expand upon the complexities that come with acknowledging the specific needs of individuals, from the difficulties people have in reaching out due to stigma, the levels of cooperation from workplaces that vary according to the degree of awareness, the sad reality that not all government departments, providers and agencies are open to providing such services - and if and when they do, cases are not necessarily guaranteed to be monitored - becoming more of a "ticked that box, we've done our job". She made it a strong point to note that referral pathways need to be both clarified and made available, whilst also providing those seeking help with support while in the wait to receive the help they seek - highlighting the waiting list reality consists of two somewhat alarming facts:

1. 20% of psychologists have closed their books with regard to taking on new clients, and

2. 50% of clients will be caused to wait 3 or more months for their appointment

Olivia Keene from 'NeuroFrontiers Burnout Prevention Clinic' - "Using Neuroscience to Protect Our Nervous System: Burnout Prevention Workshop"

This workshop presentation delved into the multitude of factors that can contribute to burnout, inclusive of the potential for systemic processes to add fuel to the fire as a result of being more an "opinionated approach" versus a "supportive approach" - with more focus being on the "work" than the "workers" themselves. Olivia explained that in reality, the respective nervous system of every individual is unique - and therefore it is futile to assume that everyone will benefit from a flat-line, or generic, solution.

She went in to great detail on the subject of the Autonomic Nervous System - our "driver of survival", that which is responsible for the varying states of Fight, Flight, Freeze, Faint/Flop and Fawn/Appease - and how it is always protecting us, particularly those of us who serve as frontline first responders.

Neuroscience itself has long intrigued me ever since I undertook my studies in Advanced Psychology. Especially upon reading a book that had just come out at the time written by Norman Doidge, "The brain that Changes Itself"(2007). A renowned Psychiatrist, Psychoanalyst and author, Doidge introduced the concept of Neuroplasticity, which is the ability of neural networks in the brain to change through growth and reorganisation. While that book and theory in and of itself is entirely another story, I make mention of it out of presenting the fact that provisions of appropriate support towards recovery and healing are not necessarily always afforded via 1800 numbers. As confronting as it can be, the reality is that deep-set traumatic experiences may well require a much higher level of professional assistance. When and if such becomes the case, I strongly believe that it is only right and kind that such is afforded - especially to those whose trauma came as a result of their lived-experiences as first responders.

ON TO THE FIRST RESPONDERS WELLBEING SUMMIT SERIES:

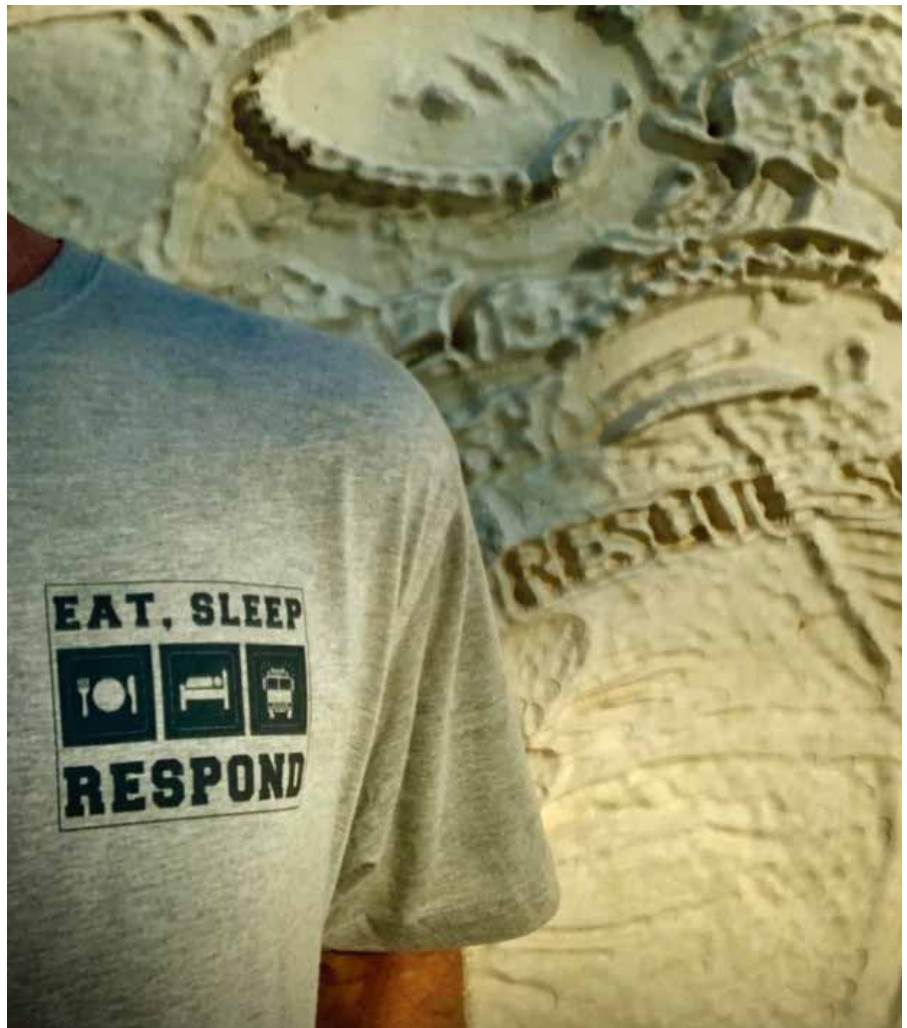
After actively participating in the Summit at the beginning of 2022, I was invited by the Director of Wellbeing Australia, Kathryn Taylor, to attend their AGM last year. I looked forward to this year's Summit, the format of which was redesigned following consultation with participants, to be held as a Series over every few months rather than crammed in to one week.

