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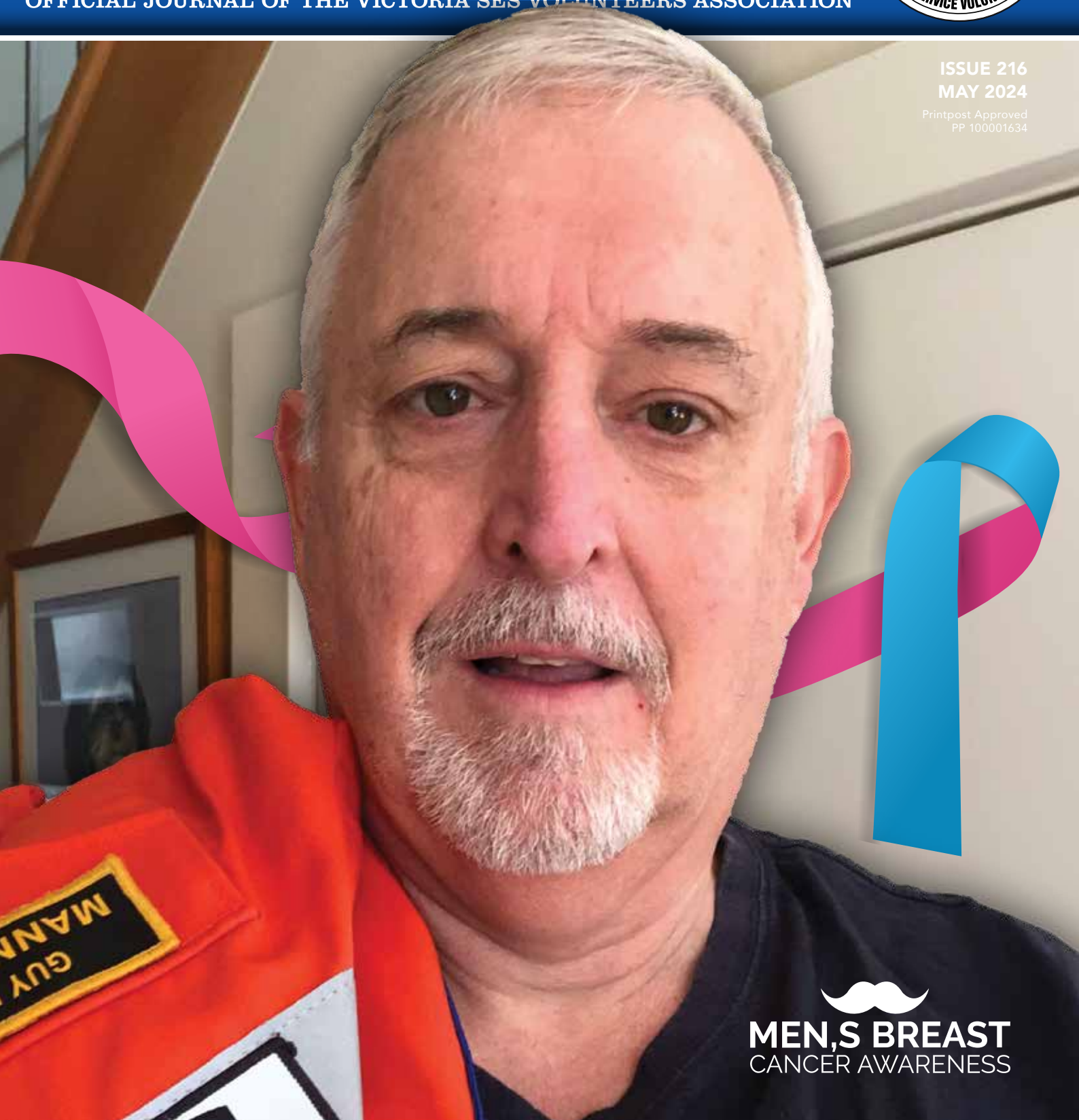
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VICTORIA SES VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION



ISSUE 216

MAY 2024

Printpost Approved
PP 100001634




MEN'S BREAST
CANCER AWARENESS

MALE BREAST CANCER IS REAL
FLOOD INQUIRY INTERIM REPORT • ANZAC DAY 2024



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If you have a point of view you feel would be of benefit to VicSESVA, or a request for any article which other members may be able to help source, mail it to PHOENIX. If your Unit has a need to publicise an event or Unit activity, send it to PHOENIX.

