

THE OFFICIAL YEARBOOK OF THE NATIONAL STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION

# NSESVA

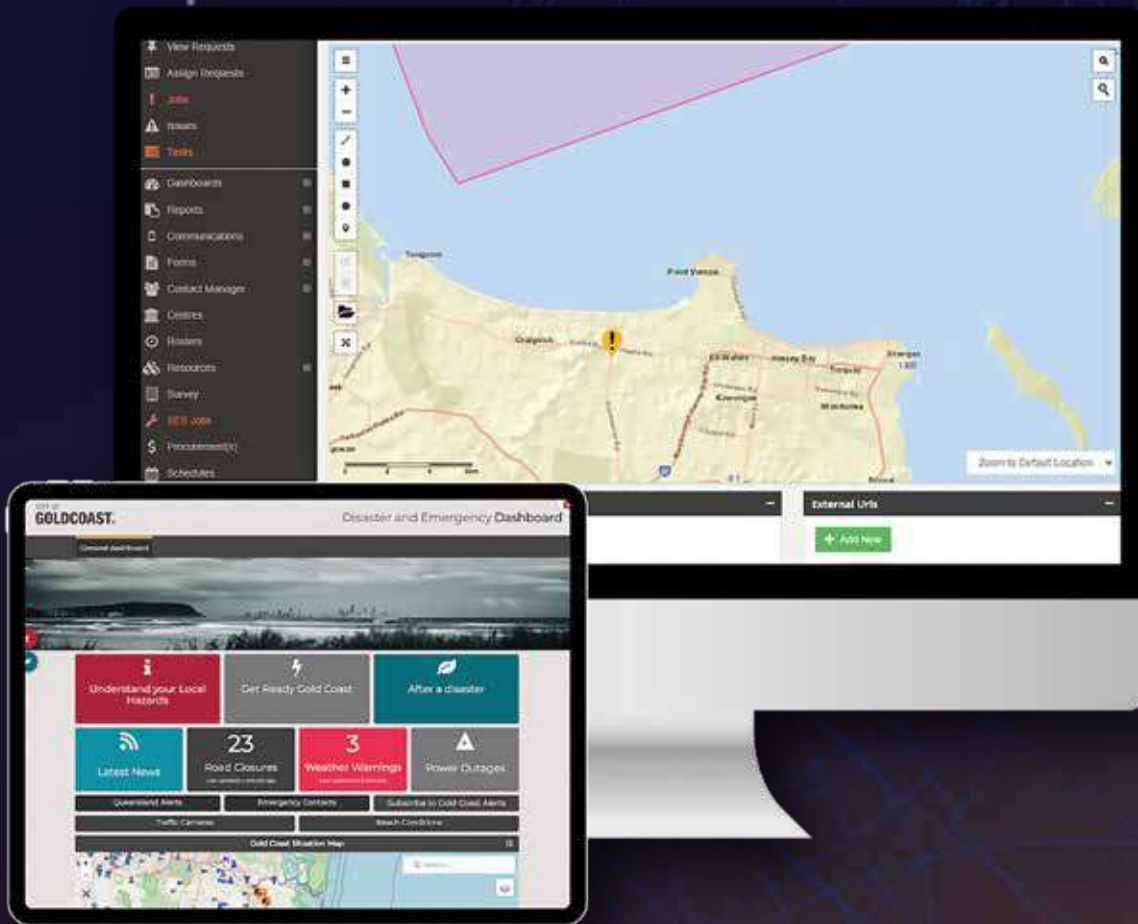


Yearbook 2025



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who serve our communities with courage and compassion.

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# From the Minister

❖ The Hon Kristy McBain MP

*Minister for Emergency Management*

## I'm honoured to serve as your Federal Minister for Emergency Management.



**I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO** have a strong network of volunteers across the country.

Volunteers provide hope during the most challenging situations, making a significant impact not only during events but also throughout the longer recovery processes for communities.

I recently spent time in the Hunter and Mid North Coast, and met many amazing emergency services workers and volunteers from across the country who sacrifice their time helping others in need.

Whether combating bushfires, assisting communities after floods, or supporting evacuation centres, emergency volunteers form the backbone of Australia's disaster response and recovery efforts.

As Mayor of the Bega Valley Shire during the Black Summer Bushfires, it was the volunteers who carried our community on their backs.

During this tragic time, Australia relied heavily on its volunteers. Over 80,000 personnel were involved in responding to the Black

Summer Bushfires, of whom almost 80% were volunteers.

They faced extreme conditions, life threatening situations and often spent considerable time away from home. This takes a toll.

As Minister, I am committed to doing more to ensure volunteers are supported both during and after a disaster.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements found that sustaining an effective volunteer workforce is vital to ensuring future capabilities of fire and emergency services to respond to natural disasters.

The Australian Government also recognises the considerable impacts disasters can have on the mental health of our emergency service workers and volunteers.

We've committed \$3.6 million to extend targeted mental health support programs for emergency services personnel and their families.

Preparedness is also vital to support our volunteers as Australia faces more frequent and more intense severe weather events than ever before.

Through the \$1 billion Disaster Ready Fund, we're delivering practical, jointly funded mitigation projects across the country, from levee upgrades to flood intelligence mapping.

We're continuing our work on the National Messaging System, which will ensure there is a nationally consistent approach to emergency warnings.

We're bolstering the national aerial firefighting fleet and undertaking a review to identify cost-effective options for long-term aerial capability.

The National Emergency Management Stockpile also continues to expand, ensuring specialist equipment can be deployed rapidly.

These investments are key pillars in building long term resilience, hazard mitigation, planning and community capacity building.

I am proud to be part of government that supports those on the front line who are responding to disasters.

Through sustained investment and strong partnerships, Australia is building a more resilient future, ready for whatever comes next. Thank you for your service.



# Thank you

to the volunteers  
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**The Minerals Council of Australia is proud to work with the SES as part of the Victorian Mine Rescue Competition (VMRC).**

The SES is a pillar of safety, preparedness and resilience in regional areas where rapid response is critical. SES participation in VMRC strengthens inter-agency cooperation and reflects the respect and reliance the mining industry places on the skills, commitment and courage of SES volunteers.

We thank the SES for their service to regional communities.

**Victorian Mine Rescue Competition 2026**

27 February – 1 March, Bendigo



# From the Chair

✘ Gordon Hall ESM

*NSESVA Chair*

*SES Volunteer Mandurah WA*

**As I sit here and write the foreword for the 2025 NSESVA Yearbook, I reflect on three past Yearbooks and think that we were never sure how the Yearbook would be accepted.**



**HOWEVER, THE SUPPORT BY THE** sponsors, the article providers and the many readers has been very encouraging, and I believe we will see the Yearbook to be a positive addition to the sharing of information by many people into the years ahead.

As I look back over the past years, I can see many events that are a credit to the SES Volunteers and those agencies that support them and their initiatives.

The many articles in this book not only keep a history trail of different events but also showcases some of the involvement by the SES Volunteers and associated groups or agencies and in doing so provides them with an understanding of what happens elsewhere.

One of those events is conducted during the Missing Persons Week, first week of August, where the Zonta Club of Peel conducted their annual Missing Persons Memorial Service in Mandurah, WA. This service has been

conducted annually over the past twenty years and has many dignitaries attending including the emergency services. This is a credit to the Zonta Club and there is an article about this later in this Yearbook.

The National SESVA Directors continue their work with the federal government, politicians and elected representatives, to ensure they are kept abreast of what the SES volunteers do and how they assist their communities in times of natural disasters. Over the past year we have kept our advocacy role going as we meet with different people and groups.

One of the groups is AFAC, where we are involved in a number of committees and have found working with their CEO, Rob Webb and his team very professional, positive and productive.

Participation in the National Memorial Service, in remembrance of fallen Emergency Services personnel, is another key activity by the National SESVA where we bring a contingent of

SES Young Emerging Leaders from all jurisdictions to provide a guard of honour to welcome the Governor General as they arrive at the memorial. The organisation of this service is a credit to AFAC, and they are to be applauded for this. The Queensland SESVA conducted their first state YEL program in October 2024 and it proved to be a great success.

I also acknowledged the fantastic support that the National SESVA and the state associations receive from many organisations including Volunteering Australia, AFAC, Countrywide Austral, federal and state politicians and others. It is greatly appreciated.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Councillors I acknowledge the support given to the SES Volunteers by their families, friends, employers, and many supporters that makes it all possible throughout their training and response activities.

Stay safe,

**Gordon Hall**

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# Editor's Note

✘ Dr Faye Bendrups OAM

*NSESVA Vice Chair*

*Editor, The NSESVA Yearbook*

*Volunteer, VICSES Footscray, Victoria*

**As this 2025 edition is read by thousands of emergency sector workers and other stakeholders across the nation, we can reflect on the incredible contribution made by Australians from every walk of life in every jurisdiction.**



## THAT CONTRIBUTION IS UNDER

increasing stress, faced with challenges such as climate change, sustainable volunteering, an ageing workforce, increased administrative burden, and competition for the time and energy of people in a complex and demanding world, which makes it even more admirable that so many continue to give so much.

The sustainability of the emergency volunteer workforce – which conducts 90% of disaster and emergency response in Australia and NZ - is at a fragile and uncertain crossroads. Action to mitigate this challenge is a large part of future planning.

Volunteers work to deliver a professional, skilled service to the community. They gain great satisfaction when practices, processes or policies are effective, achievable and meaningful. There is immense appreciation for being able to support their communities with the delivery of successful programmes and projects. Projects such as some of those featured in this edition are even more important to build the future, from the highest-level research with the tertiary sector to the effective community engagement programmes conducted by local SES Units. All are equally important in the multi-faceted landscape of emergency service and management.

For all of us involved with our respective SES volunteer associations, it is a privilege to serve not only our own communities, but the broader community of volunteers nationwide, and to dedicate ourselves to the ongoing development of individual volunteers and the sector. NSESVA is committed to ensuring that the voices of volunteers are recognised. This NSESVA Yearbook is one way that the outstanding contribution of SES volunteers can be celebrated. We hope you enjoy the range of stories and experiences recounted in these pages.

Regards,  
**Faye Bendrups**

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# From the Frontline to the Future: Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in SES

 By Brianna Brown, Deputy Local Controller, Brisbane City SES Unit  
Queensland Representative, NSESVA Young Emerging Leaders 2025

**As State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers, we all share a commitment to serving our communities during times of need.**


## HOWEVER, BEYOND THE

operational response of the sandbags, chainsaws, and storm clean-ups, there's another side to volunteering that often goes unnoticed: the development of leadership, connection, and purpose.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of representing Queensland at the NSESVA Young Emerging Leaders Programme in Canberra. This event followed a state-based conference held in Brisbane in late 2024, which brought together volunteers from across Queensland for a powerful prelude to what would become a transformative national experience.

This opportunity wasn't only about building individual skills, it was about exploring how the next generation of SES leaders can shape the future of volunteering across Australia. Through national collaboration, behind-the-scenes site visits, and moments of deep reflection, we were given a platform to



 Flying the maroon flag: Queensland's emerging leaders proudly represent their state at the national conference in Canberra. (Left to right: Laura Yinfoo, Brianna Brown)



**Inside national coordination: Delegates gain insight into Australia's emergency response command centre, the National Situation Room**

think bigger, learn from one another, and honour the legacy we're stepping into.

What follows is a reflection on that journey and why leadership in the SES is about much more than rank or experience. It's about showing up, stepping forward, and making the most of the opportunities to serve not just during emergencies, but every day.

When I first joined the SES, I expected to learn practical skills: how to sandbag a house, operate rescue equipment, and respond to natural disasters. And yes, I've gained all those capabilities, but what I didn't expect was how much the experience would shape who I am as a leader, a teammate, and a person.

In 2024, I was selected to attend the inaugural Queensland SESVA Young Emerging Leaders Conference hosted in Brisbane; a state-level gathering aimed at equipping Queensland's young volunteers with tools and inspiration to take on greater leadership roles within the service. It brought together volunteers from across our

vast state and created a platform to connect, collaborate, and consider the future of volunteering.

That conference alone was powerful. It offered the chance to step away from day-to-day operations and engage with big-picture ideas. We explored emerging challenges, such as youth engagement, sustainability of volunteer models, and the increasing demands placed on disaster management personnel. We also toured the Queensland State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) and participated in a Ministerial Q&A, giving us insight into the machinery behind major emergency responses in Queensland. I left feeling inspired and ready to do more. But that was just the beginning.

Following the Brisbane event, I was honoured to be chosen to represent Queensland at the National SESVA Young Emerging Leaders Programme in Canberra. Alongside an impressive cohort of volunteers from every state and territory, I joined a three-day experience of intensive leadership

development, learning, and meaningful engagement. To be trusted as one of the few representatives of our state was both humbling and empowering, and a clear sign that youth voices in emergency services are not only being heard but actively welcomed.

One of the most unforgettable moments was forming part of the Guard of Honour at the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) National Memorial Service, standing shoulder to shoulder with fellow SES volunteers from across the country. As we honoured the memory of those who have fallen in the line of emergency service duty, there was a shared sense of purpose and respect that transcended state lines. The service was moving; a solemn reminder of the risks our personnel face, and the legacy of courage and sacrifice we're now part of. That moment alone was enough to remind me why I volunteer, but the experience had so much more in store.

We toured Parliament House, where we were given an insight into



how legislation and national priorities shape emergency service policy.

We visited the National Situation Room, a secure facility that becomes the nerve centre during national crises. The experience gave us a unique understanding of how incidents evolve from local response to national coordination and how the SES plays a critical part in that chain.

Another key highlight was visiting Geoscience Australia, where we learned how scientific research, mapping, and data modelling underpin much of the disaster resilience and hazard prediction work across the country. To see the connection between frontline operations and backend science helped solidify something I've come to understand more deeply: every task we perform as SES members is part of a much larger ecosystem.

Our final stop was the ACT Emergency Services Complex, where we saw first-hand how a multi-agency approach can be structured under one roof. This sparked conversations

about inter-agency collaboration, co-location benefits, and what the future of SES infrastructure could look like. These types of ideas don't just come from theory, they come from exposure, dialogue, and vision. That's exactly what the NSESVA programme delivered.

But beyond the tours and site visits, the most valuable aspect of the week was the people. It was a rare opportunity to sit beside other volunteers, each with unique experiences and local challenges, and talk honestly about what's working, what's not, and what needs to change.

Leadership in the SES isn't just about wearing orange or having the loudest voice in the room. It's about taking initiative, supporting others, identifying opportunities, and having the courage to think differently. These conferences showed me that effective leadership can be quiet, persistent, and grounded in service. It can mean improving how your unit inducts new members, helping someone find their confidence, or driving small changes that make a big difference.

I've also come to realise that the SES is more than a training ground for operational excellence; it's a training ground for personal growth. In my time as a volunteer, I've developed skills in public speaking, negotiation, conflict resolution, and strategic thinking. These aren't just useful in an emergency; they're life skills that have shaped who I am today. Through these leadership experiences, I've been able to refine them even further.

Of course, with growth comes responsibility. Having been given these opportunities, I now feel a greater duty to give back: to mentor new members, contribute to strategic discussions, and support initiatives that strengthen our organisation. I'm already putting some of the conference insights into practice in my local unit and in broader SES projects, and I'm more committed than ever to supporting the sustainability and success of SES in Queensland.

To any young or emerging volunteer reading this: this is your sign. If you've ever wondered whether you're "ready" to take the next step, whether that is



**Science meets service: SES volunteers explore how cutting-edge geoscience informs disaster resilience and emergency response planning**

applying for a leadership role, joining a project team, contributing to something outside your comfort zone, the answer is yes. Leadership isn't a destination; it's a mindset. You don't have to know everything or be perfect, you just have to care enough to want to make things better.

There's no doubt that emergency services across Australia are entering a time of great change. Climate impacts are becoming more frequent and severe. Volunteer expectations and demographics are shifting. And the demand for professional, capable, and compassionate leadership has never been higher. But I have hope.

After spending time with the young leaders at both conferences—listening to their ideas, hearing their passion, and seeing their dedication—I truly believe we're in good hands. These are the people who will help shape the next chapter of SES, and I'm proud to be among them.

Representing Queensland was a true privilege, one I'll never forget. Now, I'm looking to the future, ready to keep building, supporting, and stepping up. Not because I have all the answers, but because I know how important it is to be part of the conversation.

As I return to my unit, I carry not only the knowledge gained from national-level insights, but also a renewed sense of purpose. The future of SES depends on volunteers who are willing to lead, to challenge the status quo, and to support each other as we grow. These conferences proved that leadership doesn't always wear a title; it shows up in mentorship, innovation, and the quiet determination to make things better. I'm proud to be part of that future, and I encourage others to step forward. Because when we invest in our people, we strengthen the entire service, for today and for the emergencies yet to come.

**About the Author:  
Brianna Brown**

Brianna joined the SES in 2022 and currently serves as Deputy Local Controller for the Brisbane City Unit. She brings a strong passion for disaster and emergency management, which extends across both her professional career and volunteer service. Brianna is committed to supporting the growth of future SES leaders and strengthening community resilience through collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning.



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# AFAC 2025 National Memorial Service

Australian and New Zealand Council for Fire and Emergency Services

**Fallen fire and emergency service personnel have been commemorated at the National Memorial Service in Canberra on Thursday 1 May 2025.**

## THE ANNUAL MEMORIAL HONOURS

the commitment of all fire and emergency personnel, the tragic loss of those who have died in the line of duty, and the families they leave behind. It is timed to closely align with St Florian's Day (May 4), the Patron Saint of Firefighters.

Family, friends, and the fire and emergency services sector gathered on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin to acknowledge those who have made the ultimate sacrifice while keeping their communities safe across Australia and New Zealand during disaster and emergency events.

The service began with a Welcome to Country by Ngunnawal Elder Serena Williams, followed by a Mihi Whakatau by Piki Thomas, Deputy Chief Executive, Kaipapa Maori and Cultural Communities, Fire and Emergency New Zealand. AFAC President Darren Klemm AFSM introduced the service, and AFAC CEO Rob Webb hosted the proceedings. Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister,



Minister for Emergency Management and Cities, delivered the Official Address, and Chaplain Cameron McKerral from Fire and Rescue NSW gave the Reflection.

Dignitaries in attendance included diplomatic representatives from the USA, Canada, and New Zealand. Chiefs, Commissioners, staff, and volunteers from fire and emergency service agencies across Australia and New Zealand also attended to pay their respects. The annual contingent of SES Young Emerging Leaders, brought together in Canberra from all Australian jurisdictions by the National

SES Volunteers Association, provided a guard of honour for visiting dignitaries.

The 2025 service commemorated personnel from Airservices Australia, Country Fire Authority Victoria, Department of Fire and Emergency Services WA, Fire and Rescue NSW, Fire Rescue Victoria, NSW Rural Fire Service, SA Country Fire Service, SA Metropolitan Fire Service, and Tasmania Fire Service.

In recognition of their sacrifice, an AFAC Memorial Medallion was presented to each family of the 25 fire and emergency service personnel honoured at this year's event.

The National Memorial Service also acknowledged additional names engraved onto the Memorial Wall. Established in 2018, the Memorial Wall is a permanent reminder of the more than 600 fire and emergency personnel who have lost their lives while keeping communities safe in Australia and New Zealand since official records began.

# Supportal

Emergency Service Families Portal  
is now LIVE!



## Supportal is Live: A Vital New Online Hub for Emergency Service Families!

✘ Emergency Services Foundation

**Emergency Services Foundation's new Supportal is now ready for access - a first-of-its-kind online mental health hub created specifically for the families of Victoria's emergency service workers and volunteers.**

### IT WAS LAUNCHED AT THE

Emergency Management Conference with the Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, Sheena Watt, applauding this initiative.