On March 22nd this year, Graeme Bint (former Army and Paramedic) was the event speaker for a members-only presentation, "Trauma Recovery and Renewal Through Nutrition". Brilliant, insightful and empowering, to say the least - and proof yet again that diet can and does make a positive difference to our wellbeing in more ways than we may realise. As an aside, here's a fun fact unearthed from my own previous studies -

Did you know that eating baked potatoes (specifically sweet potatoes) of an evening at least 4 hours before you sleep has hidden benefits? This is because they naturally elicit an insulin response that clears the way for the amino acid tryptophan to flood the brain with less competition from other amino acids - the more tryptophan in our brain then helps to promote more serotonin production. Being a sleep hormone, Serotonin, also stabilises your mood, as well as your feelings of happiness and general wellbeing. Result? We sleep better and feel better. How goods that! Worth trying for yourself, no?

It was the Summit Series session on June 28th featuring Shane Fitzsimmons and Georgeina Whelan that I was very much looking forward to. Originally, this session was to have taken place as part of last year's First Responder Summit, with Shane appearing alongside Carlene York - however it was postponed due to the major widespread flood events that we know all about.

The opportunity to listen to both Shane and Georgeina speak of their experiences (and interact with them in the process) provided no shortage of insights. Both of them have a very relaxed and gifted way of speaking to an audience, with a knack for doing so



in a way that listeners are made to feel comfortable and on-par with them - akin to sharing everyday discussions among friends at a bbq or around a campfire.

A particular standout, was when Kathryn Taylor prompted discussion based upon feedback from members of more than one Agency, regarding attending to Psychosocial Hazards that exist in their workplace and the potential that such have to harm to not only the Mental Health of those exposed to such hazards (whether directly or indirectly), but the effectiveness of the Agency itself to carry out its work. Shane Fitzsimmons fielded this topic with verve and empathy, stating that far too commonly those who are subjected to such toxicity more often than not feel unable to speak up about it, for fear of some kind of systemic retribution or labelling. Ironical in so many ways, considering "Resilience" is a word that is commonly touted throughout the first responder

community - and yet as has been becoming increasingly acknowledged (and subsequently heralded by the introduction of new Guidelines related to Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace and how they relate directly to responsibility workplaces have to those within their folds - ie: their Duty Of Care), being exposed to such hazards combined with not having them handled effectively by way of appropriate intervention and sound management, is essentially entirely counterproductive to enhancing Resilience. Fact is, the culture of "eat a bag of concrete and harden up" is archaic. While it is no news to most that workplace cultures become deeply ingrained, and that enacting true, resolutory change does not come easily, in this day and age of what we do - particularly as first responders - we must strive to do better, and be kinder, to each other as humans.