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For more information on NSESVA, go to nsesva.org.au

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Other information: wellbeing@ses.vic.gov.au



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From the BOARD

One of the greatest challenges to emergency management in Australia is the ageing workforce, and debate continues over whether younger generations want to take up volunteering, especially considering the demands of training, time and commitment needed in disaster and emergency work. So it is heartening to see the contribution and success of young volunteers from all walks of life who have established their credentials in the emergency sector. This edition features articles about the SES Young Emerging Leaders programme; one initiated by the Nation SES Volunteers Association to recognise and celebrate our future leaders.

The **NSESVA Young Emerging Leaders** programme gives an opportunity for up to two volunteers from every jurisdiction

to travel to Canberra and participate in the annual AFAC National Memorial Service. They meet the Governor-General, have a private tour of Parliament House, visit the ACT Emergency Services Agency, the National Situation Room at NEMA and Geoscience Australia. In 2024 two members from Victoria were selected: Spencer Calderwood from the Kilmore Unit and Audrey Tan from the Footscray Unit. Their achievements are deserving of this recognition.

The ESF continues to provide groundbreaking programmes and strategies into mental health and well-being and the first of their ESF Residential Wellbeing Program Pilots has begun. If you need to know more about their work, start with esf.com.au and

read about their long history and effective projects that have been implemented.

What a lesson we can learn from Manningham volunteer Guy Mason who writes about his experience of male breast cancer and how ***“an SES issued, navy blue t-shirt saved my life”***. A story of true resilience and a message to us all to be vigilant with our health.

Other stories of Unit activities, local council initiatives and the release of the Victorian Government Inquiry Interim Flood Report demonstrate the scope of the work facing us in the sector. It is the volunteers who make up around 90% of the sector's workforce and everyone can be proud of their contribution and dedication.

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VICSES CHELSEA MULTI AGENCY EXERCISE

WHAT A NIGHT IT WAS ON THE PATTERSON RIVER IN CARRUM IN MARCH, WHEN CHELSEA SES HOSTED ONE OF THE BIGGEST MULTI AGENCY TRAINING EXERCISES THAT WE HAVE EVER UNDERTAKEN.

Police, Live Saving Victoria, Edithvale CFA, Search & Rescue Dogs Australia, and members from Greater Dandenong SES, Pakenham SES, Monash SES, Narre Warren SES and of course Chelsea SES, were given a scenario that involved 2 incidents on and near the river.

This involved multiple casualties: in the water, on the beach, within rapids, close to the Wells Road bridge, and on the riverbank. SES members searched the riverbank with our search dog, LSV looked after the casualties on the beach, and SES took care of the casualties in and along the river.

There was no shortage of resources either: LSV had their Drone up, surveying the scene from above, jet skis in the water, as well as IRBs on the river, and Chelsea SES and Pakenham SES had their boats on the river. The lighting trailer was deployed, the multi casualty trailer was utilized, and the Edithvale CFA Mobile Command Vehicle was home to all agencies; all this along with almost 75 Emergency Responders.

It was so great to see VICSES Chief Officer Tim Wiebusch, who came down to get an overview of the entire night. The night was deemed a great success by all involved. We learnt things, which means we can only improve the service that we all bring to our community.

A huge thank you must go to Chelsea SES Deputy Controller for Training, Cameron Milner, who did an amazing job pulling the entire night together.

Submitted by Phil Wall



Patterson River







**EMERGENCY
SERVICES
FOUNDATION**

better together

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS WORKSHOPS

JOIN US FOR A MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS WORKSHOP HOSTED BY THE EMERGENCY SERVICES FOUNDATION (ESF) WITH SUPPORT FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT.