Developed by the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) with funds provided by the State Government's Emergency Responder Mental Health Fund, Supportal responds directly to what families told ESF they need: better awareness, stronger connections, and greater access to mental health education and support - bringing it all to families' fingertips via their mobile phones.

Designed to best support the wellbeing of a family member, loved one or a child impacted by the demands of emergency services work, Supportal offers practical guidance, tailored resources, wellbeing activities, and a sense of community.

In what is believed to be a first, participants at the conference received a letter addressed to their family which acknowledges their important role as the people who stand behind our emergency service workers and volunteers and draws their attention to Supportal. ESF will continue to reach families by widely distributing the letters.

### Why Supportal Matters

The families of emergency service members may not wear the uniform, but their support, patience and resilience are part of what keeps the sector going. They are the ones who often witness and carry the weight of trauma at home, often without clear pathways for support.

ESF's research reveals that most families in the sector are unaware of the support available to them,

simply because this information is rarely passed on by workers. And yet, those at home are often the first to notice the warning signs that something isn't right. They know their loved one best, but many do not know what to do next or where they can turn to for help.

Supportal aims to bridge that gap. It collates digestible, relevant information and agency-specific support into one accessible online platform, which is organised according to the user's role in the family, either as a family member, emergency service worker or a child of one.

As Courtney Daly, wife of a former police officer and a valued member of ESF's Family Matters Advisory Group, shared:

*"Supportal is going to be an amazing resource for all families within our community. Families are often the*

forgotten element within the mental health journey [...]. Families see the impact on daily life when things start to change and go wrong. Supportal is going to help families see the signs before they may even know what's going on, it's going to be a place where they can seek support or identify what might be happening. With a quick check on my phone, I would be able to find a little tip to fix a sleep issue within the family, a nutrition issue, to pull up some mindfulness to do, but the biggest change for me would've been having those crisis numbers in my pocket. When you're in a state of crisis with your family, the last thing you need to be doing is searching for where to go, and Supportal is going to be a massive help for our families when that happens. I hope people will share this app far and wide so that no one in our community feels alone."

Supportal gives families the tools they need to work through the everyday stressors and overwhelming moments that come with a job often marked by repeated exposure to trauma.



Attendees at Emergency Management Conference holding the letters they will take home to their families



Courtney Daly, Member of ESF's Family Matters Advisory Group

### A simple, trusted space for families

Supportal's three main sections are shaped by the pillars families told us matter most, as identified in ESF's research on families undertaken in 2021 and 2023.

- **Education:** Practical information on mental health, recognising signs and symptoms, and simple tips to support the wellbeing of yourself, your emergency service worker, or your child.
- **Help:** Easy access to relevant support services, tailored to your agency and including options specifically for children.
- **Connections:** Learn from the lived experience of others in the emergency services community and stay informed about ESF's family-friendly events and programs.

### Free to use and ready for access

Supportal was created by listening closely to emergency service families, who want to feel supported, seen, and informed. It offers a trusted platform that fosters belonging and understands the weight families carry.

Martine Gilliot, ESF's Family Matters Lead, who has worked tirelessly to bring Supportal to life - shared:

*"Supportal is about giving families what they've been missing for a long time. Families are the backbone of our emergency services, and Supportal ensures they're no longer left in the dark when it comes to mental health support. I'm proud to be part of this project, which has been a collective effort shaped by extensive consultation with the emergency services sector, ESF's Family Matters Advisory Group, ESF's Mental Health Advisory Group and clinical team."*

### Try It Out and Spread The News

We encourage all emergency service families to explore Supportal - this resource has the potential to change lives and create healthier family spaces.

By helping more families feel supported, informed and connected, we can build a stronger, healthier emergency services community together.

**Supportal registration is free and ready for use now on your mobile phone** - visit Supportal today at [supportal.esf.com.au](https://supportal.esf.com.au).



# Shaping the Future: Young SES Leaders Unite in Canberra

By Emma Bugler

On Thursday 1st of April, a select group of young leaders from State Emergency Services (SES) units across Australia gathered in Canberra for the National SES Volunteers Association (NSESVA) Young Emerging Leaders Program.

## REPRESENTING EVERY STATE AND

territory, these passionate volunteers came together for a week of learning, reflection, and connection. With one shared goal, to help shape the future of the SES.

The program offered participants a rare, behind-the-scenes look at how emergency services are coordinated at the highest levels of government. Visits to Parliament House, the National Situation Room, Geoscience Australia, and the ACT Emergency Services Agency, highlighted the complex systems and planning that support frontline responders. Whether exploring the role of geospatial data in disaster planning or seeing national coordination in action, the group walked away with a deeper understanding of the broader emergency services landscape.



Victorian Young Emerging Leaders Emma Bugler (Cobram Unit) and Elliott Matotek (Mildura Unit)

One of the most significant and moving moments came at the 2025 National Emergency Services Memorial Service, where participants formed part of the guard of honour. A powerful

and emotional tribute to those who have fallen in the line of duty. For many, it was the first time visiting the memorial, and the experience left a lasting impression.

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Beyond the formal visits and ceremonial duties, the most meaningful takeaway for many was the opportunity to connect with peers from across Australia. The program fostered a space where young volunteers could share stories, compare experiences, and appreciate the diversity of SES operations, from uniforms and vehicles to call-out procedures and local challenges.

“It was eye-opening to see how different each state operates, but also how much we have in common,” said a participant. “That diversity makes us stronger, and this program really helped us understand that.”

The NSESVA Young Emerging Leaders Program is more than just a professional development opportunity, it is a chance to empower the next generation of SES leaders with the tools, knowledge, and networks they

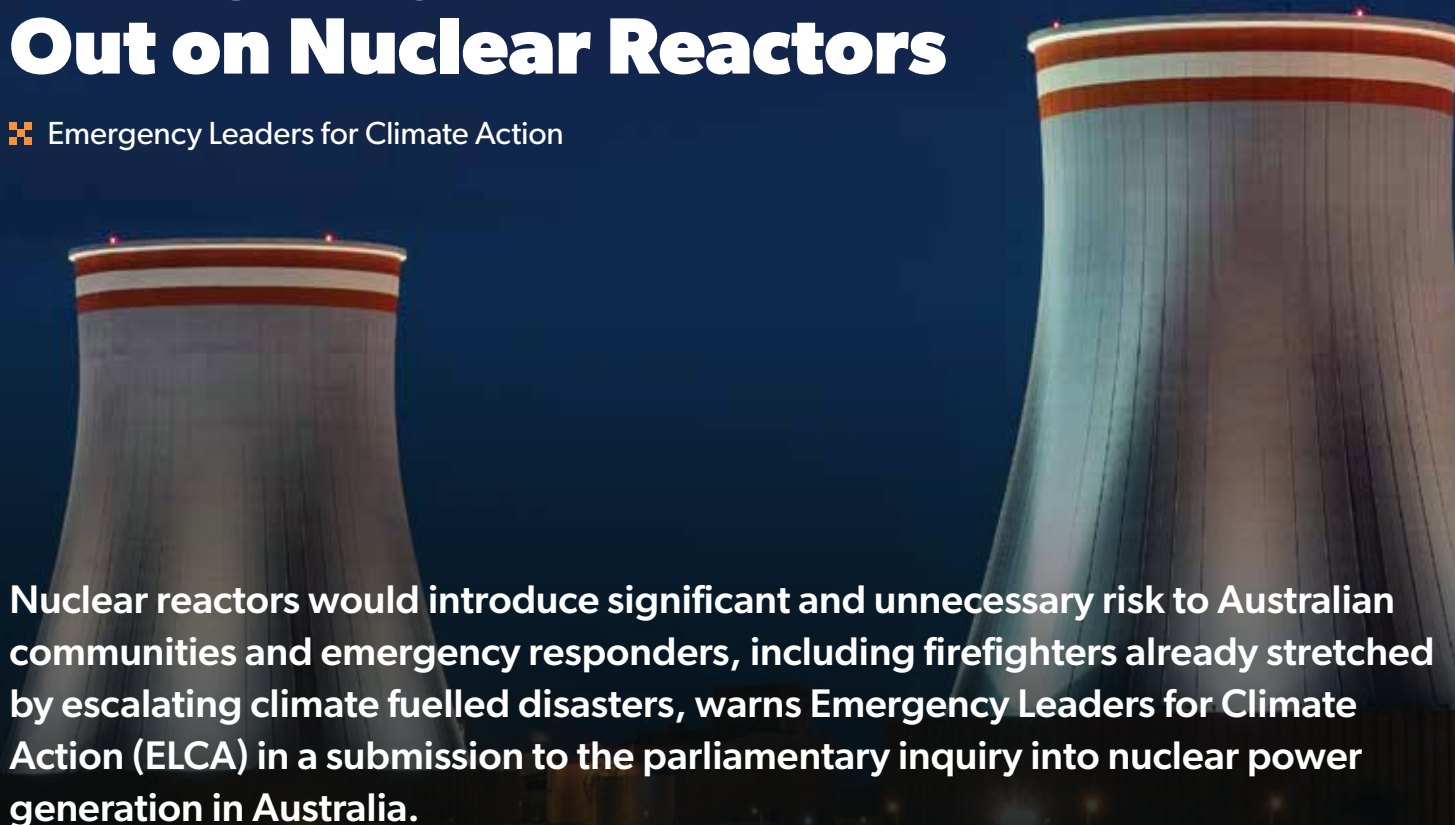


need to thrive. With strong support from the NSESVA and state/territory representatives, this initiative is helping to ensure that the future of the SES is in capable hands.

As participants return to their home states and territories, they do so with new perspectives, lifelong friendships, and a renewed commitment to service.

# Emergency Leaders Speak Out on Nuclear Reactors

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action



**Nuclear reactors would introduce significant and unnecessary risk to Australian communities and emergency responders, including firefighters already stretched by escalating climate fuelled disasters, warns Emergency Leaders for Climate Action (ELCA) in a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into nuclear power generation in Australia.**

**GREG MULLINS, SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF 38 FORMER** fire and emergency service chiefs from across Australia said: “Our firefighters are on the frontlines of escalating climate-fuelled disasters, like bushfires and floods, fuelled by climate pollution. They’re not trained or equipped to deal with nuclear emergencies that could arise from nuclear reactors or the transportation and storage of radioactive waste.”

The ELCA submission highlights that nuclear reactor emergency planning and management has not been addressed by proponents of nuclear energy and emphasises that Australian emergency services lack the experience and resources to handle potential nuclear emergencies.

“Australian emergency services would have to be built up from scratch to respond to nuclear disasters, with no costings or plans in place to achieve this. There are no fully staffed urban fire service stations near the proposed sites for nuclear reactors, and it’s neither feasible nor reasonable to expect volunteer bushfirefighters to handle such high-risk emergencies,” said Mr Mullins.

“I oversaw the deployment of Australian firefighters to assist in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami that led to the Fukushima disaster, where the chaos and devastation caused by

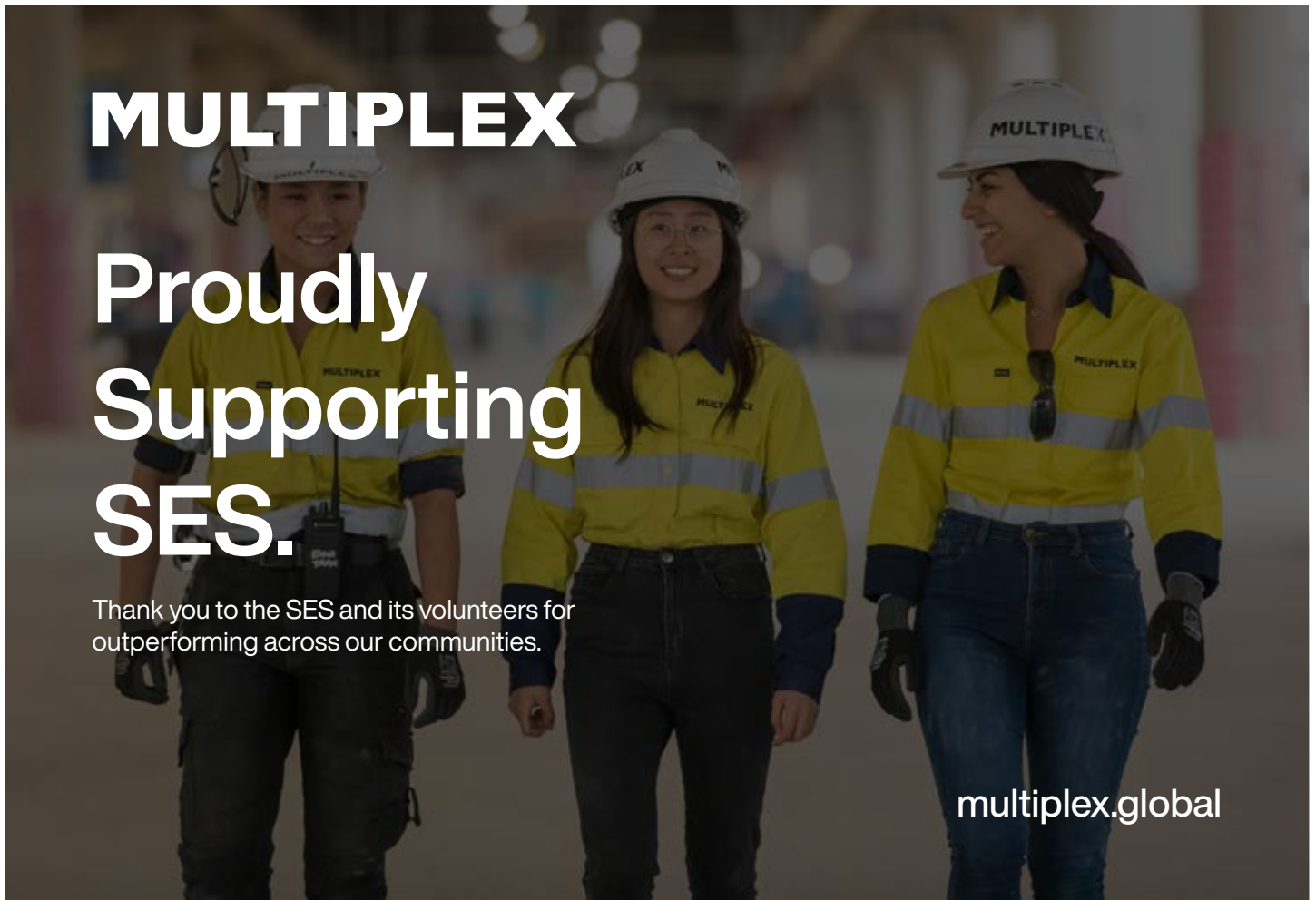
nuclear failures was stark. First responders, many of them civilian firefighters, were thrown into situations they weren’t trained for. That’s not a risk we should take in Australia, no matter how remote.

“There are no safety or environmental frameworks in place to manage the risks of nuclear reactors or to safely transport and store radioactive waste in Australia.

“Placing nuclear reactors in disaster-prone areas like Latrobe, Lithgow, Singleton, and South Burnett would add to the burden emergency services already face responding to worsening bushfires, floods, and storms.”

Beyond the safety risks, former Commissioner Mullins called the proposal a “dangerous distraction” from the energy solutions Australia urgently needs right now. “Every coal-fired power station will shut down before a single watt of nuclear power can enter our system. Nuclear reactors simply cannot be built quickly to address the urgent task of slashing pollution and reducing climate disaster risks right now.”

“Our communities and emergency services are bearing the brunt of worsening disasters driven by burning coal, oil and gas. We don’t have the luxury of waiting decades for new power stations, we must slash climate pollution now to protect



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Australians. Australia can't afford to risk our energy security, economy and safety on a nuclear fantasy when renewables can cut pollution today and help ensure a safer future for our kids."

### Recommendations

**In the submission we detail three critical concerns about current proposals to build nuclear power in Australia:**

1. Nuclear reactor emergency planning and management has not been considered in any plans for the development of nuclear energy generation in Australia.
2. Building nuclear reactors in Australia would be too slow to be a genuine climate solution.
3. Australia's emergency services are not trained or funded to respond to nuclear disasters, both at plants and in the transport of radioactive waste. International experience shows that local urban fire and rescue services will be required to be first responders to any emergencies at nuclear reactors. At present they are ill-equipped to do so.

### ELCA

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action is a growing coalition of former senior Australian fire and emergency service leaders representing every fire service in Australia, a number of SES and land management agencies, communicating the seriousness of the climate change threat, calling for government action on emissions and the necessary resources to better prepare fire and emergency services for increasingly frequent and damaging extreme weather events.





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# The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint

By Celeste Young ✘ Roger Jones

Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

## Introduction

“Our change in thinking has come from an understanding of where the national and international trends are going around sustainable volunteerism models and the emergence of new volunteerism groups and what makes them attractive. You look at that and go, ‘Okay, here’s what we’re up against’. Our traditional models will not survive in this area.” — Manager, EM Volunteering (McLennan, 2019)

The emergency management (EM) volunteering sector is ripe for change. An ageing but dedicated workforce is slowly declining in numbers, while the demand for their services is increasing. The number of informal volunteers who gather spontaneously when emergencies occur has increased, while those who wish to volunteer formally have decreased. This is challenging traditional notions of what EM volunteering is and does.

### Successive Productivity Commission Reports on Government Services track these changes in formal volunteering:

- State and Territory Emergency Services volunteering workforce decreased from 27,206 in 2009–2010 to 24,357 in 2023–2024.
- Fire service organisations volunteering workforce decreased from 221,848 in 2009–2010 to 189,041 in 2023–2024.

The majority of the services provided by emergency management organisations (EMOs) rely upon volunteer contributions. Although volunteers are part of the EM

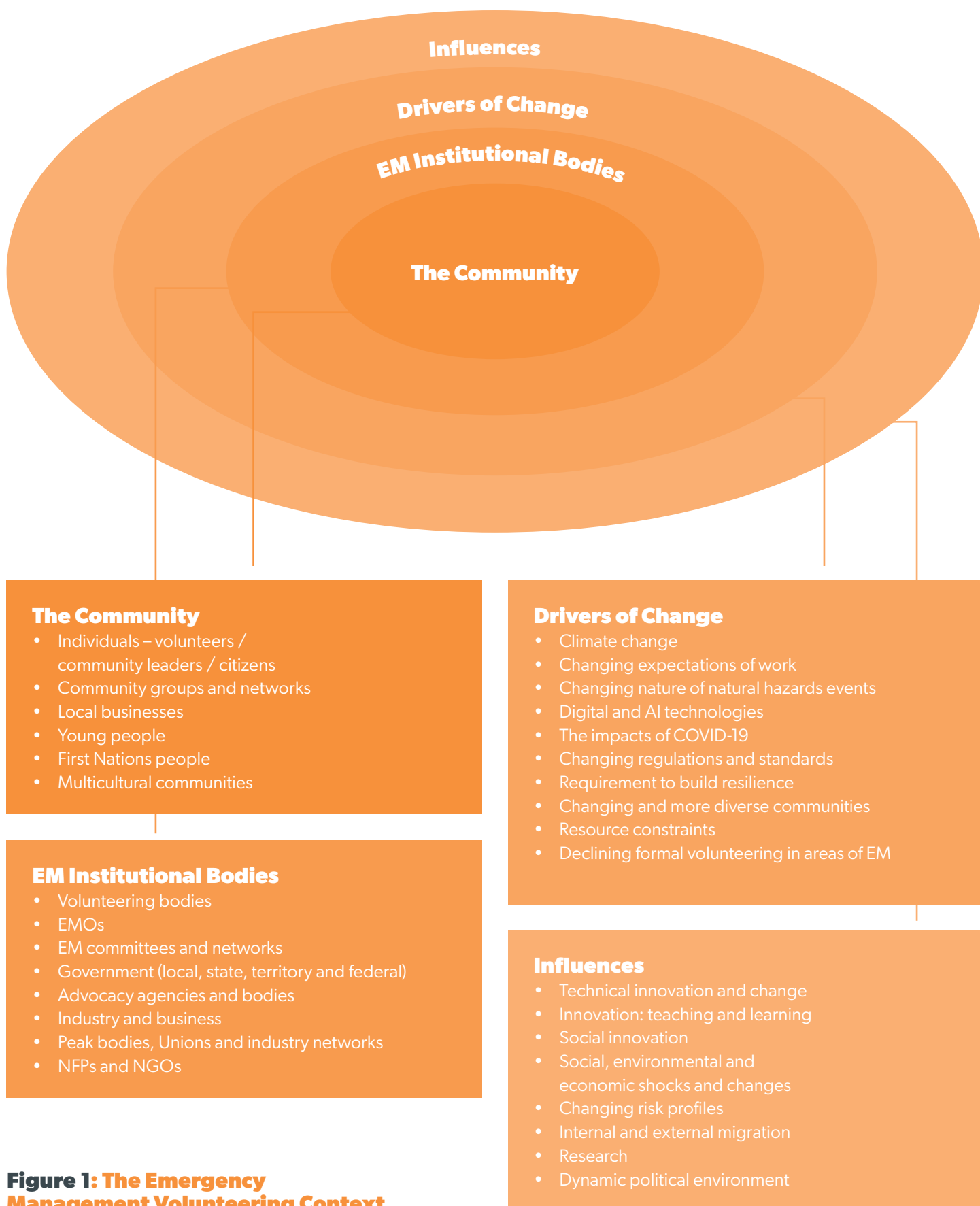
workforce, they are not paid employees. This places them in a unique position within the EM ecosystem, which cannot function effectively without them. However, due to a lack of standardised reporting, and patchy data and measurement, volunteer contributions lack visibility and are often underreported and undervalued.