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THIS PARLAYS IN TO THE 2023 DISASTER AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE:

As a presenter at the conference myself, I found myself sincerely in awe of the topics and subject matter presented by my peers.

While conferences themselves can be an interesting beast - with much passion and hype existing there and then in the moment, I can honestly say that I was quite struck with how so much of the content of this conference displayed correlations with what had been explored at the Frontline Mental Health Conference. Sensations of hope itself, swelled as a result.. and I have reflected upon this fact many times over the last month since.. particularly as I prepared to compile this article for inclusion in this magazine.

I am quietly humbled to say that the panellist presentation that myself, Kathryn, Alana and Pia was extremely well received by our audience. Kathryn Taylor did an outstanding job of facilitating our session, encouraging participation, input and questions from those whom attended. Feedback following has been positive, and also provided each of our panel with additional insights in to the experiences of those we represent as part of what we do. Similarly, it has been refreshing to find various managers throughout the sector consult each of with us seeking better understanding. For me, this "removing the barriers" was a large part of what our presentation was about - exploring the Human Factors, together, as humans. Heck, we're all in this together! Our presentation slot proved ideal, coming mid-afternoon on the first day of the two day conference. It had allowed for initial meet and greet opportunities during the morning, including over tea and coffee at morning tea, and those shared over lunch.

Just before lunch I took in presentations given by Shane Daw from Surf Life Saving Australia - "Forgotten Responders: A Preliminary Study on Australian Surf Lifesavers and Lifeguards". The shared affinities of Volunteer hearts that more recently united inland with the widespread flooding - well, it was certainly quite an honour to then visit some of our

mates in their own work environment following the conference, and express my gratitude in person for all that they do, and to assure them that they are far from forgotten about by myself and many others, who are well aware of the invaluable role they play, and not only in (or near!) the surf.

After lunch I took time to prepare for our panellist presentation. Following it, I exhaled - and then bounced straight in to catch what was a presentation I feel worth sharing with you all in detail - that being the one given by Tony Marks from Rural Fire Service Queensland, *"Engaging with Volunteers for the Long Haul: Closing the Gap Between Expectation and Reality"*.

Unsurprisingly, I found this to echo much of the essence of that which Shane Fitzsimmons imparts so readily when it comes to valuing Volunteers (and their inimitable capacity to just plain say "NO" if and when they should be caused to feel they are being treated otherwise). Drawing upon his 35 years personal experience as a Volunteer, Tony began by quoting the findings of research from the Bushfire CIC that came out a few years ago "that indicated that if you got three years' service from a Volunteer, you'd actually done pretty well". He openly stated that he found that statistic "quite galling, and gutting to think that is what has occurred".

He explained that the aim with his presentation was to look at some of the things from his experience as a Volunteer, more specifically - why he "has stayed around for 35 plus years, doing something that I like, and am passionate about".

He did an amazing job of this, including setting the tone for the topic based upon validating the fact that "Empowered Volunteers become Engaged Volunteers". He expanded upon this by examining why any particular agency would be the "employer of choice", to a Volunteer - what sets them aside from, and ahead of, other such agencies, and attracts them in the first place - going in to detail about the various factors that go in to an Employee Value Proposition. One of the components he identified as commonly being a stumbling block for an employer, particularly with regard to Volunteer

organisations, was its Integrity and Ethics and common understanding of those who were the faces of the frontline.

Tony identified that "typically Volunteers are coming from the community, they are members of that community" - and to look at groups such as the SES and RFS, especially those inland, is to recognise that they actually are the important community organisations in terms of the way that such "galvanises people within the community in purpose, physical location in their outcome". This point struck a chord with myself, being in a regional location, as I am sure it does many of you. Like it, accept it or not, our Agency gets perceived differently by those within regional rural communities than it does in the cities. There are many contributing factors to this, and I certainly feel it was an important aspect for those managers in attendance to hear and hopefully return to their offices and seniors to extrapolate upon - after all, it would appear worthy of understanding what is at the core of an adage often expressed in rural regions further away from the bright lights - that NSW stands for an entire state of Australia, not simply Newcastle - Sydney - Wollongong.