This is a mental health workshop delivered differently. Designed by people in the sector, for people in the sector. ESF's Mental Health Matter program is a free, no pressure, conversational workshop with a focus on involving partners/ a support person from home!

ESF will come to you at a time that best suits you to deliver this 2.5-hour program.

Ideally, a local leader will gather people from a brigade, unit, club or group and reach out to other local volunteer agencies to attend this unique program.

We encourage participants to bring someone from home so that family members / significant others can also learn important mental health concepts, including effectively supporting emergency workers.

Topics covered in the ESF Mental Health Matters workshop include:

- What is mental fitness?
- Identifying the signs & symptoms
- What's in your toolbox What's my PPE?
- Who is in your support crew?
- Where to get help?
- Stigma around mental health
- How to effectively ask R U OK?

For any enquires about the program, please e-mail comms@esf.com.au.





ESF RESIDENTIAL WELLBEING PROGRAM PILOT

ESF WILL BEGIN TO PILOT A RESIDENTIAL WELLBEING PROGRAM IN APRIL 2024.

This will involve six groups of ten people in residence for four days on the Mornington Peninsula to work with two mental health counsellors familiar with the emergency services environment.

The six ESF led pilot programs will take place between April and October 2024 and, as an early intervention initiative, will be open to participants from ESF member agencies including SES who are assessed as sub-clinical or in the yellow-orange zone on the mental health continuum.

The program will be facilitated by former SES volunteer and clinical counsellor Dr Shannon Hood.

The British Columbia First Responder Resilience Program

ESF considered various program approaches and options internationally including the Police treatment Centre in the UK. From this work, it was determined that the British Columbia First Responder Resilience Program (BCFRRP), developed by Dr Duncan Shield and Dr David Kuhl from Blueprint at the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine in partnership with the BC Professional Firefighters Association and the BC Police Association, provides a model which best aligns with ESF's goals and which ESF could effectively emulate and tailor to local needs.

ESF program facilitator, clinical counsellor, and former SES volunteer Dr Shannon Hood recently attended a BCFRRP in Canada with a group of police officers. He said,

"If I were to distil down the secret sauce it might be this: typically, first responders hesitate to tell their stories to professional listeners in part because they don't think the listener will truly understand. Yet paradoxically those who can understand the story are usually pretty rubbish at truly listening and responding in helpful ways. This residential program overcomes that paradox by equipping the peer listeners and providing a safe place for storytelling."

"It's not rocket science, but it is extraordinarily effective and was perhaps one of the most profound experiences of my 20+ years working in mental health with emergency services. I am looking forward to being able to journey with our own emergency service workers as we bring the program to life in 2024."

For more information about the program, and to apply to participate in one of the pilot programs in 2024, go to esf.com.au/residential-wellbeing-program/

Rationale & Research

ESF's approach to developing a Residential Wellbeing Program Pilot is informed by a variety of research.

One of these studies took place when Senior Sergeant and Station Commander at Clayton Police Station Greg Dean completed a Sir Winston Churchill Fellowship in 2018, and through his research with law enforcement agencies across the USA, Canada and UK, the benefit of intensive early intervention 'retreats' to provide a proactive and preventative approach to reducing the occurrence and impact of mental health injuries was identified.

In 2019, Greg furthered this research with an ESF scholarship, in which he sought to understand if commercially available proactive mental health treatments utilising therapies in a retreat environment could benefit emergency service workers.

It was determined a program tailored to the specific needs of local emergency service was required.

On seeing a residential wellbeing program come to fruition informed by his research, Greg said the following:

"Throughout my research I have witnessed and experienced firsthand how beneficial residential wellbeing programs can be for those struggling with their psychological health. These programs compliment clinical therapies and provide attendees with a greater suite of options in their personal toolkit to proactively address their wellbeing in the now, medium, and long-term future. This program is unique in that it is specific to our emergency services sector and the first of its type in Australia. I'm honoured to be part of its inception and so thankful for the tireless support and work of the Emergency Service Foundation to get us to where we are today."





HOW AN SES-ISSUED, NAVY BLUE T-SHIRT SAVED MY LIFE!