## The changing EM volunteering context

The broader context in which EMOs and their communities exist is rapidly changing due to a number of drivers and influences (Figure 1).

These factors amplify long-standing issues, such as the administrative burden and cost to those who volunteer. They create compression points for communities and EMOs and present new challenges for EMOs, which include:

- Securing the necessary investment to support transformation in an environment of constrained resources and increasing service demands.
- Building on the emergence of new volunteering models – particularly in communities (e.g., digital volunteering, spontaneous and fluid volunteering) – and coordinating between them.
- Navigating changing relationships and expectations as EMOs make the transition to working with communities on an ongoing basis rather than for them during emergencies.
- Fostering innovation and the integration of new technologies and ways of working, particularly the application of systems-based approaches.



**Figure 1: The Emergency Management Volunteering Context**

- Understanding what the impacts of the changing context, composition and expectations of communities means for the future volunteering workforce.
- Managing trauma and fatigue in impacted communities and the volunteering workforce.
- Increased competition for volunteers and the need to enhance the volunteering experience and accommodate new ways of working.

These factors are also contributing to how risks are being conceived and managed by the EM sector, leading to an expansion of volunteering roles beyond response to longer-term recovery and resilience building. In locations experiencing repeated disasters, this has led to open and ongoing discussions about the lack of time to recover and the need to increase resilience.

**The social contract between communities and the EM sector is also changing, influencing:**

- how people wish to volunteer
- their ability to volunteer
- their expectations of the organisations they volunteer with
- the roles they are willing to undertake, and
- the changing psychological contract volunteers wish to have with EMOs.

These changes are occurring as community roles and responsibilities increase, and capacity in EMOs is becoming stretched. They highlight the interdependent nature of EMOs and their communities, emphasising the need for EMOs to strengthen trust and build new relationships with their communities and volunteers.

**The Blueprint**

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint (The Blueprint) was initiated by the AFAC Volunteering Management Technical Group (VMTG) and funded by Natural Hazards Research Australia (NHRA). Its aim is to provide the foundation for the strategic infrastructure to support implementation of actions across the EM sector to progress the sustainable volunteering agenda.

The Blueprint comprises living documents that can be adapted to changing circumstances and needs. It identifies an initial set of solutions and evidence-based projects that can be supported by action-based research. It links three core components - a theoretical evidence base, strategy, and practice to support and enable effective national outcomes.

The high level of risk that EM volunteers work with places them in a different category to other volunteers. This, and the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand, differentiates The Blueprint from the National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033 (Volunteering Australia, 2023). Although the focus of The Blueprint is volunteers within the SES and Fire Services

in Australia and New Zealand SES and Fire Services, it also considers the broader volunteering ecosystem that interacts with these agencies and their communities before, during, and after incidents.

The AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group (VMTG) is the champion for The Blueprint and steward of Strategic Framework and Interim Action Plan.

*The Emergency Management Volunteering: More than Words* project was conceived with a clear goal in mind – to move the EM sector beyond discussing challenges for EM volunteering and the need for change in the sector, into practical, tangible action that addresses long-standing challenges.

The development of The Blueprint considered volunteering in its many different contexts and has been developed using a collaborative and iterative process to meet the need to:

- Reframe and envision EM volunteering challenges and opportunities in different ways to the past to reveal new kinds of solutions.
- Guide and support strategic, sector-wide collaborative action that sustains EM volunteers (the people), volunteering (the activities), and volunteerism (the culture).
- Create opportunities to influence the sector toward investing in new, innovative, and sustainable approaches.

**Two areas were identified as underpinning almost all ongoing actions:**

- **innovation:** taking well-informed and calculated risks for greater reward, which is essential when engaging in transformative change, and
- **education and learning:** a continuous process that supports innovation and change through experiences and the development of new knowledge. This will also support a wider recognition of volunteers’ skills and capabilities.

**The Blueprint comprises of three components:**

- Research and industry knowledge.
- The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: Strategic Framework (The Strategic Framework).
- Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: 18-month Interim Action Plan (The Action Plan).

**The function of The Blueprint is to provide a foundational structure that:**

- Presents an evidence base which brings together existing knowledge with sector intelligence to provide a synthesis of what is known and what is needed to progress the agenda.
- Organises and makes visible the different aspects of the EM volunteering system to support identification, planning and coordination of actions being undertaken across the sector.

**The outcome sought** is a sustainable and inclusive volunteering sector where volunteers are empowered, appreciated and valued.

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# Powerful Results: ESF's Residential Wellbeing Program Report Now Live

Emergency Services Foundation

After six years of global research and development, Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) proudly piloted the Residential Wellbeing Program, a four day residential retreat for 48 participants from nine of Victoria's emergency service agencies between April and October 2024.

**NOW, IN MAY 2025, WE ARE EXCITED TO RELEASE THE** pilot evaluation report - detailing the powerful impacts this initiative has had on emergency service individuals, as well as their families and workplaces.

In a sector where mental injury claims are increasing in both frequency and severity, the toll on individuals and the system is significant. The RWP was created as a preventative, early intervention initiative to support those in the orange zone of the mental health continuum - before they reach crisis point.

## How it came to be

The program was inspired by ESF's CEO Siusan MacKenzie who came into the role with lived experience of vicarious trauma from exposure to the Linton Fires and their aftermath as a CFA executive manager.

She had a vision of what would have been helpful for her to process that trauma and started a conversation with the ESF Board about the benefits of a wellbeing retreat. This led to former Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton introducing her to Senior Sergeant Greg Dean.

Greg had recently undertaken a Churchill Fellowship which saw him exploring trauma-informed residential wellbeing programs across the UK, USA and Canada. Graham and Siusan shared the view that any such program needed to have sector wide application.

Greg was later backed by an ESF scholarship to further explore the options of commercially available wellbeing retreats in Australia. His conclusion was that a dedicated, holistic residential program for emergency workers that offer spaces for reflection, storytelling, healing and practical tools for recovery was required.

ESF then began to investigate possible approaches and in that process met Adjunct Professor Duncan Shields from the University of British Columbia in Canada. He had recently worked with the BC Professional Firefighters to adapt a program he'd instigated 15 years earlier for military personnel to suit first responders.

The rest is history.

The program in Canada has been evaluated with support from Movember, and an Agreement was reached with Professor Shields who generously guided ESF to develop its own program with strong clinical oversight from ESF's Mental Health Advisory Group and a Governance Committee.

**Upon the release of the report, Senior Sergeant and program visionary Greg Dean stated:**

*"It's not lost on me that what we've created is probably a first for Australia, and maybe even a world first. Not only have we developed a program from an early intervention perspective—it has been designed for the entire emergency service sector and it has involved significant others and support people. We've probably broken some pretty big ground."*

**Adjunct Professor Duncan Shields from the University of British Columbia said of the program:**

*"I couldn't be more thrilled. This really started as a collaboration and a belief that if we rolled up our sleeves together, we could leverage something inherent in the emergency service population—the ability to do hard work, to summon up courage, to turn to the things that are hard to look at, and to have one another's backs. We created an environment where emergency service workers could come together, support each other, and recover together."*



## Findings from the Evaluation and Report

An independent evaluation on the pilot conducted by Phoenix Australia found highly positive results, informed by evaluative surveys from participants conducted at three time points - prior to acceptance and attendance on program, four weeks following attendance and six months following attendance. The surveys had high survey response rates, representing 75% of participants completing all three evaluations.

### Based off the report, it was concluded that:

- **Mental health improvements:** Participants showed significant reductions in psychological distress and PTSD symptoms one month after the program, with benefits largely maintained at 6-month follow-up. Broader positive impacts: Participants showed significant reductions in psychological distress and PTSD symptoms one month after the program, with benefits largely maintained at 6-month follow-up.
- **High satisfaction:** Participants reported very high satisfaction with the program, feeling valued and supported. The location, peer support, and expert facilitation were highlighted as crucial elements.
- **Skill application:** Many participants reported continued use of skills learned, particularly in communication, mindfulness, and self-care, months after the program.
- **Ripple effects:** Participants noted positive impacts on their personal relationships and work environments, including improved communication and ability to support others.

- **Cost-benefit potential:** Initial analysis suggests the program could be cost-effective compared to potential workers' compensation claim costs, though more comprehensive evaluation is needed.
  - Six months post the 8 pilot interventions, it is understood that none of the 48 participants has lodged a workers' compensation mental health claim

## An investment in prevention

The average cost for a single workers' compensation claim across the emergency services sector exceeds substantially the cost of a RWP intervention, which is approximately \$40,000 for eight participants. By comparison, the average cost of a single claim is \$214,578 at Victoria Police, \$111,806 for Ambulance Victoria and \$164,013 for Triple Zero Victoria. While these figures include both physical and mental injury claims, research confirms that mental injury claims are significantly more costly, involve longer recovery times and are increasing in prevalence.

According to a Return on Investment evaluation by Findex presented in the Report, the RWP has strong potential to minimise greater costs from WorkSafe claims, presenting the program as a highly cost-effective solution to reducing the financial and deeply personal toll of mental injury claims on our sector.

Associate Professor Lisa Dell and Dr Ellie Lawrence-Wood from Phoenix Australia, the National Centre of Excellence in Posttraumatic Mental Health, highly commended the program upon completing its evaluation:

*"ESF's commitment to bringing this residential wellbeing program to Victoria for our own emergency service workers has been inspiring. Phoenix Australia has been proud to sit alongside this innovative initiative and work with those who participated to evaluate it, and the results speak for themselves. We've seen positive improvements and impacts that reach far beyond the individuals involved."*

— **Associate Professor Lisa Dell, Phoenix Australia**

*"Speaking to participants, and hearing their stories of the transformative experience they had was both moving and powerful. We look forward to seeing the next steps forward from ESF in this important work for the sector."*

— **Dr Ellie Lawrence-Wood, Phoenix Australia**

## Reflections from those involved

The results of the evaluation clearly highlight the powerful outcomes of this initiative - but it was the reflections of those involved that truly brought its impact to life. A webinar was held to announce the release of the report, bringing together program participants, facilitators, and international collaborators. Their emotional reflections powerfully affirmed the findings and demonstrated just how deeply the program has resonated across the sector:



**Participant of the pilot program and member of Ambulance Victoria, Jackson Sorati said:**

*“It’s changed my life in ways I can’t explain. I was most certainly towards the red zone of the mental health continuum] and very deep in the orange. Having that homely space with other emergency service workers and knowing that I was safe allowed me to be more vulnerable than I think I have ever been with anyone else in my entire life—and that in itself should be all the information anyone ever needs to keep [this program] going.”*

**He went on to reflect on how the program had not only helped him recover but elevated him beyond his pre-crisis state:**

*“I am a better human being now on the other side of this program than what I was beforehand. I’ve become more whole than what I was before.”*

**Following Jackson’s reflection, Steve Farina, British Columbia firefighter and international program partner, responded:** “I feel so profoundly proud to see this program that we created go international... What you said, Jackson, that embodied our why. This is why we do this—shoulder to shoulder. Nothing for us, without us. This is what destroys stigma: to be vulnerable... I could not be prouder.”

**From a facilitator perspective, Sharon Craig shared that helping to deliver the Residential Wellbeing Program was one of the pinnacles of her career:**

*“The Residential Wellbeing Program has been one of the highlights of my career [...] It was a privilege to witness the positive changes in emergency service workers—to see their transformation firsthand and learn of the impact their experiences had on their families and careers. This program is a meaningful way to give back to those who support and protect our communities every day.”*

**Looking Ahead to the Future**

The success of the RWP pilot underscores the importance of the innovative thinking and approaches required to address the alarming incidence of mental injury through early intervention in the emergency services sector. For numerous participants, the program was described as “life-changing”, fundamentally shaping their outlook and equipping them with the tools to manage the impacts of trauma. Importantly, the benefits extended beyond the participant, with positive flow-on effects to both their families, teams and organisations.



 **NORTHERN MINERALS**

## Developing our Heavy Rare Earths Project – Supporting the Energy Transition.

**Northern Minerals (ASX:NTU) is a mineral exploration and development company with headquarters in Perth, Western Australia**

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Established in 2006, our primary focus is developing the Browns Range Heavy Rare Earths Project in the East Kimberley region to become sustainable producers of dysprosium (Dy) and terbium (Tb). These rare earth elements are critical for high performance magnets used in applications including hybrid vehicles, wind turbines and defence applications, ensuring we can support the energy transition and do our part to create a cleaner future.

In addition to the 100% owned Browns Range Heavy Rare Earths Project, our secondary focus includes exploration activities on our varied projects located in both Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

As we look toward the future, ESF is committed to expanding access to this program so that more emergency workers—and those who support them—can benefit.

*“The next part of the uphill journey begins now, to make this program accessible to all those who need it.”*

**— Siusan MacKenzie, CEO, Emergency Services Foundation**

Our goal is simple: to support emergency service workers to remain mentally fit so they can continue to protect the broader community day in and day out.

We would like to thank the funders of the program, Tony’s Trek, Side by Side, EML, WorkSafe, State Government Emergency Responder Mental Health Program and Motorola Foundation - without your support, this would not be possible.

We invite you to read the full evaluation report here to learn more about how this program is changing lives and shaping a more resilient, effective sector.

To help ESF deliver more of these life-changing programs, we invite you to donate to ESF here this EOFY. Your support will help us continue to develop and run initiatives that safeguard the mental health of the emergency services personnel who selflessly protect our community every day.

### Additional Responses to RWP Evaluation

*“The ripple effect is so obvious to me. You come back not only changed in your private life, but from a work perspective too—you role model what you’ve learnt. These learnings really clicked inside my head and they’re easy to use.”*

**Emma Atkins, Life Saving Victoria & RWP participant**

*“By attending a non-single agency program in a setting that is not the token classroom [...] it really breaks down the stigmas and allowed me to get my spark back and deliver higher-performing outcomes with my service and performance to others”*

**Simon Lewis, Life Saving Victoria & RWP participant**

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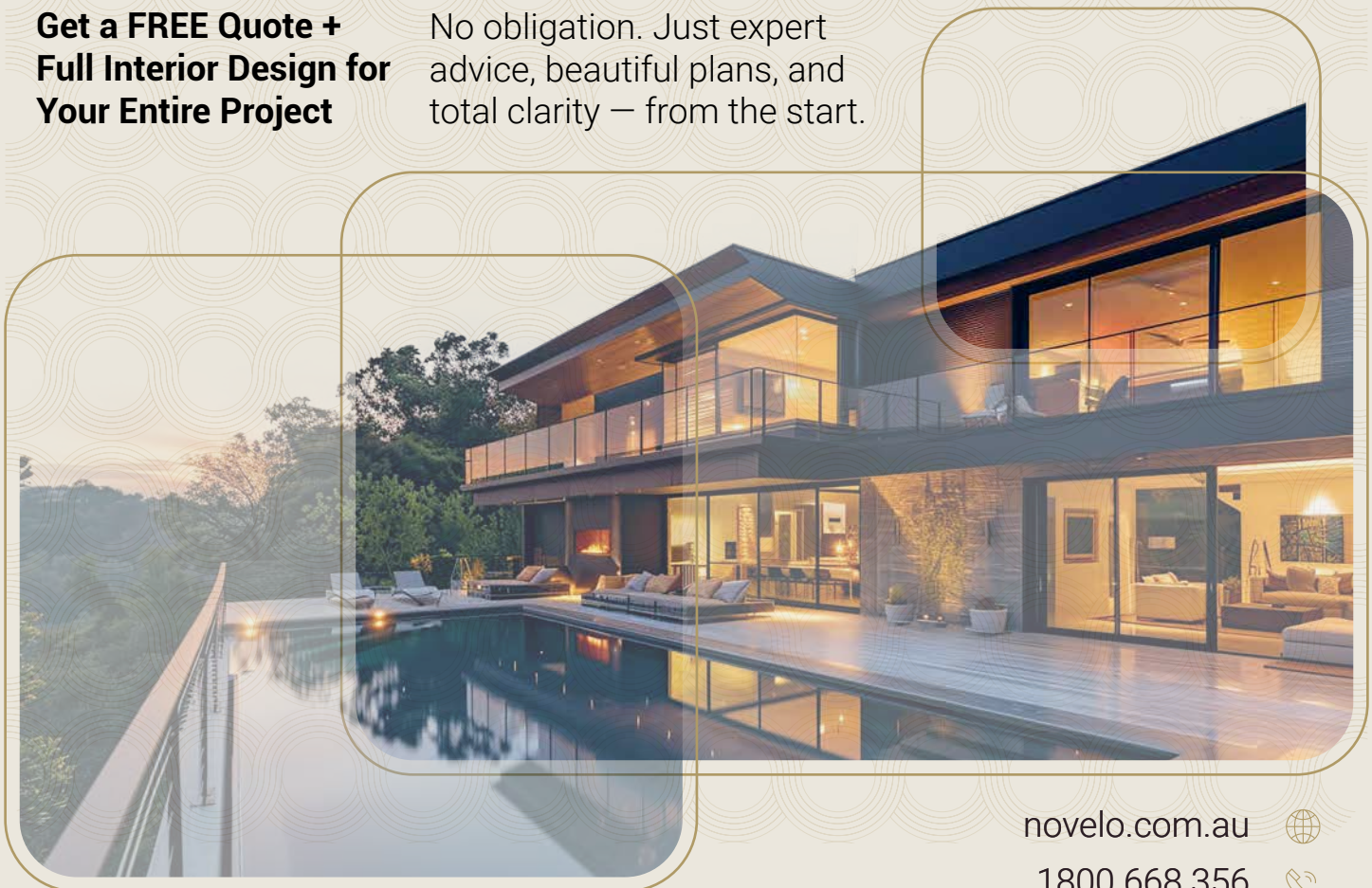
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 Servicing Greater Sydney

# The Climate Risk Map

## Two million properties in the Firing Line: Date reveals how climate change threatens the Great Australian Dream.

### NEW DATA OUT IN APRIL EXPOSES

the electorates where homes and businesses are most at risk from climate-fuelled flooding, bushfires, tropical cyclone winds, coastal inundation, and extreme wind.