Tony readily acknowledged that when it comes to identifying an organisations Volunteer Value Proposition, it is actually quite challenging given there may not be a formal document that necessarily exists (unlike that which is a commonly a norm in the "paid" employee realm). In lieu of such, he stated it would be mindful to look at a couple of key things:

1. the Organisational Culture and Structure - as this gives a pretty good idea of how the organisation values it's Volunteers
2. the "lived" Values and Behaviours - that which the organisation puts forward and espouses, and to see whether they are actually being lived

Out of those, he felt one could be pretty confident that one would be able to work out "is this an organisation that I can actually be part of, remain part of, and be proud of."

He went on to display a PowerPoint slide depicting two Functional Models for organisational culture:

*** Top Down driven** - with Leadership and Senior Staff at the top, Middle Management at the next level down, with Field Staff and Administration being at the bottom.. with the flow being essentially pushed downwards. Commonly this model "becomes very directive, very self-referring because the mechanisms to get feedback don't exist within that organisation. It's bureaucratic, procedurally driven - if I was to look at it, you have a Chain Of Command, which is very much within a Rural Fires context, that's what you have.. quite often there is a high degree of distrust across the organisation both up and down; there's micromanagement at all levels within the organisation; it's very sensitive.. highly sensitive to criticism - and that's something I have found, the hard way.. which is, 'mistakes don't happen here'. Which is very counter to things like a lessons learned culture. Even though an organisation may espouse they have a lessons-learned culture - if people are literally punished, and I use that phrase in inverted commas, whatever that may be.. they are put on the sidelines; they're shuffled somewhere else; their life is made difficult, whatever it may be.. - that would indicate it is not truly a lessons-learned culture. And things like Values and Behaviours, are just a matter of a process.

THE COUNTER MODEL?

Tony went on to detail the model that has been put forward by a person who is now leading the change within Rural Fires, and that in Queensland:

"..there was a review that was released that the Government has endorsed that has actually meant quite significant changes for SES, Surf Living Saving, Volunteer Marine Rescue, Volunteer Coastguard and Rural Fire Service.

But this is this model that they espouse that they want to see within the organisation. Which is a complete upturning, and it requires a real change in the way in which the organisation itself operates. So, at that point, the Volunteers and the Community actually become THE focus for what is done - it becomes the lens through which things occur. Yes, the political masters and the industry interests still exist. The difference in this instance, is that rather than being seen as 'well this is



what we need to do and we'll push it down (the Chain of Command), they identify 'well, this is what we need to do; this is what the Volunteers and the Community are telling us they want; and this is how we will actually go about meeting what THEY want, and what is needed or what is required of

me by the/my superiors if i can put it that way or the people I'm accountable or more accountable to - and achieve those outcomes. It requires real leadership - it is no longer about a management exercise, it becomes

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about leadership. It doesn't mean that everything is perfect - and there will still be some direction that has to occur - but in the whole, the whole process becomes one of consultation and involvement, empowerment and engagement, through the whole process through the whole structure. It becomes one when listening is just not about words - it's where listening actually becomes transferred or translated into tangible actions and outcomes. And leadership doesn't just become something from the top - leadership becomes required at ALL levels of the organisation. From the person who comes in from their first day saying, 'oh I don't understand that can you explain it to me.. uh, might this not be a better way of doing it?', to somebody who has been there for 35 to 40 years".

Quite something.

He wrapped up that segment by stating that from looking at the latter model as one of the very tangible outcomes, is that "there is an acknowledgement that mistakes do happen - but we seek to learn from them. Big difference. Big, big difference".