(MALE BREAST CANCER IS REAL)



IN 2023, OVER
20,000
AUSTRALIANS WERE
DIAGNOSED WITH
BREAST CANCER.

AROUND **200** OF
THESE WERE MEN.

IN JANUARY 2024,
I WOULD ADD
MY NAME TO THE
CURRENT STATISTICS.



The start of December 2023 was a busy time for State Emergency Services (SES) units all around Victoria as massive storms took their toll at various rates across many communities.

For the Manningham SES Unit, the second weekend of December saw around 14 Requests For Assistance (RFAs) of which I managed to attend 12 from Friday afternoon until the early hours of Sunday morning.

Wet, tired and ready for some down time, by the time we got back to the unit on Sunday morning, I was saturated from the inside out and the outside in.

Despite having worn wet weather gear (unusual for me, so that's how wet and humid it was!) and even though I had a set of dry clothes in which to change, I just couldn't be bothered and simply thought I'd hit the shower as soon as I got home; the humidity and heat of the day would also see any dampness in the car dry pretty quickly too.

On the way home, my wet-through SES standard issue blue t-shirt was clinging to my chest and was making my right breast quite itchy. Rubbing the breast helped alleviate the itch, but I'd worry about that when I got home.

Once home, I jumped straight into a hot shower and this brought great relief to

tired and aching muscles (at 63 years of age, maybe I was getting too old for this?) but it was during that shower and attending to the "itch" that I noticed my right nipple was dimpled and quite inverted – no matter how much I tried, the nipple was remaining unchanged. But at the same time, at "11 o'clock" to the nipple, I detected a small lump, around the size of my small fingernail – that seemed odd. I checked over and over, and yes, it was a lump, and it was not just a figment of my over-worked imagination.

So, I decided that I'd monitor this lump, as breast cancer was not foremost in my thoughts at the time, having known 8 male friends and ex-colleagues who had all been diagnosed with various forms of Prostate Cancer across the last 12 months.

The week following the lump detection saw me contract my first positive test for COVID, so I had plenty of time to isolate and to try and not think too much about this lump which was not changing, all the while thinking *should I go to the doctor?*

Suddenly it was Christmas and then New Year, when I was back on call and SES units including Manningham were again smashed with RFAs across the new year period. Knowing that my doctor was on leave, I decided it was useless trying to make an appointment ... just yet.

But across early January 2024, Professor Google (every doctor's worst nightmare) and I became acquainted. In searching for "male breast cancer", the first URL and associated images showed a male breast tumour in the exact location where I'd found my lump ... hmmm.

Further reading highlighted that many males suffer from an inverted nipple just as mine was presenting; although somewhat reassured with what I was reading, everything was pointing to the fact that I just might have breast cancer. But hey, *"Males don't get breast cancer, right?"*

We were heading on a cruise a week or so later, so 'mum' was the word – there was no use both my wife and I stressing about "what might be" whilst out in the middle of Bass Strait where there are many other things one can stress about. *Thank goodness for alcohol!* Because after all, this lump could be simply nothing. Maybe it was just a lump?

In the second week of January and prior to our cruise, I bit the bullet and decided that I should get this checked and as such, set out to make an appointment with the doc.

I knew my usual doctor was away all of January on her well-deserved annual break, so I decided to see a young male doctor who had been highly recommended. Well, the first available appointment he had was



The life-saving blue T-shirt



Guy Mason - an inspiration to us all

whilst we were cruising to Kangaroo Island, so I took the next available slot that worked around our busy retiree schedule, which was on 1st February at 09:30am.

On the 31st of January and after the cruise, I entered the doctor's appointment for the next day into the electronic calendar I share with my wife. Of course, she asked *why the doctor's appointment*, and it was then I shared with her what I had discovered some weeks earlier. Had I made the right decision in keeping the last five weeks or so secret from my wife of 38 years from whom I had never kept a secret before?

In reflecting on this question and as much as I love her, I'd probably do the same again.

The doctor's appointment arrives and to my delight, he is right on time and within a few minutes, he indicates as I had expected, that I'd need an ultrasound to determine what we were dealing with. In returning to my car, I phoned the Imaging practice and was able to secure an appointment for the ultrasound at 11:00am the same day.