The Climate Risk Map, an interactive online map using fresh data from Climate Valuation, allows every Australian to see the climate risks in their local area.

**A new report, *At Our Front Door*, analyses this data at a national level. It finds:**

- One in 23 Australian homes and businesses, or 652,424 properties (4.4%), across the country are already at **high risk** today from one or more hazards that have been made more dangerous by climate pollution.
- Another 1.55 million properties (10.4%) nationally are at **moderate risk** – for which insurance costs will be abnormally high. That’s a further one in 10 properties.
- At high levels of climate pollution, our exposure to climate risk is set to get much worse, with twice as many properties (more than 1.3 million) at high risk by 2100.
- Further, the analysis finds that more than 72,000 homes and businesses are located in 86 suburbs categorised as “critical climate risk zones”, where 80-100% of properties are classified as **high risk** and insurance may soon become unaffordable or withdrawn entirely.

### Climate Councillor and economist

**Nicki Hutley said:** “The climate crisis is literally at the doorstep of Australian households, as worsening extreme



weather driven by climate pollution risks their greatest asset: the home.

“We keep getting hit by disasters in Australia and that’s driving insurance bills through the roof, but we cannot insure our way out of this crisis.

“It’s not just Australian voters in risky areas who should be looking closely at this. Five of the top 10 ASX-listed companies are banks with significant exposure to climate disaster risk through residential mortgages and loans for commercial property and businesses.

“The Climate Council and Climate Valuation are releasing this data free to the public as we believe people have a right to know the threats they’re facing now and into the future.”

### Climate Valuation founder Karl

**Mallon said:** “Our data draws on 15 million commercial and residential

properties in over 15,000 Australian suburbs and 150 electorates. The numbers show us that climate change is not a far-off future event: it threatens entire communities today.

“Most alarmingly, our analysis has identified 86 critical climate risk zones requiring urgent and major government interventions, such as flood levies, buybacks or other measures. It is imperative that decision makers at all levels look seriously at the stark statistics presented here and work to address questions head-on: What adaptation action are all levels of government going to take now to protect our vulnerable communities? And how will this be financed?”

### Climate Councillor and former NSW Fire & Rescue Chief Greg Mullins

**said:** “As the climate risk map and report makes distressingly clear, no home or business is now safe from the devastating consequences of burning fossil fuels.

“Even if your electorate is in a low-risk zone, it does not mean fires or floods won’t happen in your local area because climate change has rewritten the rules.

“As the recent fires in LA and Japan show, massive fires can now happen in winter. They can happen in rainforests like the Daintree or in the suburbs of London. We’ve been through Black Summer, Black Saturday, and the 2003 fires that badly impacted Canberra. Unfortunately, we’ve already locked in conditions for similar fires again, but we have a choice for the future. We must drive down global climate pollution faster and continue the shift to clean energy. The cost of failing to do so is spelled out in this climate risk map.”



# Strengthening a Dedicated Volunteering Workforce for Future Generations

Paul Watson

Manager Stakeholder Insights

**Volunteering is critical for Australia’s emergency services – and supporting the training and skilling of volunteers is of huge importance considering the increasing intensity, duration and variation of climate disasters and community needs.**

**AT PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA (PSA),** we’re working alongside volunteers and volunteer organisations to ensure your skills, leadership, and dedication are supported for years to come.

PSA is one of 10 Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) working across all industries to enable a modern and skilled workforce. PSA is responsible for five industry sectors of critical importance to Australia’s safety and prosperity - Correctional Services, Defence, Fire and Emergency Services, Federal, State/Territory and Local Government and Police. Within each sector, PSA brings together employers, unions and governments to find real-time solutions to skills and workforce challenges. As industry-led, not-for-profit organisations, JSCs exist to ensure both career and volunteer workforces are skilled, adequately supported, and represented now and into the future. This is achieved through four key functions:

- **Workforce Planning** - undertaking both internal and external research and data analysis to identify workforce challenges that contribute to annual Workforce Insights Reports.
- **Training Product Development** - developing quality VET products to strengthen the skills and capabilities of these industry sectors.
- **Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring** - monitoring and promoting the implementation of VET training products and their respective impact on each sector.
- **Industry Stewardship** - consulting with, advocating for and promoting the needs of our industry employer and employee bodies and volunteer associations.

With approximately 400,000 Australian volunteers within the Fire and Emergency Services workforce alone, PSA maintains a strong relationship with the National State Emergency Service

Volunteers Association (NSESVA) along with other organisations, including but not limited to:

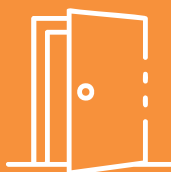
- Surf Life Saving Australia
- the Council of Australian Volunteer Fire Associations (CAVFA)
- Australian Council of State and Territory Emergency Services (ACSES)
- Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC)

PSA has highlighted a comprehensive overview on the current volunteer workforce as part of the upcoming 2025 Public Safety Workforce Insights Report. This report identified key challenges around barriers to attraction, recruitment and retention when it comes to youth volunteers, as well as identified skills gaps in leadership and human resource management in volunteer organisations. PSA is addressing the identified challenges through two projects:



PSA has also established a Volunteer Network that provides specialist advice on matters concerning volunteers within our industry sectors. The Volunteer Network helps PSA to achieve effective industry stewardship, intelligence collection and engagement. PSA is committed to ongoing consultation and engagement with volunteer stakeholders to leverage your knowledge and experience to strengthen our insights and advocate for the sector. A recent example of this was a Fire and Emergency Management Volunteer Workshop held on the 2nd September in Melbourne to ensure the volunteer to better understand the workforce challenges and training needs of volunteer organisations. The insights gathered from this workshop will inform the 2026 Workforce Insights Report.

As PSA continues to grow, we will continue to broaden and deepen our engagement to support the volunteer workforce. If you would like to contribute to any of our work initiatives or get involved by joining our Volunteer Network, please feel free to contact Paul Watson, our Manager of Stakeholder Insights and Stewardship. You will also be able to find our current projects and publications at our website [www.publicskillsaustralia.org.au](http://www.publicskillsaustralia.org.au).



### Volunteer Leadership Project

**Purpose** - to tackle a key capability gap in non-operational leadership roles across Australia's volunteer-based FES.

#### The project will:

- map leadership development efforts across agencies.
- identify capability gaps.
- evaluate existing training programs for relevance and accessibility.
- highlight transferable leadership skills to support career mobility.

**Intended Outcome** – update the Public Safety Training Package to promote nationally recognised credentials, paving the way for a consistent, accessible, and transferable leadership framework that strengthens Australia's volunteer emergency workforce.



### Understanding the Youth Volunteer

**Purpose** - to address the challenge of attracting and retaining young people in volunteer roles across Australia's FES.

#### The project will:

- Conduct a literature review focused on youth volunteering within the FES context.
- Collaborate with volunteer organisations to collect data on the key drivers of youth attraction, recruitment, and retention.

**Intended Outcome** – provide strategic recommendations to support FES organisations in developing targeted youth engagement strategies, to support the industry-sector in building a future-ready volunteer workforce.

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# ACTSES and ESA Deployment to NSW

Rotation 2 - Jurisdiction Liaison Officers  
Deployed to Wollongong - 23-29 May 2025

In late May of 2025, teams from the ACT Emergency Service Authority (ESA) were sent at short notice to support NSW SES with the recent Northern NSW flooding event.

## REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

included fixing damaged roofs and broken windows, clearing out mud and damaged furniture, and conducting welfare checks on local residents.

ACTSES volunteer members even managed to face the media on occasions and promote the amazing work that our ACTSES Volunteers did; there was some great footage on the news and The Project.

And here are some of the staff and volunteers who went North...



Rotation 1 - Intel/Mapping Team deployed to IMT in Metford - 22-28 May 2025



Rotation 4 - SES Strike Force deployed to Taree - 26-30 May 2025



Rotation 3 - SES Strike Force deployed to Taree - 23-27 May 2025



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# Changing the Guard for the ACT SES Peer Support Team

❖ By David Hatherly



**In July 2025, Sue Elsbury stood down as the leader of the SES Peer Support team. Sue had held the position since 2011 and thought that 15 years was enough!**

## REPLACING SUE WE HAVE ANN-

Marie Jenkins, who was, until very recently, the head of the ESA's Wellbeing and Support programs. In farewelling Sue, it's worth reflecting on the changes that she has seen to the Peer Support function in her time as Team Leader.

When Sue started in Peer Support in 2010, the role of PSO had been around for more than a decade (Doreen McEncroe, who is still a keen PSO, was one of the founding members of the team in 1999). Perhaps at that time there was a drive within the ACT Public Service to establish Peer Support, as she remembers that her initial training program included people from across a number of Government departments. It's certain, though, that there wasn't a clear appreciation of how the Peer Support function for a normal public service department could be adapted to serve a volunteer workforce, because PSOs weren't activated at all for more than a decade.

Fast forward to 2015, and the third reincarnation of team took place and, following more external training, a training package in Critical Incident Management and the role of Peer Support which was successfully delivered to all units. However, lacking an official "sponsor" within the ESA, activity continued to be spasmodic.

Things changed in 2017 with the appointment of Ann-Marie Jenkins as the



Sue Elsbury's farewell lunch, with members of the PSO team and ESA Chaplains in attendance

ESA's Wellbeing and Support Programs. Peer Support now had our sponsor within ESA, and in short order she got approval to recruit and train yet another batch of new PSOs to bring membership up to eleven.

Another recruitment and training round in 2023 has again increased our numbers: we are now eighteen. So, we have arrived in 2025 The Peer Support team has the numbers to be pre-emptively deployed to provide support at every critical incident, and to have at least one Peer Support Officer in every unit to be available for the quiet conversations that most of us need from time to time, and more generally, asking us RUOK.

Our statistics show that since Ann-Marie started collecting statistics in 2017 we have had a PSO presence at over 80 missing person searches

and 15 evidence searches. We have also accompanied teams on interstate deployments, including the C-130 crash during the 2019-20 bushfires. 430 member interactions have been recorded, but this is only the tip of the iceberg, as none of us remember to record every brief chat.

So,

- farewell Sue (as team leader, but hopefully she'll be a PSO for many more years)
- farewell (for now!) to Ann-Marie as Senior Director of Wellbeing and Support Programs within ESA
- but welcome back Ann-Marie, as she takes on Sue's role as PSO team leader
- and welcome to Sue's dachshund Maddie, who has officially become the PSO mascot



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# Exercise Sudden Storm

On Sunday 17 November 2024, with a BOM Severe Thunderstorm Warning fittingly issued for that afternoon, 25 SES members came together to take part in the concluding component of this season’s IMT(Incident Management Team) preparedness training program, Exercise Sudden Storm 24.



**THE EXERCISE COMPLEMENTED TRAINING SESSIONS** conducted over the preceding 2 months, ranging from online briefings/presentations to targeted training for specific IMT roles – notably Incident Controllers (ICs), Operations Officers and Sector Leaders, Planning/Intel Officers, Logistics Officers and Management Support personnel operating under the AIIMS (Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System) Management Structure.

More than 50 members engaged in some form of training in this space. Combined, the training provided opportunities for IMT members to develop or rekindle close working relationships, work with the newly rolled out ESA (ACT Emergency Services Authority) IMT Portal, (re)acquaint themselves with new and existing operational and procedural

protocols, systems and tools, and, particularly during the exercise, consider and initiate action which may be needed across a diverse range of scenarios not normally encountered in your typical SES-led response.

Injured cats, nursing home evacuations, cross-border negotiations, a crew-member injury, trapped residents in a basement garage and threats of major flooding - amongst other excitement - all came into play, requiring creative thinking and responses. Whilst this tranche of formal IMT training has concluded, SES HQ now enters a phase of ‘lessons learned’ and program refinement, with a view to preparation of the 2025 training program and provision of more regular opportunities to build and reinforce key knowledge and skills

# Bald Hill Paraglider Rescue

Steve Cliffe  
Wollongong Unit

Bald Hill at Stanwell Tops, near Wollongong, is a world-renowned destination for paragliding and hang gliding, offering spectacular coastal views of the Grand Pacific Drive and the Illawarra coastline.

## THIS ALSO MAKES IT A "HOT SPOT"

for Vertical Rescue for the local Wollongong Unit, as it was on Saturday 31st May.

At 1pm the Unit was activated for a paraglider who had crashed into the side of the cliff north of the launch site. Whilst en route the team received an image of the crashed paraglider from another paraglider who flew over him:

Our first priority was locating a suitable location to access the paraglider which was hampered by the terrain in the southern end of the Royal National Park being rugged with thick vegetation along the top of the cliff line.

By this time we'd been joined by Ambulance SOT Paramedics, one of their Toll rescue helicopters and the Illawarra Police Rescue Squad (PRS). Helicopter winching was ruled out because the downwash could blow the paraglider off the cliff so a plan for access and extrication was



discussed and agreed by the various agencies now involved.

An Ambulance SOT paramedic, PRS operator and with two of our VR operators abseiled down the cliff with a stretcher to prepare for the extrication.

Like the top of the cliff, the cliff itself provided vegetation challenges and a couple of spots that required our

operators to position themselves to help manage rope rub points and assist with manoeuvring the stretcher.

The casualty was finally extricated to the waiting Ambulance helicopter at 4:30pm.

This multi-agency rescue involved 10 VR operators from our Wollongong and Dapto Units, 2 PRS operators and 3 Ambulance SOT Paramedics.



### WHILST WOL & DPT UNITS

were land search training in the Dharawal N.P off Appin Rd, our rescue crews were pulled & activated for a Vertical Rescue for a Paraglider crashed into a cliff at Bald Hill - Northern Suburbs. Our swift response ensured the casualty was brought to safety before last light. Our rescue crews, having spent the day training in land search operations, demonstrated their exceptional versatility and readiness by responding at a moment's notice, highlighting the depth of their skill, dedication, and ability to pivot from training to life-saving action within minutes

**Josh Hurst**

Deputy Unit Commander





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# Armidale Unit Responds to Largest Snowstorm in 40 Years

While many NSW SES units have been busy responding to the impacts of severe weather over the last week, members of the Armidale Unit were faced with not only flooding and storm impacts, but an icy situation too.

**A SNOWSTORM TRANSFORMED THE** region into a winter wonderland on Saturday, 2 August, but unusual snow levels of 20-40cm reported at Armidale, Guyra, Dorrigo and surrounds caused havoc on local roads and resulted in an influx of calls to the NSW SES. Some local members said it was the most snow they've seen in the area in 40 years.

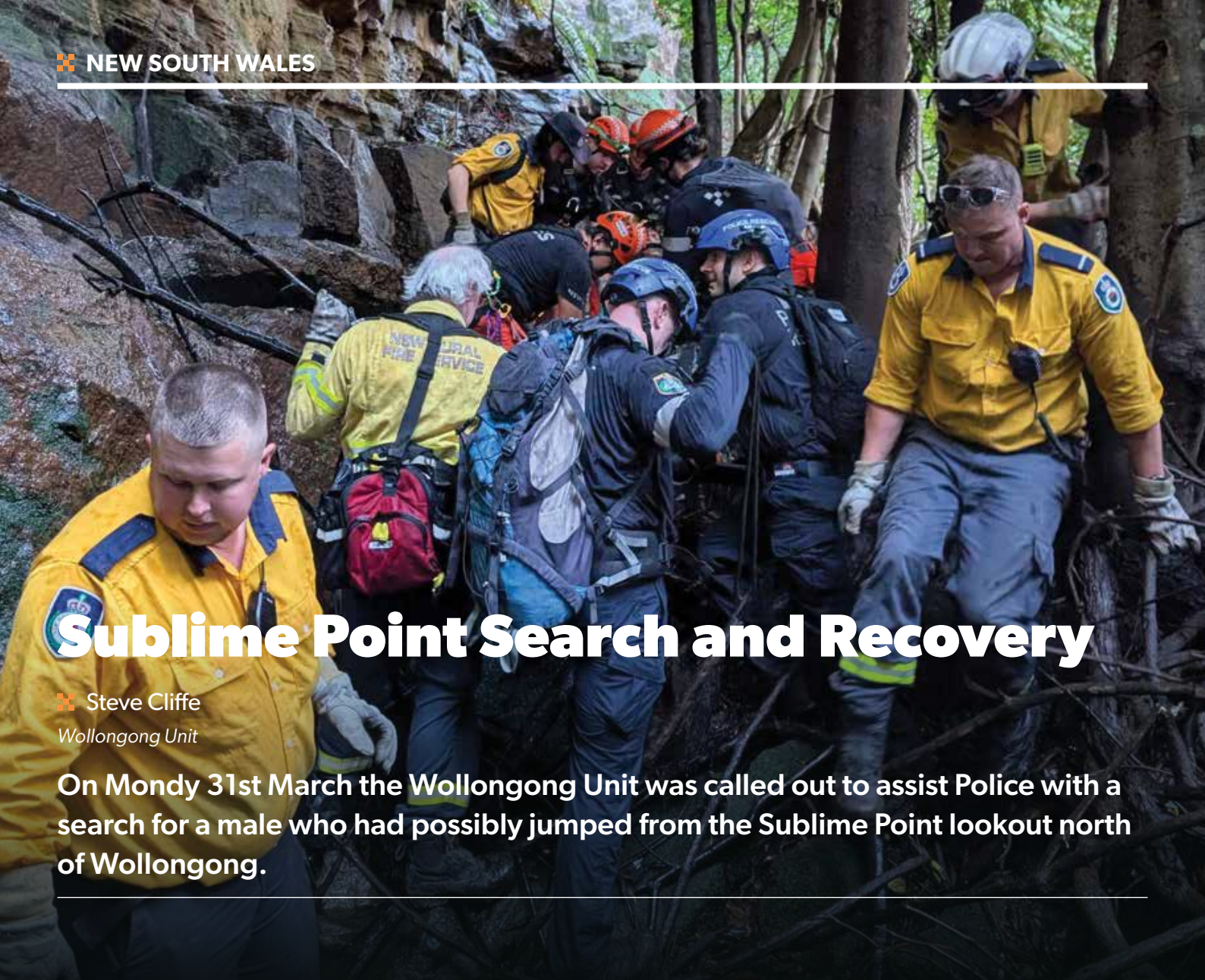
The snow made for spectacular sights for some, but created dangerous conditions for others, with about 200 vehicles becoming stuck in the snow on New England Highway, Waterfall Way, Norris Drive and Grafton Road.

The Armidale Unit quickly sprung into action, responding to more than 309 incidents including trees down, structural collapses and road crash rescues. Crews from RFS, Fire and Rescue NSW and Ambulance NSW also lent a helping hand in the response.

To thank emergency services for the multi-agency response, a community barbecue was held at Jackson's Provedores after the event.

Take a look at some of the photos from the response:





# Sublime Point Search and Recovery

Steve Cliffe  
Wollongong Unit

On Monday 31st March the Wollongong Unit was called out to assist Police with a search for a male who had possibly jumped from the Sublime Point lookout north of Wollongong.

## WE WERE TASKED TO SEARCH ALONG THE CLIFF TOP

areas, whilst the RFS were sent down the walking track to search along the base of the cliffs.

After about an hour the RFS team located the POI deceased at the base of main lookout. The use of a Helicopter for the retrieval was ruled out due to the thick canopy and strong winds along the escarpment, so we would have to do it the hard way.

After waiting for Police Forensics to arrive we headed down the walking track and made our way along the base of the cliff to where the RFS were waiting with the deceased.

After Forensics had done their work, ours began. We had two Police Rescue operators with us and normally they would have done the packaging to minimise the exposure to us and the RFS. Unfortunately, the deceased person was large and heavy so two of our members ended up assisting.

We started the walk out at 1630, and getting along the base of the cliff to the walking track took us almost 2 hours as the terrain was rugged, steep and slippery.