Tony then returned focus back upon to the former top down driven model again, explaining that when an organisation has a set of values that they say they will operate by, and a series of behaviours - they also have their organisational culture. He explained that a key thing to be observed about a top down driven model, is that the Values and Behaviours of such an organisation don't actually support anything other than the structure itself. "In that sense, it's very self-serving. You'll see Values are seen as an optional; they're regularly ignored; and there is no sanction for them being ignored. Behaviours are destructive. I mean, how often have you heard the phrase, 'I feel like I've got a knife in my back' - because the organisation itself is trying to protect their own territory. And you got a whole series of what I call 'white-anting behaviours', where if people see that their power is being eroded, then they will actually react in a way that is negative and destructive. The key thing of this is that at the bottom, the whole reason

the organisation exists - which is for the Volunteers AND the Community - they're just a bi-product. They are not actually the reason".

From here, he then spoke as to how, in contrast, where you have an organisation structure and a culture that is turned on its head, the Values, Behaviours and the Culture actually support what is occurring. It becomes part of what they do day in and day out, resulting in empowered people and engaged people, because they have got a stake in it. Change is not seen as a threat, it is seen as an opportunity - to somehow make things incrementally better.

In closing his presentation, Tony tailed out with concurring with the content of a presentation given earlier in the day by Councillor Justin Englert from Mackay Regional Council, entitled "*Local Government Partnerships Increasing Emergency Volunteer Numbers*", stating that such could be seen as evidence of the

Local Government Partnerships Increasing Emergency Volunteer Numbers

success of such a model, with the SES in that region, in terms of the effect that what is essentially a "power-with" structure, as opposed to "power-over" has had upon engagement that has occurred there, and the positive impact it has had on Volunteer numbers. "Proofand point".

No doubt - this presentation yielded some valid points for reflection, and ones worthy of consideration.

Now for a much shorter summary of three keynote speeches in particular,

that were given to a veritable full house of those attending the conference. (If you have read this far in one sitting, you are doing outstandingly!). I share these in particular, as I feel they sent some very positive ripples out in to the Emergency sector. At least, we can hope so.

The first of which, was given by Mark Crossweller AFSM, Director of Ethical Intelligence - "*The ethical premise of leading through crisis and adversity: The case for Ethical Compassion*".

Mark offered the benefits of his career of multiple decades along with his PhD studies, including encouraging listeners to consider how they may view the achievements of the work they currently perform in their respective roles as they move through their careers within institutional frameworks, if viewed down the track, upon exiting their position, or their careers.

He cut straight to the notion of compassion - and the ethical notion of what it means to be a leader.

He stated that sadly he found in his research that while filled with good people who are compassionate and kind, there was a thread that runs through the Emergency sector, of insensitivity. That we are not as sensitive to the needs of others that we otherwise like to be, or could be. He explained that such "is not so much a psychological reflection, but it is a sociological one". One that takes us away from the people we serve. It having a detrimental effect on our capacity to inspire resilience for example in some people. While it's not necessarily conscious or intended, this discourse is real.

Mark shared insights gleaned as a result of interviewing 89 leaders, such as "Most of us want to be compassionate, yet we do not understand loss and suffering well, and admit that we could do more to minimise them"; "Most of us want to be trusted, yet some of us do not understand our organisational limitations, and despite most of us knowing that these limitations affect trust, some of us still think we can we can cope in all situations". In short, he offered that the data suggests that leaders and managers are denying, disavowing or ignoring their