By 11:45am, I was home having been scanned initially by a 'student' doing work-placement which was awesome for her, because she'd never scanned a male breast before! Part way through the scan, the senior radiologist moved in and took over and she completed the necessary details and

concluded the scan. She indicated there was nothing to worry about here, that there was not much to see and that I shouldn't lose any sleep over it! Most reassuring.

At 12:45pm, a mere one hour after the scan, the doctor rang and indicated the scan report suggested an 'urgent' referral to a breast surgeon was required. Hmmm.

90 minutes after that news, I had an appointment booked with a highly regarded breast surgeon and this was scheduled for the next morning at 10:15am.

After gaining a little sleep overnight, the next morning I met one of the most caring and nicest surgeons you will ever meet, and in his 20 second examination of my breast, he reported that it was an 80:20% chance that I had cancer – that knocked the wind out of me.

This was now getting very real.

In saying this, the surgeon went to great lengths to advise that if this lump was cancer, it was treatable; if it wasn't cancer, it was treatable; if it was just a fatty cyst, it *was* treatable. Nice to hear, but hard not to focus on that 80%.

The next step was to undergo a biopsy of the lump and this procedure was thankfully scheduled for a few hours later that afternoon.

I won't go into the nitty gritty of the breast biopsy as I do not wish this procedure on anyone; however, the discomfort and vivid, explicit memories evoked by just writing about it here, were critical for an accurate diagnosis, so it was worth it in the end.

A follow up appointment with the surgeon 4 days later highlighted that I did indeed have breast cancer and that I would require a full mastectomy of the right breast.

As it happens, the tumour I had felt back in December had latched on to the bottom side of the nipple and was gradually drawing it into the breast – he would not be able to save the nipple, but at 63, this was not going to be an issue.

I now refer to that eight-week period from early December 2023 until the diagnosis in February 2024 as the period of the 3 C's ...

COVID, Christmas and Cancer.

PET and CT scans saw radioactive tracers injected into my body to trace the cancer and possible spread; blood tests and so on filled in the two weeks prior to the surgery which was undertaken on Friday 23rd February around 19:00pm; I was home by 10:30am the next morning, minus one breast.

Immediately prior to surgery, the surgeon mentioned he would get the results of my pathology whilst he was away at a conference the following week, and that he would ring me when he returned to Melbourne about 10 days later. How relieved was I to receive a text message

from him at 21:26pm on the Wednesday night after the surgery advising that the pathology results indicated he had managed to remove the whole tumour (approximately 22mm x 17mm x 10mm but *irregular* in shape) and that the cancer was fully contained and had not spread. Nor would not require chemo or radiation and all I had to do now was heal!

27 days from first meeting the surgeon to being advised I was all clear of cancer – I am so amazingly blessed that this 'speedhump' in the road of my life was only a short one, when so many fellow cancer sufferers go through years of on-going treatments in one form or another, and maybe even outcomes that leave family and friends devastated.

My surgeon reports that the continued numbness, swelling and muscle stiffness under and across my upper arm, will probably continue for some time to come, but this is such a small price to pay compared to what so many others must endure.

On-line forums of fellow male breast cancer survivors suggest that some of the symptoms described above may possibly go on for years.

Why am I sharing my story?

I just want to highlight that **breast cancer in males is a real thing.**

Blockes – check yourselves from time to time and do not be embarrassed to ask your GP if you find a lump - anywhere! Get it checked sooner than later.

Ladies – if there is a bloke in your life, please make sure he *does* check. Oh, and make sure you check yourself, too!

Breast cancer is no longer a life-sentence if it is found early and enjoys one of the highest success rates of treatment, so checking yourself is the first step. **Do it!**

For me, I will be on medication (oestrogen blockers) for 5 years and will undergo 12 monthly scans and checks with my surgeon but hey, a small price to pay for getting the chance to watch my grandchildren grow and prosper.

My mind and body recovery is not yet quite ready to pull on those orange overalls to get back out on the trucks with my SES mates and this is just going to take some time; but I cannot wait to get back out there with my overly dedicated 'orange' mates!