Having arrived at the track didn't mean things were going to get any easier for us, as the track contains seven consecutive steep, narrow ladders. Fortunately, being a popular walking



track in our area we'd devised a technique and practiced getting a stretcher up it (albeit with a much lighter dummy!).

Despite this the ladder section was hard, compounded by the fact that we could only get people around the stretcher at the short landing areas between the ladders.

All up the extrication took over 4 hours and involved 7 SES, 6 RFS and 2 PRS operators.



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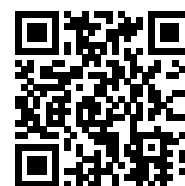


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# Leading the Ingham Flood Response

Lee Webb

Unit Officer, NTES Nhulunbuy Volunteer Unit

On February 9 this year, I travelled to Townsville with five other Northern Territory Emergency Service (NTES) volunteers and one staff member to support the area's flood response efforts.

## ONCE WE ARRIVED AT THE STAGING

area, we were notified that we would be heading north to Ingham alongside incoming teams from around the country.

Not long after we arrived, a member of the Incident Management Team (IMT) approached me to ask if I could lend a hand. Thinking I'd be helping around the staging area, I agreed without hesitation. Then came an unexpected request: would I be willing to lead the deployment to Ingham? After a quick briefing, I agreed to take on the role.

Upon arriving in Ingham, we coordinated with state team leaders to organise teams and assign tasks. We also established a local IMT using members from our deployment group. The conditions were difficult: constant rain, flooded streets, high humidity, and extensive mould made things challenging. We were housed in a local gym with fans but no air conditioning.



Despite this, the team remained focused and got the job done. Our primary responsibilities included removing damaged furniture, conducting welfare checks, helping with supply deliveries and distributing information to the community.

Safety remained our top priority throughout, and we tackled each

challenge as effectively as possible. As our deployment came to an end, discussions with Queensland SES and NTES resulted in a decision for me to remain for the next deployment rotation. This was to help facilitate a smoother transition and maintain continuity in leadership.



While the rest of the NT team headed home, I remained in Ingham to lead the next group of 65+ volunteers. We re-established the IMT, assigned tasks and continued working through the remaining job list. Again, the conditions were difficult but they had changed: minimal to no rain, a lot of the flooding had subsided, high humidity still but with higher daily temperatures, but the mould continued to thrive. Throughout both rotations, we also took on “jobs of opportunity” as they arose, logging them accordingly. A four-person team was sent to Lucinda, which remained isolated due to river levels. We also received support of a 20-person day crew from Townsville. When the next rotation arrived, we handed over the few remaining jobs in Ingham and about a dozen in Lucinda, where road access had only just been reopened.



In more than 30 years of volunteering, I have never led a deployment of this scale. It was a significant learning experience and one I am truly grateful for. I gained valuable insights and would definitely do it again if the opportunity arose.

- Be open to opportunities—but trust your instincts. It’s okay to say no if something doesn’t feel right.
- Collaborating across different jurisdictions can be challenging, but it brings great value.
- Use knowledge and experience you gain to strengthen your own team and improve the service you provide back home.

Yes, there were challenges: different systems, structures and operational approaches. However, strong support from Queensland SES, combined with my flexibility, adaptability and experience with AIMS, allowed me to navigate these differences and help deliver a smooth and coordinated response.

To the many people I worked with in the IMT and on the ground: thank you for your support, they wouldn’t have been successful deployments without all your hard work. To the Queensland SES: thank you for your trust and support and I look forward to working alongside you all again.



# Celebrating

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# NTES Deployment to QLD Tropical Cyclone Alfred

Ali Snowden, Deputy Unit Officer  
Nhulunbuy Volunteer Unit

Having been with the Northern Territory Emergency Service (NTES) for three years, my other commitments had kept me from deploying until 2025.

Listening to fellow NTES members share their stories of deployments over the years, I knew it was something I wanted to do; to be able to put my skills and training into practice while assisting other units in times of need. In March 2025, the call went out for members to volunteer for the cleanup efforts following Tropical Cyclone Alfred in Queensland. I eagerly put my hand up for the task and was selected to deploy. I was a little apprehensive yet excited, I was fortunate to travel with three exceptional NTES members: Lee Webb from Nhulunbuy, Ron Green from Katherine, and John Duncan from Darwin, along with Peter Clouting from HQ. Together, we were headed to Queensland to offer our support.

## The Journey Begins

On Thursday, Lee and I flew from Gove to Darwin, where we met the rest of the team at Howard Springs. We gathered our roofing gear before heading to the airport to catch our flight to Queensland. Upon arrival, a Queensland SES representative greeted us, assigned us a vehicle, and provided directions to our accommodation for the next few days.



## Day 1: Briefings and the First Task

On Friday, we started early and made our way to Redlands SES/Cleveland Group, located within the Brisbane Region, for our initial briefing. There, we met with teams from Western Australia, South Australia, and the ACT. Each state operated within its own team, and we were designated as NT1.

- Vehicles were fully equipped for field operations, including chain sawing and storm damage repair.

- Queensland uses a “pod system,” where each pod is lifted onto the back of a Ute, containing boxes for specific tasks, such as a pole saw, ladders, sandbags, tarps, and more.
- Briefings also covered the contents of each pod, including essential items like batteries, food rations, and other supplies.

## Day 1: Karragarra Island

We received our tasking: assisting on the islands between the mainland and

Moreton Bay. Our team travelled by ferry to Karragarra Island, where we were assigned roof tarping, tree trimming and removal tasks. NT1 was able to complete all assigned tasks, and the small community expressed their gratitude for our assistance. After returning by ferry, we went back to the Redlands Base, where the team helped us inspect and sharpen chainsaws, prep the utes, ensuring everything was ready for Day 2.

### **Day 2: Macleay Island**

Saturday began early with the daily debrief and break. Once again, communication was seamless, and updates regarding our schedule were clearly conveyed by Redlands/Cleveland IMT and our team leaders. Each team was provided with detailed job sheets, which included task instructions, contact details for property owners, and in some cases, photos for clarity. Our tasking for the day was well defined, and we were able to carry out our work efficiently. We then headed to the ferry for Macleay Island, where we would continue our work, more roof tarping and cutting and removing of trees. With some assistance from SA1 filling sandbags.

### **Day 3: Russell Island**

Another early start and long day, commencing with debrief and breakfast at Redlands Base, our final day we were off to Russell Island. We picked up where SA and WA had left from the previous two days, more tarping and removal of trees. We had been left some extremely large trees and tree structures to cut through, including a cannonball avocado with a multitude of branches and avocados the size of rockmelons all over the ground.

### **Reflections on the Experience**

This was my first deployment with NTES, and it exceeded my expectations in every way. The organisation by the Redlands/Cleveland Group was excellent. Each team knew their tasking the day before and all logistics, including ferry timings



and equipment preparation. Each team was provided with detailed job sheets, which included task instructions, contact details for property owners, and in some cases, photos for clarity. Our tasking for each day was well defined, and we were able to carry out our work efficiently.

#### **Key highlights from the experience included:**

- Putting my skills and training into practice while also learning from more experienced team members.
- Observe how different state SES teams manage and work together.
- See the innovative organisational systems in action, such as the equipment pods and team work tubs, which made operations much more efficient.
- Clear communication and detailed job sheets.
- Timely ferry departures and arrivals, with well-defined work areas.
- A supportive and cooperative atmosphere between teams from various states.

Having the same team and work pod each day allowed us to work efficiently and build strong camaraderie. NT1, you are an outstanding team. Queensland SES and Redlands SES, your support and

coordination made this deployment a memorable and impactful experience. I look forward to future opportunities to work alongside such a dedicated group of professionals.

### **Takeaways for Future Deployments**

For my first NTES deployment, the organisation and planning were top-notch. It was evident that most scenarios had been carefully thought through, ensuring that everything from equipment readiness to task allocations was covered. The experience provided valuable takeaways that can be implemented in our own units to improve our work-ready kits. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to enhance my training, develop my skills, and contribute to the recovery of the Queensland communities affected by Cyclone Alfred. A special thank you to the NT1 team for their support and to Queensland SES, Redlands SES, and Cleveland Group for trusting us with this important task.

# Turning Knowledge into Action: Building Skills for Community Resilience

**From storm preparedness to supporting people through floods, Rosie is using new skills in emergency management to strengthen her community and inspire others to get involved.**



**Rosie Bolingbroke (far left) on duty with the SA SES Metro South Unit in Adelaide.**

**When a severe storm or flood hits, volunteers are often the first to respond.**

For Rosie, a member of the South Australian State Emergency Service in metropolitan Adelaide, volunteering began as a way to help her community during times of need and has grown into a passion for building resilience in times of crisis.

That motivation led her to study the Graduate Certificate in Emergency and Disaster Management at Queensland University of Technology Online, a course that could be completed fully online, while she continues to work full-time.

"I was looking for that broader piece, that greater understanding of disaster emergency management, how to better serve the community," Rosie says.

The course has given Rosie practical knowledge that she can use every day in her work volunteering with SES and other community organisations.

The skills she has learned from the course range from educating the public about storm preparedness to best practice strategies to support people after disasters.

**"It opens your mind up and gives you a greater understanding of how disasters happen and how we can better support the community to avoid them"**

Rosie reflects on what she has learned and says one of the most valuable lessons has been recognising the emotional impact of disasters.

"The last thing you want is a whole heap of people dressed in orange with helmets marching through someone's house during an emergency without thinking about the emotional impact," says Rosie.

**"Sometimes just sitting with someone for five minutes is much more important to emergency recovery than tasks like clearing mud and water"**

The program has also strengthened her leadership skills, particularly in managing resources and volunteers during severe storm events.

"The course has been really good for better approaches to managing volunteers, making sure you don't fatigue everyone in the first six hours when you might have two more days of storms ahead."

For Rosie, volunteering provides a sense of fulfilment that she says enriches her life and helps her to feel more connected to others.

"I get a lot out of the volunteering. I started out with the SES and wanted to do more to follow up with people after we have attended to make the environment safe, that's why I have joined Disaster Relief Australia and St John Ambulance, too."

Rosie continues, "The QUT Online course has really helped me connect the dots between the roles that all three of those groups play in helping people get back on their feet after something has happened."

"It feels meaningful, like I'm doing some good out in the community."

Rosie's story highlights how emergency preparedness is becoming vital across many professions. With the right knowledge and skills, individuals can help build safer, more resilient communities.

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# Serving side by side: 50 years of the SES in Queensland

**The Honourable Dan Purdie**  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Premier David Crisafulli and Minister for Police and Emergency Services Dan Purdie thanking SES volunteers in Ingham on 7 February 2025

**This year we celebrate 50 years of the Queensland State Emergency Service - five decades of orange overalls, selfless service, and an unshakable commitment to our communities.**

**FOR ME, THIS MILESTONE IS NOT** only an opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of SES volunteers as Minister for Police and Emergency Services, but also to reflect on my own time as a police officer working side by side with SES crews.

During my policing career, I saw first-hand how critical the SES is to keeping Queenslanders safe. Whether it was flood rescues, storm response, search operations, or traffic crashes, the SES were always there. Late nights on the roadside directing traffic in pouring rain, or trudging through floodwaters to reach families in need. Their teamwork, reliability and calm under pressure never failed to impress me.



Meeting two of our Orange Army volunteers at the Ingham SES Headquarters in February, where staff often slept on the floor between shifts.




 SES volunteers being flown to Townsville from Cairns during the North Queensland floods on 5 February 2025

Fast forward to today, and in my role as Minister, I have had the privilege of seeing the SES in action across the state. My first storm season as Minister is one I will never forget. In Ingham, I walked into SES headquarters and found volunteers stretched thin, some sleeping on the floor between gruelling shifts. There was no fuss, just a deep sense of duty to their community. That moment summed up the Queensland spirit for me.

In that single flood event, more than 400 SES volunteers were deployed, supported by nearly 300 interstate counterparts, completing over 2,500 tasks from rescues to community support. It was one of the most coordinated and sustained responses in recent years, and a testament to the professionalism of our SES.

Of course, the SES is more than a response agency - it's a community. Each volunteer brings their skills, their heart, and their time to serve others, often putting themselves in harm's way



 Watching our SES volunteers in action while recovery efforts got underway to remove a fallen tree from a roof in Townsville in February

to protect neighbours and strangers alike. That culture of service is what has carried the SES through 50 years and will continue to carry it forward.

On behalf of the Crisafulli Government, I want to place on record my sincere thanks to every SES member,

past and present - all the lives you have saved, the communities you have rebuilt, and the hope you have carried into the darkest of times.

Congratulations on your 50th anniversary. It is an honour to celebrate this milestone with you.

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# Queensland SES 50 Years

Photos supplied by Far North Region and Northern Region State Emergency Service, Queensland

**Some people have a birthday week or a birthday month, but Queensland SES is having a birthday year!**

**WE OFFICIALLY CELEBRATE OUR** 50th anniversary on December 11th 2025 but we thought we'd get the party started early, kicking off now and wrapping up in June 2026.

The Queensland SES 50-year Flag will travel the State visiting groups and at the time of deadline for this magazine has so far visited Northern Region and Far Northern Region in Queensland.

A summary of some of the groups that are depicted with the flag as it travels our State and some of the more scenic locations

SES Yarrabah Group is located in one of the most beautiful places in the SES Far Northern Region in the Yarrabah. A township of Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, it is situated to south of Cape Grafton overlooking the Coral Sea and Fitzroy Island. It is approx. 55kms from Cairns by road yet only 10kms by



direct distance and is geographically separated from the Cairns CBD by the Murray Prior Range, Mt Yarrabah and Trinity Inlet.

Today Yarrabah is made up of descendants from Gunggandji, Yidinji and many other tribal groups – peoples forcibly brought to Yarrabah during our history – continue to live and

work together for the betterment of our community. (Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council website)

SES Yarrabah support their community in Search & Rescue and Storm Damage Operations. The SES 50-year Flag toured to the majestic Windin Falls in the Wooroonooran National Park on the Atherton Tablelands west of

# Thank you.

 recognises and thanks the SES for the amazing work they do in the community's times of need.



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Cairns, Queensland. SES Volunteers from the Atherton and Malanda Groups trekked the 11.5km round trip into the top of Windin Falls before getting some amazing footage thanks to our SES FNR RPAS pilots.

The Gulf of Carpentaria...

Way out North West

The SES 50-year Flag has travelled to two of our very remote groups, Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw are situated in western Cape York Peninsula.

SES Pormpuraaw Group is 8 hours by 4WD from Cairns on the Gulf of Carpentaria and SES Kowanyama Group is a similar timeframe by 4WD from Cairns, located south of Pormpuraaw and just inland from the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Both SES Groups respond to Search & Rescue operations and severe weather events including cyclones and flooding with both locations regularly isolated to road transport, becoming reliant on



air or barge services for resupply for months at a time.

The SES 50-year flag visited the most northerly point of the Australian Mainland with SES NPA Bamaga in the Northern Peninsula Area Council area.

The Group regularly activates for Search and Rescue and Road Crash Rescue within one of the most beautiful yet remote

and isolated parts of our Region often only accessible by air or resupplied by barge.

Located on the east coast of Cape York Peninsula and situation in the main township within Queensland's largest Local Government of Cook Shire Council is SES Cooktown Group.

Famous for the site of emergency repairs for HMS Endeavour after

it ran into the Great Barrier Reef, Cooktown has a long history as a gateway to Cape York and some of the largest alluvial gold fields in Australia.

Grassy Hill played a major part in the then Lieutenant James Cook who climbed it to identify a path through the reef as well as a significant part in indigenous relations with; regular gatherings between the crew of the Endeavour and local Aboriginals, the first naming of 'Kangaroo' and botanist Sir Joseph Banks naming many plants in the area including the Cooktown Orchid which is the floral emblem of Qld.

Where better for SES Cooktown to take our 50-year flag to snap a photo.

SES Cooktown supports the community and neighboring SES Groups travelling long distances to respond to activations and attend training sessions.

The SES Far Northern Region's Vertical Rescue Team incorporated the 50-year Flag into their Exercise Fallen Flag at Mount Yarrabah (630m).

The VR Team used the exercise to put into practice the many skills required to maintain their competences, including planning, logistics and the many high-level activities involved in vertical rescue. It was also a spectacular day for RPAS footage of the team down 70m of rope and at the top with Cairns in the background.

The Torres Strait and its many stunning islands are closer to Papua New Guinea than they are to the Australian mainland.

Here are some amazing shots of the SES 50-year Flags in around our SES Groups in the Torres Strait, with the Horn Island based Rescue Helicopter – Rescue 700, SES Dauan Island Recruit Class – 25 Dauan (at the Biosecurity/Trade treaty sign and at the basketball court with a view), the proud SES ladies on SES Badu Island, Eunice at SES St Pauls (Moa Island) and with the Land & Sea Rangers on Saibai Island awaiting a helicopter pick up.

Thank you to all our SES Volunteers throughout Queensland who 'wear so many hats' when they live and work in remote communities.





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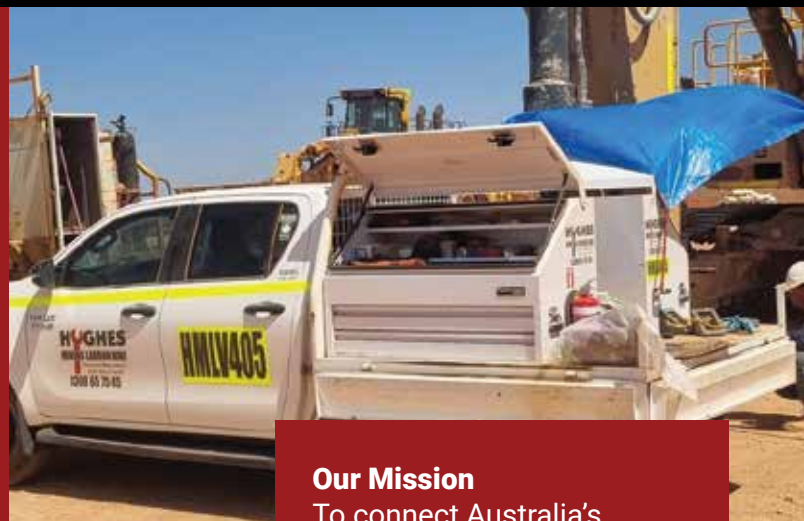
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# SA Wear Orange Wednesday

SA Wear Orange Wednesday and thanks from the Hon Emily Bourke MLC, Minister for Emergency Services to our Volunteers

## AS A PART OF NATIONAL

Volunteers Week (19 May – 23 May 2025) the SASES in South Australia celebrates the week on the Wednesday by encouraging people to wear orange to work on the day, 'Wear Orange Wednesday'. Additionally, many key buildings around the city were swathed in orange lighting, including Parliament House.

This year when discussions were held on encouraging volunteers to ask friends to wear orange and themselves participate in activities, our Chair and National SESVA Director, Warren Hicks, suggested focus should actually be on our volunteers and their families and mooted the idea of holding barbecues at units during the week on the unit's normal training night, as a thank you to both our volunteers and their families for all their support.

This idea expanded and as a consequence, barbecues were held in both the Northern and Southern Districts, (Enfield SES and Western Adelaide Units) with the barbecues



provided by SASESVA partner, Police Credit Union and they also had staff on hand to assist with the cooking. Other attendees included John Fulbrook MP, Catherine Hutchesson MP, Olivia Savvas MP, and representatives from local councils. And the Police Credit Union also provided each attendee with fruchocs. And prizes for a free raffle including Nespresso Machines.

Whilst in North Region the Deputy Chief Officer Kristy Phelps embarked on a week-long road-trip which encompassed 24 units across the north of the state.

The Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Emily Bourke MLC, attended both events in the metropolitan area, firstly addressing and then mixing with volunteers and guests. The Minister is very supportive of volunteers and has enabled them to attend events such as the Chihuly Nights and the Riverbend Drags in April and May 2025.

The following week in Parliament the Minister again recognised our volunteers and their commitment of 24/7 support 365 days of the year and detailing the responses. She also said:

“This year has been an especially busy one for the SES. Not only have they managed extreme weather events here in South Australia but they have also supported our interstate counterparts in times of great need. Their recent efforts include:

- responding to the Wilmington fires with both incident management and ground support, with 42 SES members deployed;
- supporting operations at the Grampian fire, including staging and base camp co-ordination;
- multiple deployments to Queensland, to assist with the flood and storm damage following ex Tropical Cyclone Alfred;
- sending teams to WA for cyclone response and incident management; and
- establishing base camps to support the South-East fires also here in South Australia.

Closer to home, the SES continues to support Innamincka and surrounding communities during ongoing inland flooding in the state’s far northeast. I had the privilege of travelling to Innamincka where I got to see firsthand the record-breaking floodwaters impacting the local community.

A massive shoutout to the SES who supported, I believe, what has been a 50-day activation. A DefenCell flood barrier was constructed to help support this community. More than 10 additional volunteers were embedded in the incident management team at Emergency Services at Keswick with, I believe, over 30 SES volunteers rotating through the deployments in Innamincka.

To every SES volunteer who has contributed to this response, we recognise the sacrifice, the long hours, the travel, and time away from loved ones. Your efforts in Innamincka, across our state and interstate, have not gone unnoticed.”



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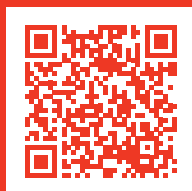
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# SASES Campbelltown 60 Year Anniversary Celebration

❖ By Darren Clark ❖ Photos by Charlie Haynes



The last five years have been particularly busy for the South Australian State Emergency Service (SASES), responding to COVID-19, supporting the Black Summer Fires 2019/2020 and the River Murray floods, all while still servicing our local communities.

## THE CAMPBELLTOWN SES UNIT

assisted with these events, and additional local significant events such as the storms of November 2022. This storm is memorable to our unit as it brought down numerous power lines causing most of Campbelltown to lose power, all while our unit operated for 40 hours on a backup generator.

A number of our members have been deployed to the majority of states in Australia for significant events such as Cyclone Debbie (NSW 2017); Cyclone Yasi and floods (QLD 2011) and recent floods in QLD, along with providing logistical support for fires such as the Kangaroo Island fires in 2007 and 2019/2020, and the recent fires in Victoria.

The unit has a very active community engagement team that assist the local



community building resilience through community event and presentations.

In 2024, the SASES proudly celebrated 50 years, however the Campbelltown unit marked a milestone 60 years' of service to the local community and state. The first 10 of those years were spent as part of the Civil Defence, before becoming an integral part of the SASES family in 1974.

A chance to reflect on these events occurred on the 13 November 2024, when approximately 50 people gathered at our unit to celebrate the unit's 60 years of service.

In attendance were SASES Chief Officer Chris Beattie and Deputy Chief Officer Kristy Phelps, The Honorary Vincent Tarzia MP, Member for



Hartley and Leader of the Opposition, Campbelltown City Council’s Mayor Jill Whittaker OAM, Deputy Mayor and Councillor John Flynn and Councillor Jagdish Lakhani along with past Unit Managers.

Most importantly, 40 current members of the unit ranging from one month to 37 years of service were in attendance, making that close to 350 years of operational service.

The event started with a BBQ dinner in the vehicle shed before moving into the main building for speeches from the dignitaries, who all touched on the appreciation of the service, our current and past volunteers, and what the SASES means to the community.

A small PowerPoint presentation highlighting the unit’s 60 years was shown, proudly displaying images of the past.

To commemorate the 60 years of service, Mayor Whittaker unveiled a plaque that was funded by the Campbelltown City Council and a cake was cut by the two longest serving members, one starting in 1987 and the other in 1990.

A group photo was taken of all who attended the celebration as well as one of volunteers that have served 10 years or more, representing over 310 years of service.

After the formalities, members and guests were able to mingle and reminisce about the last 60 years, discuss the future of the unit and celebrate the entire SASES. With lots of stories starting with “it was a cold and windy night”, they were able to look at memorabilia showcasing of the unit’s rich history.

It was a great evening, honouring the past and current members dedication and service.





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**O**n 17 October 2024, the remote outback region of Broken Hill, NSW, was struck by a destructive storm that toppled transmission towers, leaving thousands without power or communications.

With critical infrastructure down and the failure of backup systems, the SES stepped in to support the community and assist in a time of uncertainty.

The Red Hill Minerals exploration team operating in the area at the time, saw firsthand the dedication of SES Volunteers, and the strength of community spirit in action.

We sincerely thank the SES and all Volunteers who put their community first during these events.

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Image source: ABC Broken Hill (Bill Ormonde)

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## SASES Monarto Emergency Services Shoot (MESS)

By Sue Gage

Laura SES



The former South Australian Police and Emergency Services (SAPES) Games were extremely popular many years ago and SES volunteers participated in many events from Shooting, Bowls, Athletics and Equestrian and were most successful. Regrettably the games ceased in 2015.

### AND THE FIRST RIFLE METALLIC

Silhouette match was introduced to the SAPES Games in 2010 and with the cessation of the SAPES Games was renamed the Monarto Emergency Services Shoot (MESS) and has continued since then. This year marked 15 years of the event being held.

Practice was on Saturday 3 May and was well attended and several shooters were looking like they were going to knock a few targets over. But Monarto had other ideas.

Sunday, match day, saw some very challenging conditions with a strong gusty wind and a lot of raised dust.



Yet all things considered some good scores were recorded.

High score in Centrefire went to Martin representing Australian Customs Service with Chas from SAPOL a very close second.

The Rimfire event was won by Ian representing Defence with Martin second place and myself in third place, representing SASES.

The overall aggregate and bragging rights for the Top Gun award went to Martin.



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# George Town SES Unit

 By Gabbie Barnard

Imagine its 2am on a Thursday morning, you've already worked your normal 8-hour work day, organised extracurricular activities that afternoon and cooked dinner for the family.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO A FULL 8

hours of sleep that night, in preparation to do it all again the next day. The slow beeps of the pager rattling on the bedside table at 2am abruptly throws that full night's sleep out the window, but there is no hesitation to respond. That is the reality for George Town SES unit volunteers. Our unit consists of 13 active members, 11 of those also actively volunteering with the TFS due to being a dual station under leadership of Andrew Taylor AFSM ESM, Unit Manager, and Matthew Potito, Deputy Unit Manager.

George Town SES unit has a broad response area to cover, with calls including road crash rescue (RCR), motor vehicle accidents (MVA), storm and flooding incidents and land search and rescue (SAR). RCR and MVA call outs see a multi-agency response enabling us to work alongside and closely with Police, Ambulance TAS and TFS to ensure scene safety, patient extrication, first aid and traffic control. As a unit we train twice a month, mostly at the Bell Bay Training Complex



which resides in industry allowing us to train in RCR regularly creating scenarios with cars donated by our community to practice our extrication techniques. Most recently we had a training day at Bellingham Beach utilising our ATVs which are vital in Land SAR and unit's favourite training was our Multi-Agency SAR training exercise with TasPol, St John Ambulance, SES and Tamar Sea Rescue.

New and improved systems for external training led by Northern Region

Training Officer Rosie Emmerton has been popular amongst members of our unit in the last 12 months. Four members obtained SES qualifications in RCR and Crew Leader, five members completing the Storm and Flood Damage Course with a Working at Heights Component and chainsaw qualification and Land SAR qualifications were also obtained by unit members. The additional training completed by unit members is a testament to commitment and dedication to upskill as a volunteer and in turn provides our



local community with a higher level of knowledge and experience.

Volunteering with the SES is like having a second family, the bonds and friendships created in our George Town Unit are second to none. This is through our extensive training focusing on teamwork and building on skills. Which allows attending those harder jobs, that can be confronting somewhat easier knowing the support that exists within the unit and the potential to escalate to external support systems in place such as CISM and My Pulse Wellbeing support. As a unit, after any tough job we make it a priority to conduct hot and cold debriefs, as well as checking in on one another and the mandatory check-in system with CISM post notification of a critical event. Tasmanian SES volunteers are extremely lucky to have access to these wellbeing support measures, which are very much warranted for the work that we do. As volunteers we are ordinary people doing extraordinary work, it is important to look after yourself and your fellow members.





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# Strength, Service, Sorell SES

The Sorell SES unit is the newest unit to be formed apart of the Tasmanian State Emergency Service and has been serving the wider Sorell Community since March of 2023, The Sorell Unit is responsible for responding and undertaking Road Crash Rescue, Storm and Flood Operations, Land Searches and assisting the needs of other emergency services such as Police, Fire and Ambulance.

## BEING THE NEWEST UNIT IN THE

state means the introduction of a new group of like-minded individuals coming together to assist our community in their time of need. The Sorell Unit is made up currently of 20 members who all started with very little experience being involved with an Emergency Service Organization. These members have put an incredible amount of time into regular weekly skills maintenance training and operational call outs, where members choose to respond, often sacrificing time with their families, work commitments, and personal activities to assist members of the community. Many of the Sorell members have had the opportunity to attend regional and state events to build and maintain skills, meet new people and build camaraderie with members from other units.





Since the opening of the unit in March of 2023 the Sorell unit has achieved many firsts, First Unit within the TAS SES to obtain the new standard of Heavy Rescue Vehicle that the TAS SES operate, First SES unit within Tasmania to go to fully electric Road Crash Rescue tools and equipment, First TAS SES unit to have had a full female management team, first callout and many more firsts! Since the opening of Sorell we have attended many different Motor Vehicle Accidents, Land Searches, Storm Events and Community Events.

Members from Sorell wanted to mention some of the reasons why they enjoy being a member of the Sorell SES. Some of those reasons include; Helping and giving back to the local community, getting to meet new people and make new friends, engaging in community events and learning and building new skills from being a member of the SES. Members from Sorell also wanted to say thank you for the support from the greater Tasmanian SES Staff, Tasmanian SES Volunteer Association,



Sorell Council and the Sorell Community for their continuing support and trust within the membership.

Looking ahead, the Sorell SES plans to continue to expand its membership, improve and grow our members' skill sets and continue to build camaraderie

as a team. If you're passionate about helping your community and looking to be part of something truly meaningful, the Sorell SES welcomes new members. Come and see what being part of our community looks like for yourself, what we do and what it is all about.



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# Chelsea Wedding Ring Emergency

Chelsea SES were called to remove the wedding ring from a lady's finger, but this job had a pretty big twist in the tale.

**PERHAPS DUE TO THE RECENT HOT** weather, and swollen fingers, the lady's wedding ring had become tighter and tighter, and was now cutting into her finger, to the extent that it was deemed medically important enough to have the ring removed as quickly as possible.

Members Ria, Mick and Cam, arrived at the address in Carrum, and found a wonderful couple, and met Mary, a gorgeous lady, who was more concerned about all of the fuss, rather than her very sore finger.

After the team checked Mary's finger, and made sure that she was comfortable, they explained what they were going to do, and then they set to work to remove the ring and relieve the pressure on her hand.

They quickly had the ring cut through and removed, and Mary was just so grateful, but then came the twist that had everyone a little stunned.

The ring they had just removed, had first been placed on Mary's finger, 61 years ago to the day, yes, it was their 61st wedding anniversary, and one they are sure to remember for a really different reason.



A number of news outlets saw the story on the Chelsea SES Facebook page, and soon the Herald Sun, ABC Radio, 3AW, and Channel 9 News were in touch, and the story

went crazy. Mary loved the fact that her grandkids would say that their Nan had gone viral.

Yet another brilliant reason why we do what we do!

# From Strength to Strength: Cobram SES Community Engagement Team on the Rise

By Kate Goldsmith

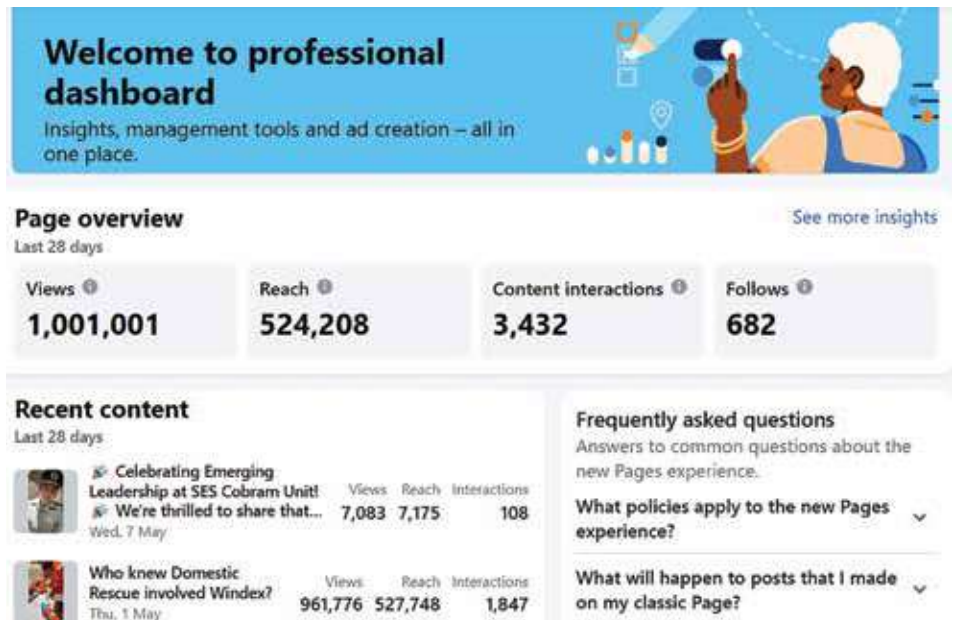
Deputy Controller – Community Engagement and Resilience, Cobram SES Unit

Since officially establishing the Community Engagement Team at the Cobram SES Unit in July 2024, our journey has been nothing short of extraordinary.

**IN LESS THAN 12 MONTHS,** the team has gone from a standing start to a thriving, data-driven success story, grounded in meaningful connection, strong partnerships, and powerful storytelling.

Located in northern Victoria on the banks of the Murray River, Cobram is a close-knit rural community, often facing a range of natural hazards from flooding and storms to bushfires and even tornadoes. Recognising the importance of community education and preparedness, we set out to build our Community Engagement Team from the ground up. After completing VICSES Community Engagement Facilitator training in mid-2024, our small but passionate group hit the ground running with a clear focus: reach our community, connect with them, and inspire action.

A key component of this effort has been revitalising our unit’s social media presence. In July 2024, data from our Facebook page painted a sobering picture. Over the



previous 90 days (13 April – 11 July 2024), we recorded a reach of just 2,681 people, engagement of 1,624, and experienced a net loss of one follower. Similar downward trends were reflected in the 28-day and

14-day metrics. But those early numbers didn’t discourage us, in fact, they motivated us. We knew that with the right content and consistent effort; we could turn things around.



And we did. By mid-October 2024, the shift was remarkable. In just 90 days, our reach had exploded to over 12,000, with content engagement climbing to 7,835 and a net follower increase of 23. Our audience was growing both in number and in depth of interaction, with followers from Cobram, Barooga, Tocumwal, Yarrowonga, and beyond. Importantly, we were beginning to reach people across a wide range of ages, with strong engagement from women aged 35–54, a key demographic for community preparedness.

Fast forward to May 2025, and the results speak for themselves. Our total follower count reached 2,632, up from 1,816 just a few months prior. In the most recent 90-day period, we recorded a reach of over 73,000 and an incredible 74,505 video views. The last 28 days, alone saw over 1,001,001 views, 524,208 reach, and 3,432 content interactions. Our top towns now include Cobram, Melbourne, Barooga, Tocumwal, and even viewers from across the Solomon Islands, New Zealand, and the United States. What started as a modest local presence has truly grown into a platform of global connection.

Our first Facebook Live videos played a pivotal role in this growth. One livestream during our most recent Open Day event, which showcased the variety of activities on offer for the community, has now been viewed more than 5,900 times. Another video, featuring our incredible ‘4am friends’ from Ambulance Victoria walking us through “what’s inside an ambulance,” reached over 2,000 viewers. Cobram CFA also featured in a follow-up video that was watched more than 1,900 times. And the most recent video of a Domestic Rescue training session, featuring the use of Windex has been viewed 961,803 times. These live moments brought authenticity and warmth to our messaging and resonated deeply with the public.

One particularly successful post was the introduction of our newest volunteers, three proud new Cobram SES members from the Solomon Islands. The overwhelmingly positive community response led to a follow-up article by the local newspaper, celebrating diversity and the strength of volunteerism.

Behind these numbers is a passionate team committed to making a difference.

We continue to engage the community through interactive displays like the Rescue Truck, the dolls’ house flood simulation, emergency awareness games for children, and our much-loved mascot, Paddy the Platypus. From storm safety messaging, to “What’s in your emergency kit” demos, each engagement is an opportunity to build trust, increase preparedness, and bring resilience to life.

We’ve also taken a deliberate approach to mapping out how we communicate with the community, focusing on gaining attention and trust through four core communication principles: What We Know, What We Don’t Know, What We Are Doing, and What We Need You to Do. While our social media posts may not always spell out each of these points explicitly, they form the foundation of our engagement strategy. Our weekly training snapshots show the community what we know and what we’re doing. As our connection with the public continues to grow, we plan to ask more of them: what do they know, and what do they need help understanding? This approach enables us to guide



them toward taking meaningful action, empowering them, step by step.

This strategy aligns perfectly with our broader resilience messaging, particularly through the lens of the *First 72 Hours* initiative. The whole approach of *The First 72 Hours*, What are you going to do? reinforces the idea that you can handle any emergency better if you are prepared. These figures represent far more than just social media metrics, they reflect trust, connection, and relevance in our community. And at the heart of it all is our community resilience initiative: the *First 72 Hours* program.

This version was initially developed for local governments by myself and fellow emergency management professional Karen van Huizen (and now embraced by many agencies including SES and CFA), the *First 72 Hours* program has become the foundation of our outreach. It's an all-hazards, any-emergency initiative designed to empower individuals, families, and communities to be better prepared during the crucial period immediately following an emergency or disaster.

The program is based on four core steps:

**Step 1: Make a Plan** – Helping people understand how to prepare for different emergency scenarios by identifying who, what, where, how, and why they need a plan. We provide the tools and templates to guide individuals, households or businesses in creating a clear, simple plan tailored to their needs.

**Step 2: Back Up Information** – Encouraging individuals and families to safely store copies of critical documents such as emergency plans, identification, insurance policies, property documents, medical information and prescriptions, and financial records. We also highlight the importance of creating a home inventory with photos of possessions, receipts, warranties, and contact lists for family members, utility providers, and other key services.

**Step 3: Prepare a Kit** – We demonstrate what to include in a practical, ready-to-grab emergency kit, covering essential supplies

such as water, food, first aid items, torches, spare batteries, clothing, pet needs, and comfort items for children.

**Step 4: Stay Informed** – We help community members understand how to receive accurate, real-time information using trusted sources like the Vic Emergency app and other official alerts. Emphasis is placed on early decision-making and avoiding misinformation.

These four steps underpin everything we do, from school visits to public events, and especially during our major community activations. It's a simple, adaptable message, but a powerful one: resilience starts with readiness, and readiness starts now.

In just under a year, the Cobram SES Community Engagement Team has evolved from a concept into a thriving example of what's possible when passion meets purpose. We're proud of the progress made, and even more excited about what's still to come.

For more updates from the Cobram SES Unit, follow us on Facebook and stay tuned for future events.