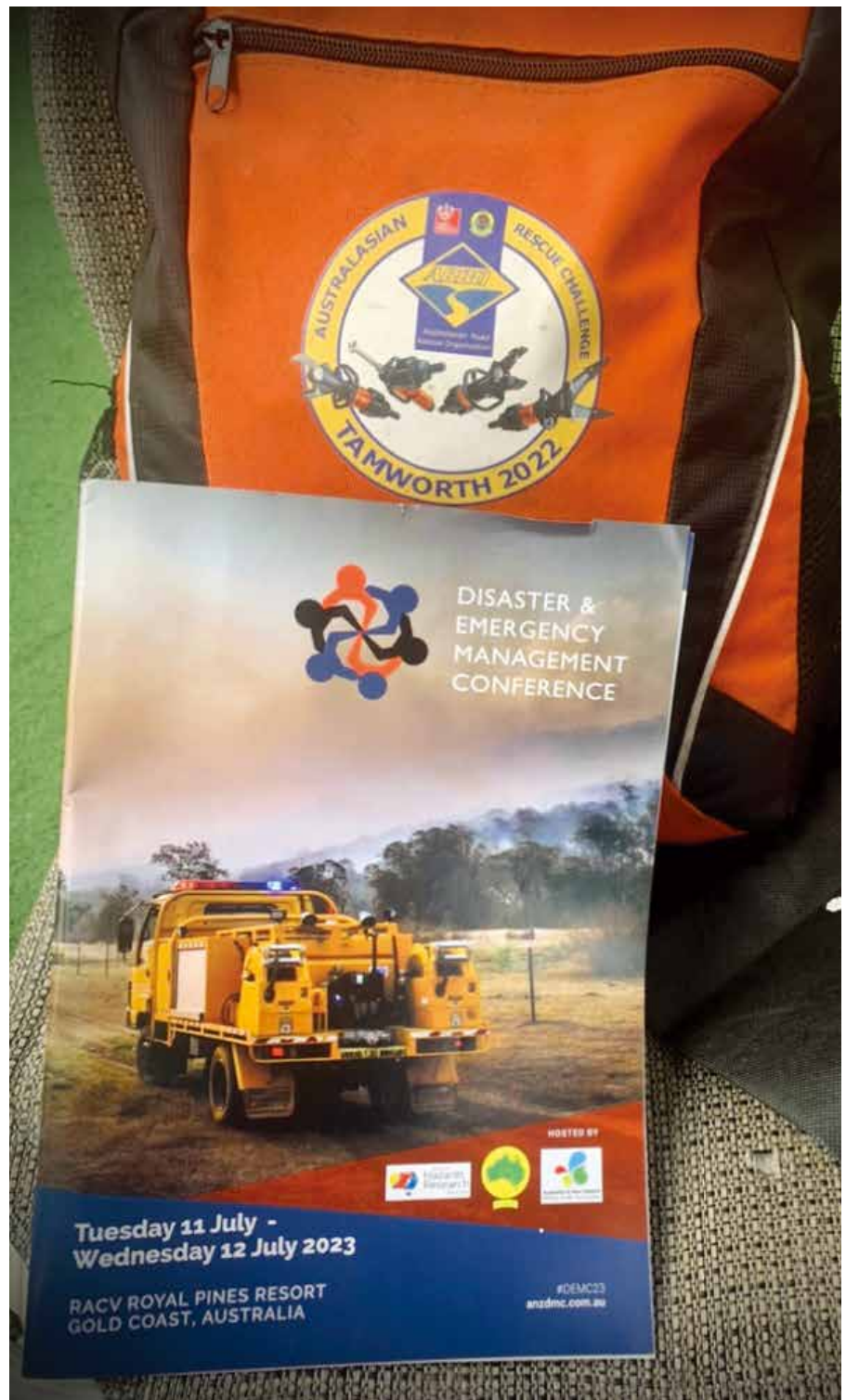
vulnerability. However, vulnerability itself, is important when connecting with people. Those whom we lead, manage, work with, protect and serve. This is a space and opportunity whereby they can demonstrate or relatability, as humans.

He closed with what he deems as Critical To Our Success:

- » Critical to our success in Disaster Management will be our capability to be “in relationship” with those we wish to lead, protect and serve
- » The basis of this relationship will be our capacity to realise our shared space of vulnerability and suffering
- » The obligation within that relationship will be to think, and act through the virtuous nature of our character and to exercise compassion when alleviating the vulnerability and suffering of ourselves and others
- » In so doing, we stand the best chance of upholding their trust and confidence as our greatest measure of success and reducing their vulnerability and suffering as our greatest mission.

Another keynote speech given by Reverend Mark Layson from Charles Sturt University - “Development of a leadership model that prevents moral injury and psychosocial hazards for emergency workers”, was immensely empowering and delivered with just the right balance of a sense of humour. With a background as a both a Police Officer and Firefighter prior to him becoming a Clergyman, Mark certainly spoke from both direct experience, and a worldly, studied perspective.