BUT, when I do get back out on the job, I can guarantee that under those orange overalls, will be that ... **SES issued navy blue, t-shirt that saved my life.**

Guy Mason
Manningham SES
March 2024



NSESVA YOUNG EMERGING LEADERS

THE AFAC NATIONAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

YELs visit the National Situation Room

EACH YEAR, THE NATIONAL SES VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION SPONSORS UP TO TWO YOUNG EMERGING LEADERS (YELs) FROM EACH JURISDICTION TO ATTEND CANBERRA FOR THE ANNUAL NSESVA YEL PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES.

In 2024 a total of 12 YELs were selected. The NSESVA Young Emerging Leaders 2024 are:



ACT

HUGH HAGEN
SIMONE MCKINLEY



NT

JACKSON CARR



QLD

KIRBEY REID
JASPER HUMPHRIES



SA

MICHAEL
LAUNDY



TAS

MICHAEL WILSON
KELSEA CLINGELEFFER



VIC

AUDREY TAN
SPENCER CALDERWOOD



WA

ANJULI TIL
LAUREN BAILEY

The most important event in this programme is the AFAC National Memorial Service (<https://memorial.afac.com.au/>) where the young leaders participate by forming a guard of honour for the Governor-General and assist AFAC as needed. The Memorial Service is held to recognise the sacrifice of emergency services personnel who have died in the line of duty. A Memorial Wall is situated at the end of Anzac Parade beside Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra and is inscribed with the names of those emergency service personnel.

As explained on the AFAC website, the wall is made up of bronze patinated sheets engraved with names, arranged evenly across a central panel at an easy height for reading by all viewers. A wattle and silver fern motif is used to reference the connection between the Australian and New Zealand organisations who make up the National Emergency Services represented.

After the AFAC National Memorial Service, the young leaders were escorted on a tour of Parliament House, then visited the National Situation Room at NEMA, before lunch and a tour of the Emergency Services Agency then a final visit to Geoscience Australia. In the evening, a formal dinner was held to present awards to the young leaders for their achievements, with guest speaker Wayne Phillips, the Commissioner of the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA).

The next day, the young leaders had a range of less formal activities, visiting important sites and venues in Canberra like the War Memorial or other museums.



Their Excellencies David Hurley and Mrs Hurley in conversation with the young leaders



Audrey Tan with His Excellency Governor-General, the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd)



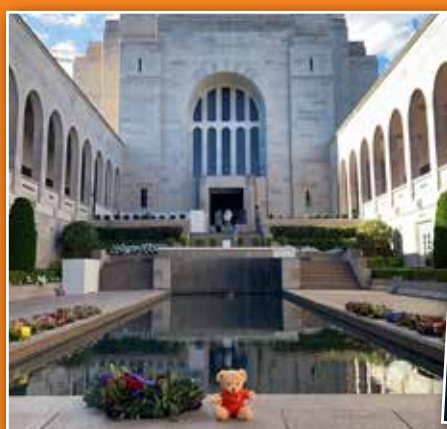
YELs visit Parliament House



The Victorian contingent: Spencer Calderwood, Faye Bendrups, VicSESVA Chair David Rowlands, Audrey Tan



Victorian YELs Audrey Tan and Spencer Calderwood with VicSESVA President Dr Faye Bendrups OAM



NSESVA YELs Programme: the Adventures of Q Bear

A couple of extra friends tagged along for the trip in 2024: Q Bear from WA and Paddy Platypus from NSW. The mascots captured the hearts of everyone and chronicled their journey on Facebook.

Lauren Bailey, a young leader from WA, tells their story in words and pictures:

Once upon a time a little bear named Q Bear ventured from Perth, WA to Canberra. He headed east to attend the National

Memorial Service alongside volunteers from across Australia and New Zealand.

On his first full day in Canberra Q Bear visited the National War Memorial to pay his respects. In the following days Q Bear met with a team of young emerging leaders from across the country as well as a fellow stuffed friend Paddy the Platypus from NSW SES.