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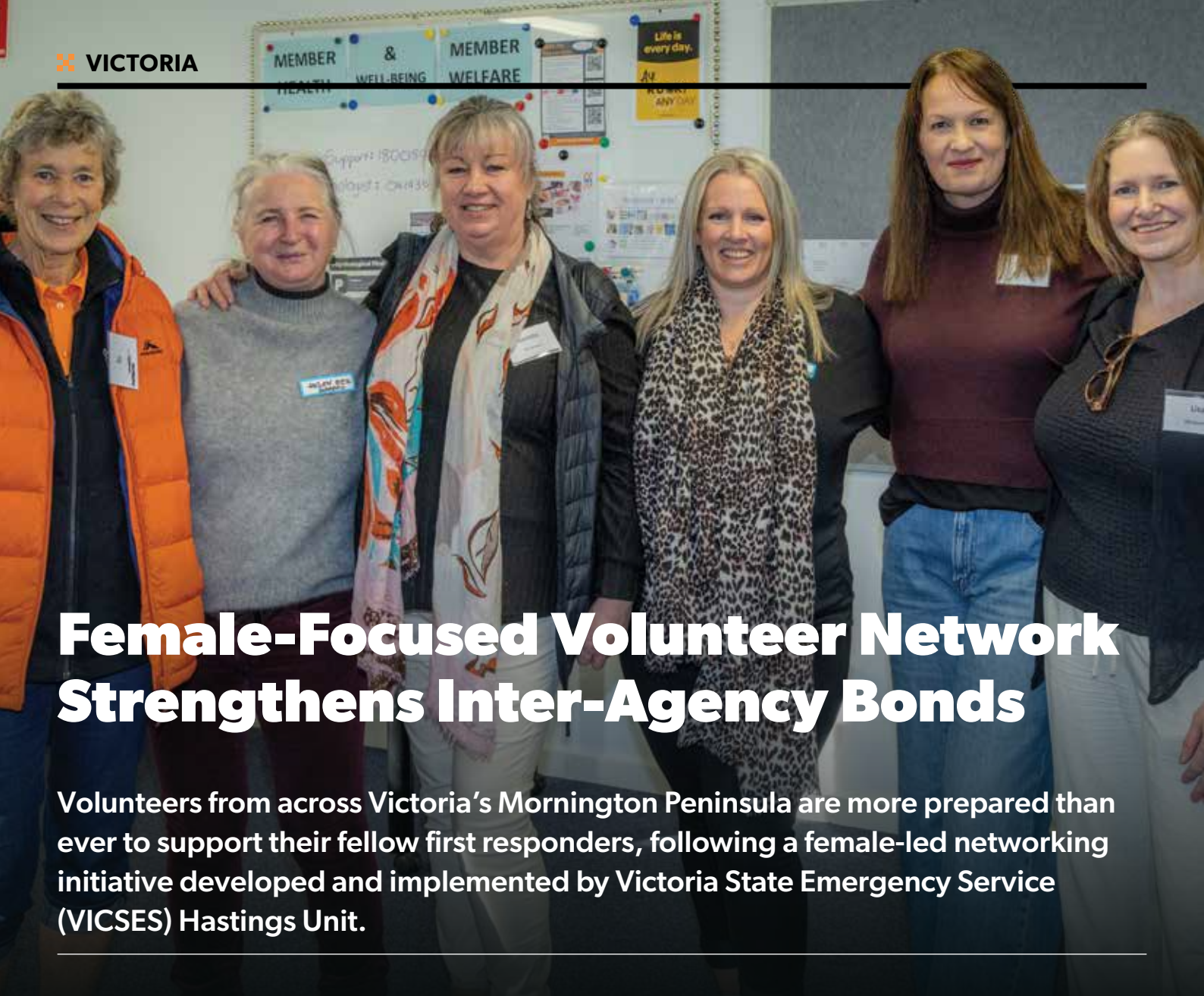
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# Female-Focused Volunteer Network Strengthens Inter-Agency Bonds

Volunteers from across Victoria’s Mornington Peninsula are more prepared than ever to support their fellow first responders, following a female-led networking initiative developed and implemented by Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) Hastings Unit.

**“It was so fantastic to see so many female volunteers connecting and discussing their shared passion for serving their communities in a relaxed and welcoming environment.”**

**“I feel exceptionally proud to belong to a community of volunteers which is so willing to share knowledge, break down barriers and give back to their community.”**

Silvana Hobley, VICSES Hastings Unit

## HELD IN LATE JULY, THE AFTERNOON TEA BUILT ON THE

success of last year’s inaugural event, which saw female volunteers representing VICSES Hastings, Sorrento and Frankston units, Country Fire Authority, Volunteer Marine Rescue and Search and Rescue Dogs Australia (SARDA) join forces to strengthen inter-agency relationships.

An estimated 50 women from emergency management, state and local government and local media united at the most recent event to learn more about the capabilities and operational approach of local first responders, while celebrating and championing the role of female volunteers.

With a host of inaugural attendees returning, the event was bolstered by the addition of representatives from Australian Volunteer Coast Guard flotillas at Western Port and Safety Beach, as well as Mornington Surf Life Saving Club volunteers, who each shared their own unique insights into the region’s volunteering landscape.

For the first time, a keynote presentation by VICSES Swan Hill Unit volunteer and Peer Support Officer Wendy Hayes



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prompted positive discussions around the wealth of wellbeing supports available in the emergency services sector and initiated important knowledge sharing among attendees.

The event also served as an opportunity for VICSES volunteers to explore the potential for further collaborations, with a series of multi-agency training events with local SARDA volunteers already in the planning stages, in addition to the ongoing annual networking opportunities already established.

With VICSES Frankston, Sorrento and Hastings units each among the state's busiest in the last 12 months, the inter-agency relationships first forged at last year's event have proved valuable, with local volunteers having been called to provide emergency support to other agencies more than 150 times during this period.

This support has been reciprocated by local first responders at many of the more than 2,600 requests for assistance (RFAs) attended by Mornington Peninsula VICSES volunteers in that same period, highlighting the 'We Work as One' approach adopted by Victoria's emergency service providers.



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# Crime Scenes, Collaboration and the FOV: A Cold Night of Hot Learning

By Vincent Ciardulli

Controller VICSES Manningham

On Monday 2 June, members of a local Unit braved the winter chill for an evening of hands-on training and collaboration with Victoria Police and the Eastern Metro Response Unit.

## THE SESSION FOCUSED ON VICSES'

role in supporting crime scenes and gave members a firsthand look at the capabilities of the Field Operations Vehicle (FOV).

Leading the evening were Acting Senior Sergeant Steve and Sergeant Josh from VicPol, who took members through two practical crime scene scenarios designed to build awareness, capability and confidence when assisting police at scenes where evidence preservation is critical.

The first exercise involved a **line search**—a familiar task, but one with added complexity in a forensic context. Conducted in the unit car park, members were briefed to stop and alert if they identified a potential item of interest, being careful not to touch anything. Once an item was “found”, Steve explained the importance of preserving the integrity of the evidence and demonstrated how police would secure and manage the area to prevent contamination.



The second scenario focused on **protecting a vehicle crime scene**. The task: illuminate and shelter the car to preserve any potential evidence and provide privacy for a possible occupant. Members deployed scene lighting, then set up and carefully walked the large SES marquee over the vehicle, under Josh’s guidance.

The scenario highlighted the importance of controlling not just the immediate scene, but the surrounding area where evidence may also exist.

A strong message from both officers was the importance of **honesty and transparency** when working in these environments. Accidental contact with a scene or item should always be



reported—better to own up early than to become unknowingly implicated in the chain of evidence.

Following the crime scene exercises, Geoff Deacon, John Murphy and members of the **Eastern Metro Response Unit** introduced members to the FOV. Designed for larger or more complex events, the FOV can assume Incident Control Point (ICP) functions and free up local Unit members to focus on field tasks. Geoff and John spoke about the importance of calling in the resource early to maximise its value during high-demand situations.

Despite the icy evening, the training was well received, giving members valuable insight into the intersection of SES support and police operations.

A big thank you to Steve, Josh, Geoff, John and their teams for generously sharing their time, expertise and professionalism with our members. Nights like these strengthen not just our skills, but the partnerships that help us serve the community effectively.





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# VICSES Chelsea: We Work as One

By Phil Wall

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working side by side from 8 Emergency Services, and Emergency Service Support Agencies, including Victoria State Emergency Service, with 9 units from across Melbourne involved, Victoria Police, Edithvale CFA, Life Saving Victoria from Carrum and Bonbeach, as well as the Westpac Rescue Helicopter, Ambulance Victoria, Coast Guard Carrum, Search & Rescue Dogs Australia (SARDA), and Parks Victoria, joined together for a massive multi agency training event at Carrum, on the Patterson River.

The scenario was of a large -scale rescue event occurring over the length of Patterson River, and stretching into Port Phillip Bay, with some 13 casualties having to be rescued. It involved retrieving casualties from the water,



transporting patients to the triage area in boats, and over land, search and rescue, and casualty handling.

This event is the culmination of months of planning, led by Chelsea

Deputy Controller, Cam Milner, to create an environment, and landscape, that is as close to reality as possible, to prepare all of the participants for the time when the call for help comes,



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and reality takes over from training. The event was a spectacular view of our Emergency Service men and women, doing what they do best.

A number of local Councillors from the City of Kingston including Deputy Mayor, Chris Howe, Cr Tess Law, and Cr Hadi Saab were there to show their support, as well as Federal Member for Dunkley, Jodie Belyea, our new VICSES CEO, Rob Purcell, as well as Regional Manager Ray Jasper, and Assistant Chief Officer Learning & Development, Natalie Kenely.

It was a brilliant day, that taught so much to so many in such a short time, and as we all know, practise makes perfect. It was a true reflection of just how well 'We Work As One'.





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# Feeling Orange: Team Echo's Spirit Shines in Queensland Cyclone Recovery

By Greg Cook

Local Manager SES Communications Support Unit

**In March 2025, Cyclone Alfred tore through Brisbane and regions across Queensland, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. As the winds died down and floodwaters receded, calls for assistance echoed across the country.**

## THE QUEENSLAND STATE

Emergency Service (SES) swiftly mobilised reinforcements from interstate to support the massive recovery effort. Among those answering the call was Western Australian SES Team Echo - a dedicated crew of volunteers from rural Western Australia, driven by a deep commitment to helping communities in crisis.

Team Echo was no stranger to adversity. Comprised of seasoned SES members, many with years of experience responding to bushfires, flood rescues, and natural disasters, they brought not only skill but heart to every mission. When the deployment order to Brisbane arrived, it sparked a wave of anticipation,

duty, and quiet resolve. They knew the scale of the cyclone's destruction would be immense—but so was their readiness to help.

As the team arrived on the storm-battered Moreton Bay Islands, just off the Brisbane coast, they were met by a haunting calm. Once-vibrant communities had become unrecognisable: streets blanketed in fallen trees, rooftops torn away, power lines down, and debris strewn across every corner. The scent of soaked earth lingered in the air, mingling with the buzz of chainsaws and the mechanical grind of cleanup crews. Stepping off the barge, the volunteers felt a surge of purpose. This was why they wore the orange.

The mission was clear: assist with debris and tree removal, support displaced families, and help restore the battered heart of the community.

Team Echo quickly sprang into action, forming smaller task groups to focus on clearing roads, accessing homes, and offering much-needed relief. Armed with chainsaws, shovels, and a steadfast sense of camaraderie, they got to work.

As they moved through storm-ravaged neighbourhoods, the true scale of devastation came into focus. Some homes were reduced to skeletons of their former selves; families huddled in evacuation centres, unsure of their next steps. But amid the destruction,

hope flickered. Locals and volunteers worked side by side, clearing driveways and roads, reopening lifelines for emergency responders.

One poignant encounter stood out. While clearing debris from a severely impacted street, the team met a woman who had lost nearly everything. She stood silently outside her damaged home, watching crews work nearby. Visibly shaken, she was hesitant to engage; fear and mistrust etched into her expression. For her, the uniforms and equipment symbolised authority, and years of cultural tension and government mistrust built invisible walls.

It took time, empathy, and professionalism to bridge that divide. But Team Echo's calm and compassionate approach slowly broke down the barriers. In time, trust blossomed. The team helped organise temporary repairs for her home and connected her with essential local services. More importantly, they helped her feel seen, heard, and safe. With food, clothing, and emotional support, she took her first steps toward recovery.

Moments like these defined the deployment; not just the physical labour, but the emotional connection. Every handshake, every nod of thanks, every shared tear underscored the resilience of a community pulling itself back together.

As the deployment neared its end, Team Echo remained relentless in its mission: clearing debris, helping to rebuild, and offering encouragement to those still processing loss. For the volunteers, the experience was humbling and deeply meaningful.

Listening and learning from these communities gives our team more than just experience; it gives us perspective and purpose," a team member reflected. "There's a reason we do what we do. It's about more than chainsaws and high-vis gear. It's about helping others when they need it most. That's what feeling Orange is."





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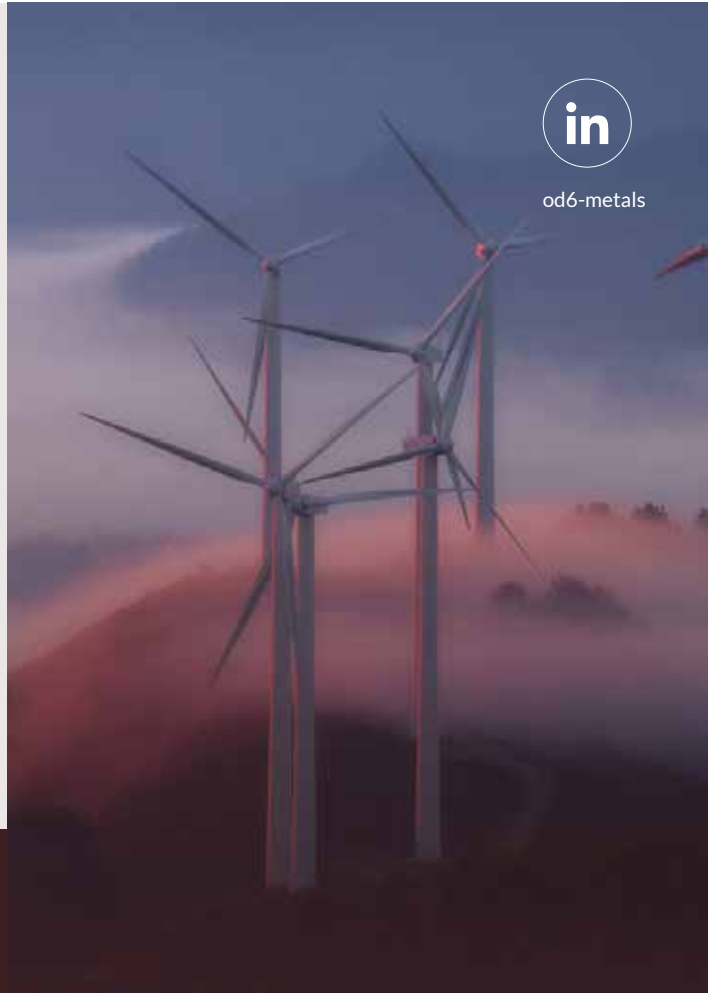
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# National Missing Persons Week 2025

By Gordon Hall ESM  
Chair NSESVA

The National Missing Persons Week is an annual week of action that takes place in Australia during the first week of August to raise awareness of the significant issues surrounding missing persons.

**THE WEEK IS ALSO USED TO PROFILE** long-term missing persons, and to educate the Australian community.

For the past 20 years, in the Peel region of Western Australia, the Zonta Club of Peel Inc. has organised and conducted a memorial service during the National Missing Persons Week.

Zonta is an international humanitarian organisation committed to building a better world for women and girls.

The name Zonta is drawn from a Sioux Indian word meaning honest and trustworthy. At the international level Zonta has a voice at the United Nations and here in Australia they advocate to government on matters of interest.

In the city of Mandurah, which is in the Peel region of Western Australia, the Zonta Club has built a memorial to missing persons. It was Joyce O'Loughlin



who, after attending a Zonta conference in Hobart 20 years ago, came back to the Zonta Club in Mandurah and discussed having a Memorial and an annual remembrance service to remember those missing persons who were never found. What started off small has now increased in numbers and at the 2025 memorial service there was in excess of 150 people.

Special persons attending included local members of parliament Rhys Williams MLA, Lisa Munday MLA and David Bolt MLA as well as local government councillors, with Jess Smith representing the Mayor of the City of Mandurah and George Walley a Bindjareb Elder.

Other guests included a number of police officers, including the homicide squad and missing persons team, volunteers from the Mandurah State Emergency Service, other emergency services personnel and representatives of the Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime.

After George Walley did his welcome, the Zonta Club President Marie Scott delivered a speech for the memorial service. Marie spoke about the remembrance garden and how it gives people an opportunity to come



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any time and reflect on missing persons. Marie also took the opportunity to thank and honour the contribution by the City of Mandurah, the Western Australian Police and the State Emergency Service volunteers, who offered their time and hard work, not only looking for these missing persons, but to also provide some care and input to the families during these hard times.

There was also a number of other speakers including Rhys Williams MLA representing the WA Premier Roger Cook, Cr Jess Smith representing the City of Mandurah Mayor, and a representative from the WA Police. After a prayer led by Pastor Jon Perry there was a minute's silence followed by piper Viv Riley playing the Lament. The agencies and groups then placed their wreaths at the memorial garden (see photos).





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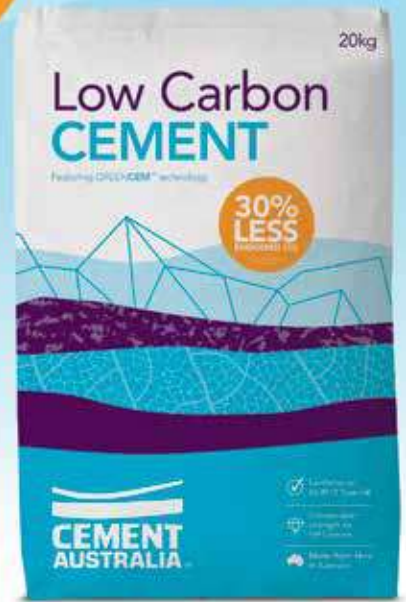
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# Orange Angels of the Gorges

By Kylie Kite

Local Manager, Tom Price SES Unit

Allen Gale

Secretary WA SESVA

## Tom Price Volunteers in Action at Karijini National Park

### Introduction

In the remote Pilbara town of Tom Price, located 1,452 kilometres north of Perth, a dedicated team of State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers stands ready to respond to emergencies in one of Australia's most challenging natural environments; Karijini National Park. Known for its dramatic gorges, waterfalls, and rugged terrain, Karijini attracts up to 800,000 visitors annually. But with beauty comes risk, and the Tom Price SES Unit plays a vital role in ensuring public safety.

### Unit Profile and Capabilities

The Tom Price SES Unit is comprised of members aged between 15 and 70, 18 active members, 2 support personnel, and 2 cadets. Despite the challenges posed by the town's transient mining population, the unit maintains a high level of operational readiness through continuous recruitment and training.

The unit's core capability lies in **vertical rescue (VR)**; a specialised discipline involving rope access and



abseiling into deep gorges. With nine VR-qualified members, the team is equipped to respond to incidents in some of the most inaccessible parts of Karijini. Their closest support unit, Newman SES, is located over three hours away, underscoring the importance of local expertise and preparedness.