He stated that first responders with psychological distress are known to be off work twice as long as those from other professions, before going on to explain in detail as to how, when managing the people within their own the Agencies/ organisations, senior staff and leaders alike need to pay attention to balancing both looking at that individuals respective experiences through a lens which takes in not only the ‘content’ (of what is either black or white), but the specific, detailed, and vibrantly multi-coloured context of their experience - especially those which relate to trauma. Not doing so, can and does add to further trauma - akin to throwing fuel on what is already a burning fire.



Moral Injury - a betrayal of what is right, by someone in legitimate authority, in a high-stakes situation (Shay, 2014)

In his own PhD into the experiences of Perceived Injustice, Moral Distress and Moral Injury in relation to Australian First Responders, Mark conducted research entailing 229 participants, 16 authors and reading 21 autobiographies. His research yielded statistics such as over 37% of those surveyed indicated that they felt

they had been betrayed over 50 times in their career, while 17% felt they had been betrayed over 200 times. (Yep. Wow!)

Mark relayed the story of Darren Hodge from Victoria, as per Darren's book "A Life On The Line". Long story short (and I can personally highly recommend reading the book), Darren was the first Paramedic to amputate a limb on site. Following which he

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was investigated as a result, never was he allowed to give his account, and eventually it was shown that he did the right thing. He received a phone call informing him that they'd like to give him a medal. He hung up. His reflection on the back end of that entire circumstance?

“The most interesting lesson was that the key source of trauma was not the actual case, or it’s management, but the sense of abandonment I felt from the ambulance service” (Hodge, p.4)

And so it is, organisational injustice can become a real and present danger. That is, the workplace itself can become a psychosocial hazard that is a risk to the wellbeing of those who work within it. This was depicted in Beyond Blue’s National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services, “Answering the call” as being:

poor workplace practices and culture were found to be as damaging to mental health as occupational trauma

Mark specified what was found to constitute “Just Cultures” according

to the findings of research conducted by an academic at Griffith University, Sidney Dekker:

- » understand the difference between work as imagined and frontline work as actually done
- » avoid firing or sanctioning workers
- » asks what was responsible, not who was responsible
- » performing learning review instead of investigation
- » acknowledge its role in creating goal conflicts and production demands
- » collaboratively identify pathways to improvement
- » staff free to give their account, not just held accountable (safe to speak up)
- » a role for forgiveness, reconciliation and relationship (Sidney Dekker)

An overview, this presentation afforded much sage wisdom, and served as a prospective lighthouse to illuminate the way forward for us all.

Lastly, the presentation given by Joe Cabbone PSM, Deputy Coordinator General, Emergency Management Response

Group, NEMA - “The New Norm - Operating in Complexity and Ambiguity” rounded out, and closed what was an amazing conference. In sharing here with you all my key take away from his presentation, is that above all else, what is required from ALL within the Emergency Management sector, is Unity Of Effort, as per:

“Whole-of-nation effort and cooperation is necessary to make Australia more resilient to natural disasters. This calls for action, not only by governments and individuals, but also by industry, businesses, charities, Volunteers, the media, community groups and others.”

Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

Righteo. And that’s a wrap. Take care and stay safe out there all. Wherever you are, I hope this finds you and yours well, warm n smiling, and feeling supported and empowered. Please remember to be kind to yourselves and those around you.

By Pete Gare



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Can you help vulnerable community members during an Emergency?

Flagstaff's EMBER program has the tools to help.

NDIS provider, The Flagstaff Group is pleased to offer resources to SES Volunteers, Emergency Personnel, Councils, NDIS Providers and people living with disability throughout NSW.

As part of its EMBER program, free resources are available to help prepare for natural disasters. Planning checklists, Non Verbal Communication Apps and tips on how to help neighbours in an emergency are all available from www.emberapp.com.au

EMBER's Non Verbal Communication App and Boards can help relay messages to non-verbal members of the community. Voice to text technology is also available on the App which is available on iPhone and Android devices.

Individuals are also encouraged become a **Street Mate** using our checklists and tips on how to help vulnerable community members at www.streetmate.com.au

Additional tools available from the website include:

- Emergency Planning Checklist
- Evacuation Centre Sensory Kits
- Go Bag Checklist
- Braille and Easy Read Collateral
- Mood cards
- NDIS Provider Collateral
- Videos and podcasts