Q Bear and Paddy continued their adventures together with their young leaders. Q Bear and Paddy placed a sprig of rosemary at the solemn AFAC National Memorial

Service reflecting upon the men and women who lost their lives in the line of service. After crossing paths with the Governor-General, they explored both Houses of Parliament before touring the National Situation Room, hearing about the work of the National Emergency Management Agency and visiting Geoscience Australia.

Stopping to admire and reflect on Mt Ainslie before filling their bellies they continued to prepare to adventure on!





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**A FRESH
START
FOR OUR
COMMUNITY**

**Paul
Mercurio MP**

STATE MEMBER FOR HASTINGS

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Hastings SES & all SES volunteers
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We couldn't be more grateful or
proud of your dedication to the
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Community meeting held in Violet Town to gain ideas for inclusion in documenting individual town plans

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Media Release

Strathbogie
SHIRE COUNCIL

STRATHBOGIE SHIRE RESIDENTS PLAN FOR EMERGENCIES

THE LEAPING INTO RESILIENCE PROGRAM HAS BEEN AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS FOR THE STRATHBOGIE SHIRE AND ITS RESIDENTS.

The program seeks to create a Local Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) to empower Strathbogie communities to take control of their needs in the face of an emergency.

Each township, and there are five participating townships in Strathbogie Shire have slightly different requirements in relation to emergency planning because of their proximity to waterways or major highways and/or their topography.

Already there have been three plans completed for Avenel, Euroa and Violet Town and currently the Strathbogie Tablelands and Nagambie communities are undertaking their planning with their working groups and expected to have their plans ready by October 2024.

Strathbogie Shire Council Administrator Peter Stephenson said the

LEAP Program is a fantastic way for the community to document and manage their own emergency.

"The LEAP project team has worked closely with three of our communities Violet Town, Avenel and Euroa to complete their plans and I encourage Strathbogie Tableland and Nagambie communities to assist their steering group with their emergency preparedness feedback for their town.

"Locals possess valuable knowledge, such as escape routes and identifying vulnerable community members, which is essential in crafting effective emergency action plans tailored to each community's needs," he said.

This three-year LEAP project is part of the LEAPing into Resilience Project, a joint initiative between Mansfield, Strathbogie, and Murrindindi Shire Councils.

Through discussions and when drawing up the individual township plans, the project creates awareness about the importance of shared responsibility between the community, agencies and the Council for emergency management and seeks to lessen the impacts of emergency events and increase a community's resilience when these events occur.

What has been most important has been the contribution of the emergency services, Ambulance Victoria, SES, Victoria Police and CFA members who have all been part of the working groups and gaining their perspective has been integral in the finished plans.

Copies of the completed LEAP plans are available on the Strathbogie Council website www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au

ROTARY EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNITY AWARDS

NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2024 ROTARY EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNITY AWARDS HAVE JUST CLOSED.

The awards are designed to recognise emergency service personnel who have gone above and beyond their call of duty and reflected the Rotary motto of “Service above Self”.

The two categories are Rotary Victoria Emergency Service Officer of the Year Serving in a Volunteer capacity, and Rotary Victoria Emergency Service Officer of the Year Serving in a Paid capacity.

In 2023 two Victorian winners were selected to represent the State. Graham Symons from Omeo Country Fire Authority was awarded in a Volunteer capacity, and Tyson Taylor from Fire Rescue Victoria in a Paid capacity. Graham was also named the Emergency Service Community Volunteer Award national winner at the awards ceremony in Canberra. Graham was awarded for his dedication of over 40 years to his community as a member and Captain of the Omeo Fire Brigade, serving as an Ambulance Victoria Community Officer for 33 years. His proactive fire preparedness and involvement in various committees showcase his commitment, making a lasting impact during crises such as the 2019-20 fires and community meetings.

“You certainly don’t do any of this to get something at the end, because it’s more about looking after your community, but it’s more about being identified, and I’m pretty chuffed that I’ve been recognised, I guess. I think it’s lovely that the people that chose to recognise me, they must have thought that I’ve done something half decent – so it’s really special” Graham said.

Nominations do not come from agencies. Ideally, they come from community members.