Tom Price SES VR Team Leader Simon Davidson knows full well how stunning

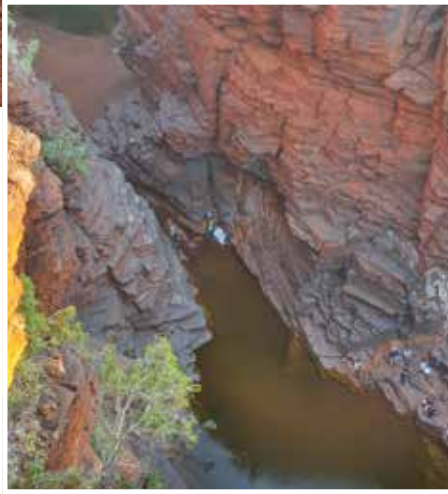
Karijini is, but it's unforgiving: "People often underestimate the risks. The slippery rocks, flash floods, and steep climbs can quickly turn a hike into a life-threatening situation".

### 2025 Rescue Season Highlights

During the peak visitor season from April to October, the Tom Price SES is typically activated 10–15 times. In the



SES Team members following a successful land search April 2024 (L-R) Cameron Hunt, Mark (Ollie) Olsen, Nicole Kelly, Annette Wilson with National Park Rangers (kneeling), off-duty Community Paramedic (2nd from the right) and the found man (2nd from the left).



first half of 2025, the unit responded to several significant incidents:

- **April:** Fractured ankle at Fortescue Falls – patient carried out.
- **June:** Dislocated shoulder at Hamersley Gorge – self-evacuation.
- **July:** Broken leg at Kalamina Gorge – carried out to Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS).
- **July:** Suspected spinal injuries at Fortescue Falls – carry-out to ambulance.
- **July:** 8m fall at Joffre Gorge – first vertical rescue of the season; patient sustained spinal trauma, compound fractures, and head injury.
- **July:** Suspected broken ankle at Joffre Gorge – team stood down, assisted by National Park Rangers (DCBA).

These incidents highlight the unit’s technical proficiency and coordination with partner agencies including WA Police, St John Ambulance, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DCBA), and the Tom Price Bushfire Brigade.

### Beyond Karijini: Community Resilience

The Tom Price SES is not limited to gorge rescues. In November 2024, the town experienced a rare microburst weather event, with unofficial wind gusts reaching 146 km/h. The SES team responded immediately, working for seven consecutive days to clear debris, restore access, and support affected residents. Their efforts were later bolstered by additional Pilbara and metropolitan SES units.

The unit also provides support for medical emergencies, land searches, fire response, and community events—demonstrating their versatility and commitment to public service.

### Volunteerism and Recruitment

Recruitment remains a strategic priority for the Tom Price SES. The unit welcomes individuals from all backgrounds, with no prior experience required; only a willingness to learn and serve. Training is ongoing, ensuring that new members are equipped with the skills necessary to contribute effectively.

Nicole Kelly, SES Team Leader and St John Ambulance volunteer, reflects on the personal impact of volunteering: “Helping someone who is having the worst day of their life, and making a difference to them and their families, makes what we do all worthwhile. It is a privilege to have the skills and knowledge to help others”.

### Conclusion

As Karijini National Park continues to draw adventurers from across the globe, the role of the Tom Price SES remains indispensable. Their courage, skill, and compassion exemplify the spirit of volunteerism and community resilience. In every rescue, every storm response, and every moment of need, they are the Orange Angels of the Gorges; guardians of both nature and humanity in the Pilbara.

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# Stretcher Mule Disability Rescue

❖ By Administration Officer

Mt Barker SES, WA

**Mount Barker SES is improving diversity with their new stretcher mule.**

## THE VOLUNTEERS IN THE MOUNT

Barker State Emergency Services Unit (SES) in Western Australia are the proud owners of the Traverse Mule, stretcher with its own built-in wheel.

Our team acquired this piece of equipment over a year ago from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), when all the regional WA BGUs were getting access to these rough terrain rescue devices.

For our first real scenario, the team practiced rescuing me, a volunteer with profound physical disability, using the Traverse Mule.

In the scenario, my power wheelchair had become stuck in loose gravel and the only way to get me out was to carry me safely on the stretcher.

The team had never practiced rescuing someone with physical disability before and having the opportunity to put those skills in action will be invaluable for real world scenarios when someone who is a wheelchair user needs to be helped out of a difficult situation.

The best part of the scenario was that it helped us gain a new, invaluable volunteer who has since become our training manager.

Patrice Madlener visited our Unit for the first time the night I was rescued with the Traverse Mule.

She volunteered to help right away and said she could really “see the benefits” of the Mule when she watched it in action.

“I was amazed there was such a thing and how much easier it made a rescue,” she said.



Patrice has used the Mule in a real rescue since then, and said the difference between having it and a normal stretcher was immediately clear.

“The Mule makes a huge difference; without the Mule it would’ve taken twice the time to do the rescue.”

Mount Barker SES local manager Kirsten Beidatsch said the Traverse Mule is the perfect piece of equipment for rescue scenarios in a variety of terrains, from tall mountains to sandy beaches.

“The Traverse Mule is a way of safely and stably rescuing people of various types and abilities from even the most remotes of locations.

“It’s more stable because it has a wheel... it’s easier for volunteers to use safely if they’re putting themselves at risk in dangerous situations,” she said.

Since acquiring the Traverse Mule, we have deployed it in many rescue scenarios and even showed it off to other volunteer units including the local Ambulance crew.

These versatile stretchers are important for rescuing people in a variety of situations and from having spent half an hour lying on one myself, I’m happy to say they’re actually quite comfortable.



# The Role of Amateur Radio in Australian Disasters

**Tropical Cyclone Tracy was a destructive tropical cyclone that devastated Darwin (NT) in the early hours of Christmas Day 1974. TC Tracy was a category 4 cyclone, causing widespread damage, claiming 71 lives and the evacuation of over 30,000 people, some never returning.**

**THE CYCLONE DESTROYED OR SEVERELY DAMAGED** about 70-80% of Darwin's buildings and infrastructure, leading to a massive evacuation and reconstruction effort.

With most of the city's infrastructure, including communication systems, destroyed, amateur radio operators played a crucial role in the immediate aftermath of TC Tracy, providing the first reliable communication out of Darwin after the cyclone.

Radio amateur Bob Hooper, used his ham radio equipment, hooked up to a car battery, to transmit the first news of the disaster to the world and that Darwin was in desperate need of help. This initial report was vital in alerting authorities and initiating the rescue and relief efforts.

Many radio amateurs involved in disaster relief, including the one who initially contacted the outside world, were members of the Wireless Institute of Australia's Civil Emergency Network (WICEN). With a history dating back to the 1970s, the Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network has responded to many disasters apart from the response to Cyclone Tracy.

In 1974, after the initial NT communication, amateur radio operators, including those in the Civil Emergency Network, continued to play a vital role in coordinating relief, assisting

with the Red Cross and Salvation Army, and providing communication for evacuation efforts.

This experience highlighted the importance of amateur radio in emergency situations and led to a greater recognition of its role in disaster preparedness and response.

Another example in WA was the multiple bushfires in 2020 between the east/west rail link and the Eyre highway where there were multiple control points and an IMT in Kalgoorlie. Communications between the control points was ineffective and the Army offered and provided a solution of HF antennas and radios for communication between the control points.

In the Peel region of Western Australia, the Peel Amateur Radio Group (PARG) have been proactive in setting up their own emergency network of amateur radio stations and mobile repeaters. A number of PARG members have joined the Mandurah SES Unit as volunteers and are involved in the planning and radio communications area.

As the Mandurah SES unit had no effective HF radio for some years, the SES volunteers' amateur radio group (PARG), Maurice VK6HLY, Andrew VK6ABF and Peter VK6PBS erected a temporary HF antenna. This antenna proved to be effective and the HF radio at the Mandurah SES unit was once again effective and in use.



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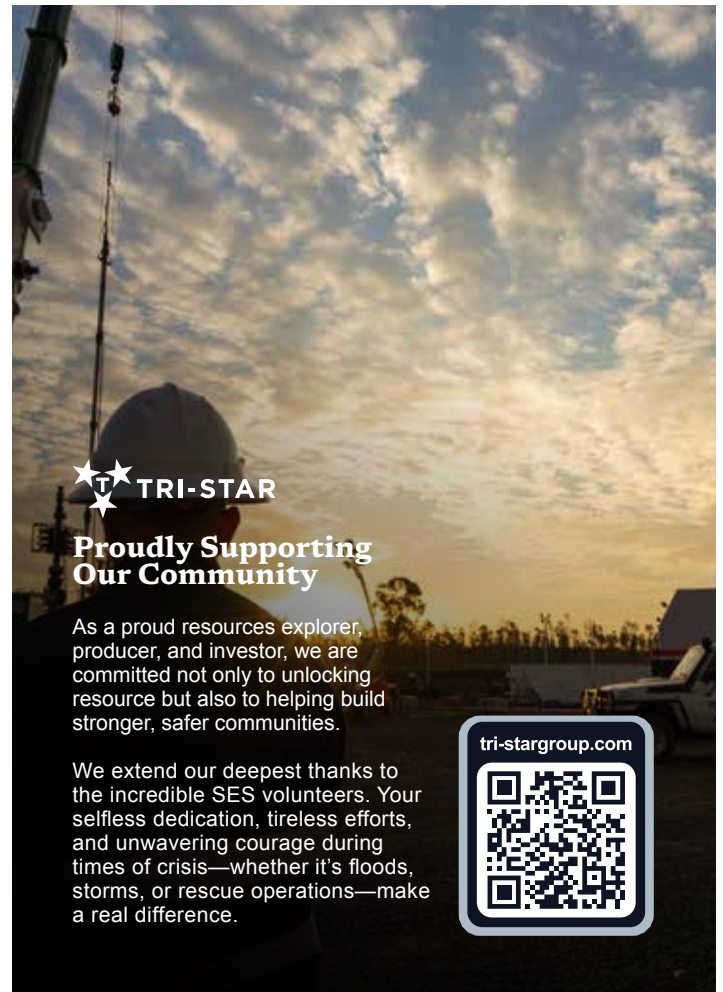
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The objective of the amateur radio group within the Mandurah SES is to set up across the state an informal network of amateur radio operators to assist with effective communications during any disaster or emergency operation.

**Across Australia, emergencies which WICEN has operated in include:**

<b>1971</b>	Nth Queensland	Cyclone Althea
<b>1977</b>	Blue Mountains	Bushfires
<b>1983</b>	VIC, SA	Ash Wednesday fires
<b>1989</b>	NSW	Newcastle earthquake
<b>1997</b>	NSW	Thredbo landslide
<b>2019-20</b>	NSW, VIC	Black Summer bushfires

During the Ash Wednesday fires, WICEN set up a control centre on a hill in a borrowed caravan. Positioned in a Melbourne suburb, the control centre used High frequency (HF) and Very High Frequency (VHF) links with rural areas. Some operators used mobile and hand-held radios while others volunteered from home stations. The Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Brigade relied on WICEN for communications. During the evacuations, Victorian Department of Community Welfare officers used WICEN. Backup communications were provided to both Macedon and the Otway CFA and individual police officers who did not have instant access to the police network used the WICEN network as well. Some operators worked in or from homes in danger areas, and others returned from volunteering to discover their homes damaged.

**Then Minister for Communications Neil Brown said:** "The operators gave generously of their expertise and without thought of cost to themselves...when communications were cut in the Gembrook and Emerald area, WICEN operators remained there at risk to their own safety and reported on the progress of the fire, the availability of power, the supply of petrol for fire vehicles and other vital matters".



# **SYDNEY (SID ) BROOKSBY**

**3/09/1939 – 21/07/2024**

## **SID BROOKSBY LIVED IN ENGADINE**

and was a member of the Bush Fire Brigade. He and some of his Bush Fire Brigade mates decided to join the then Civil Defence. When asked why he joined his answer was “It was something meaningful to do”. At that time members wore old blue air-force overalls and later bought their own white overalls.

He was one of the founding members of Sutherland SES.

The first Sutherland Local Headquarters was in then Controller’s (Jack Jones) home. Members put a lot of their own money into buying equipment. Sid sold meat raffle tickets for over a year at the local hotel to help raise enough money to buy their first Rescue Vehicle an old Land Rover.

He became the Local Controller in the eighties. When asked what he found the most frustrating and he answered

‘The Paperwork’. This and a very demanding job caused Sid to resign in 1999.

Sid was one of the first Life Member of the SES.

He was farewelled by his loving family and friends including old and new members of the NSW SES on Friday 2nd August 2024.

This above history was taken from a book written in 2010 by Mary Wilson a member of Sutherland SES.

# **VALE Darrin Parkin**

**29/07/1980 - 31/01/2025**

**ON WEDNESDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2025, WE SAID OUR FINAL** goodbye to our former Unit Commander, Darrin Parkin.. The community meant a lot to Darrin with his service to Scouts NSW, 18 years with Local Government and over 20 years of service to the NSW SES.

Darrin officially joined NSW SES Canada Bay Unit in 1995 and held several roles including Trainer, Training Coordinator, Deputy Local Commander over the years and was appointed Unit Commander (formerly known as Unit Controller) of the Strathfield Unit in 2006.

During his time at Strathfield, he was instrumental in growing the unit from 6 members to the 60 strong it is today. Darrin led the unit through difficult times as the unit headquarters burnt down, not once, but twice.

Throughout his time in the NSW SES, Darrin showed true leadership in developing the skills of his team, many of whom are still serving in leadership roles in the SES in various units, including Strathfield, or have been mentored and inspired to serve further in the NSW Ambulance Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, and the Australian Defence Force.

You will be sorely missed, but through the countless lives you have touched your memory and legacy will live on forever.

Rest Easy DP





# Vale James Gregor (Jim) MacLean ESM

✚ By Members of the SES Volunteers Association of WA



## A Life of Service, A Legacy That Endures

**IT IS WITH DEEP SADNESS THAT THE** SES Volunteers Association of WA, along with the Management Committee and the wider SES community, acknowledges the passing of Jim MacLean ESM; a respected leader, mentor, friend and pillar of Western Australia's emergency services.

Jim began his SES journey in 1982 with the Perth SES Unit, during an era when a handful of council officers in blue Civil Defence overalls answered call-outs under the coordination of the City Engineer Ian Lush. Alongside Ian, Jim played a foundational role in transforming the Unit from a small, council-based team into a broader community-based volunteer service. As Deputy Local Coordinator, he was instrumental in opening the doors to volunteers from beyond council ranks, initiating a critical period of growth for the organisation.

Jim's unwavering dedication continued as the Perth SES transitioned into the Northshore SES Unit. Taking on the role of Local Manager in 2006, Jim served until 2011 with remarkable purpose and clarity. Under his leadership, the Unit expanded its membership, strengthened its operational systems, and developed a more transparent and effective management structure. He led not for recognition, but with genuine care for people, the community, and the values the SES upholds.

### Teacher, Mentor, Friend

As a qualified trainer and assessor, Jim was passionate about education

and development. He was involved in the delivery of training both within Northshore and across other Units and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) Academy. His deep technical knowledge, practical wisdom and calm, steady teaching style helped build the capabilities of countless SES members across the state.

Jim excelled operationally as well. Whether leading a local storm response, managing teams during state-wide and interstate deployments, or running large-scale exercises like the 2007 QBE Building Exercise or the 2009 Carine TAFE Exercise, Jim was the rock everyone could rely on. His strategic thinking, humility, and skill in high-pressure situations earned him the respect of peers and the admiration of new recruits.

Outside the SES, Jim was a long-serving Local Government officer with extensive emergency management experience. His contributions to inter-agency coordination were significant, serving on both the Western Central and City of Perth Local Emergency Management Committees, and representing Local Government on the Metropolitan Emergency Management Executive Group.

### A Community Mourns

Jim's outstanding service was formally recognised with the awarding of the Emergency Services Medal (ESM) in the 2016 Queen's Birthday Honours List; a fitting acknowledgment of a lifetime committed to the safety and welfare of others.

The Northshore SES community shared this heartfelt tribute: "Jim didn't just give his time; he gave his heart. He was everything to everyone and truly the grandfather of Northshore".

Michael Wood, fellow volunteer and close friend, captured Jim's spirit in a moving tribute, excerpted here:

**With whisky poured—a Laphroaig neat,  
Strong and peaty, bold, complete.  
Beloved by Jan, by all his clan,  
A life well-lived, through thick and thin.**

### Final Salute

On behalf of all SES volunteers across Western Australia, we offer our sincere condolences to Jim's beloved wife Jan, his family, and the many friends and colleagues who were touched by his wisdom, leadership, and warmth.

The outpouring of messages from the community speaks volumes:

- "An incredibly skilled mentor with the community always in his heart."
- "A gentleman and a steady hand when it mattered most."
- "He made all of us better people."

Jim's legacy will live on in every volunteer he mentored, every life he helped protect, and every standard of excellence he set. The orange family has lost a true leader and trusted friend, but we will carry his values forward. Jim was farewelled by his family and friends which included a large contingent of SES volunteers, DFES and Local Government staff on 1 August 2025

**Rest in peace, Jim MacLean.  
Your legacy is ours to uphold.**



# Vale Sue Gage

## Many SES staff and volunteers were shocked at the sudden passing of Sue Gage, an honoured Life Member of SASES.

**SUE WAS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO** the SASES, but what many didn't know about her was her love of German Shorthair Pointers and having been a member of the Pedigree Pal Superdogs (and many of us would remember enjoying their displays on the Main Arena at the Royal Adelaide Show).

Sue's partner Mal said:

"Sue joined the Pedigree Pal Superdog team in the 1990s with her beloved dogs German Shorthaired Pointers, Rowlf and her Jaz. While Rowlf loved performing, Jaz did all the training, but didn't enjoy the performance side of the training."

And Margie Nottle-Justice, a fellow Superdog team member and close friend said:

"When Sue joined the team, we became firm friends as did our dogs; her beloved boy Rowlf and my standard Poodle, Munchkin. We did many trips away performing here and interstate Royal shows, country shows and field days as well as shopping centres. We got to know each other pretty well, spending so much time together. Sue was a truly valued friend, always there to lend a hand if needed, never afraid of hard work and always in for a laugh. Those years will always be very special."

Sue was interested in all kinds of dog sports and hobbies including retrieving trials. Sue was also an avid and very competitive shooter and helped organise SES participation in the Police and Emergency Services Games, which ceased in 2015. She had a competitive streak too, especially when it came to beating the police in the rifle shooting events (and Sue had supplied a story on the recent Monarto Emergency Services Shoot).

Sue's connection with SES began on 5 August 1997 when she joined the Metro South Unit, and she then served in a variety of leadership roles, including Unit Training Coordinator, Cadet Coordinator, and Unit Manager.

In 2005, she joined SES as a staff member, initially as a State Training Officer and later moving into roles as Regional Operations Officer and District Officer supporting the Mid North region (and when on visits to Adelaide for meetings she always brought a large box of lemons, with the message "Please Help Yourself.")

Sue transferred to the Laura Unit, where she continued volunteering.

Training and mentoring were always at the heart of Sue's service. She had a real gift for helping people grow. One story that stands out —

shared with me by staff from the North Region— involved a volunteer who arrived at a vertical rescue course terrified of heights. By the end of the week, with Sue quietly coaching and encouraging them throughout, they were the first one up the ladder.

And all who worked with Sue would agree; seeing someone succeed meant the world to her.

Even after leaving her staff role in 2020, Sue remained active in the emergency management community through her work with SA Health. She continued to give her time to SES, representing the Mid North District on the Executive Advisory Group.

Sue also gave back in other ways, including being part of the Mid North Emergency Services Team raising over \$53,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation over 2 years. She even went bald for the cause.

Sue's service and commitment were recognised through many honours: the SES Long Service Medal with Bar, National Medal with Bar, Emergency Services Medal, National Emergency Medal, and SES Life Membership.

Sue's imprint on the people who knew her will never be forgotten, no matter when or where they met. She will be missed.





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# Thank you to all SES volunteers.

Glencore values the outstanding contribution of SES volunteers across New South Wales and the difference you make to people in need within the community.



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