This year’s awards dinner will be held at the Hyatt Place Melbourne, Essendon Fields on Saturday 3rd August 2024.

Consider making a nomination for 2025:

<https://resca.awardsplatform.com/>



Graham Symons, Omeo CFA Captain



Tyson Taylor, FRV



JOE McCRACKEN MP

MEMBER FOR WESTERN VICTORIA

To our dedicated SES volunteers that work tirelessly to keep our community safe through fires, floods, storms and rescue operations.

THANK YOU!



J McCracken

03 5532 2405 | joe.mccracken@parliament.vic.gov.au
17 Lydiard St North, Ballarat VIC 3350 | www.joemccracken.com.au

Thank you to the Frankston SES and Chelsea SES members (and their families) for their continuing commitment to keeping us all safe.

You are true local heroes and my community and I are extremely grateful for your service and dedication.

Sonya Kilkenny MP

LABOR MEMBER FOR CARRUM DISTRICT



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THANK YOU

On behalf of the Western Metropolitan Region and all Victorians, I sincerely thank you for all your hard work and the outstanding contribution you make to our community.

Moira DEEMING MP
Standing for Freedom, Fair Laws & Family

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VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT FLOOD INQUIRY INTERIM REPORT

ON 18 APRIL 2024, THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT TABLED THE INTERIM REPORT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY INTO THE OCTOBER 2022 FLOOD EVENT IN VICTORIA.

The Interim Report focusses on Northern Victoria and a final report will be released in mid-2024. The report was tabled by the Chair of the committee Ryan Bachelor MLC, in Echuca.

Greater Shepparton City Council says the interim report highlights the need for a more efficient support system for community members and a faster transition to recovery following a major emergency. Mayor, Councillor Shane Sali, said Greater Shepparton residents will be pleased to see their experiences recognised:

"The report is a strong reminder of the devastation of the October 2022 flood event on communities and individual households. It talks about the best of community spirit which we saw, but also the concern that exists about how well we might be prepared for any future emergencies," he said.

"The report highlights the need for an easier support system for community members to navigate and a faster transition to recovery during a major emergency. Stronger resourcing is also needed for emergency agencies, community groups and local government, along with more investment into long term resilience strategies."

The Interim Report (p 80) outlines the goal of the committee: to ensure that

flood relief, recovery and ongoing support is responsive to what has been learnt since the October 2022 floods, and is primarily streamlined, empathetic, and accessible to everyone who needs it. The importance of this goal is compounded by the continued risk of future flooding events, as evidenced by the recent floodings of 2023 and the likelihood of further events as our climate continues to change.

The Chair, Ryan Bachelor MLC, states in the foreword to the report (pix):

"This Interim Report for the Environment and Planning Committee's Inquiry into the October 2022 flood event is an acknowledgement of the enormous contribution the regional community made to this Inquiry. I would like to thank all of those who made a contribution to our public hearings in the regional Victoria towns in northern Victoria that the Committee visited: Rochester, Echuca, Seymour, and Shepparton. I would also like to thank those from surrounding areas who came to the hearings to make a contribution, or who provided a submission. There were also contributions from regional people at our online open mic and others provided evidence at hearings in Melbourne. Further, as this Interim Report outlines, there were 880 submissions to the Inquiry.

Many of the submissions are from experts, and government and non-government agencies. The majority are from those who experienced the immense challenges of the floods personally. It could not have been easy to make a contribution whilst personally dealing with those challenges. We are grateful to those who could provide their insights and reflections. I hope that this report has demonstrated that those who experienced flooding and who understand the challenges of recovery best are at the forefront of our thinking in relation to our Final Report. The Final Report will include a discussion of the Maribyrnong flooding and will include recommendations to the government for both regional Victoria and Maribyrnong in three key areas: Mitigation (including planning and preparedness); Recovery and Response. I thank the previous Committee Chair for her contribution to the hearings in Northern Victoria, and my committee colleagues for their commitment to this important Inquiry. I am delighted that we are able to table this report in Echuca today. I commend the report to the House".

Access the Interim Report at <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/floodinquiry/reports/>

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*"Thank you to all the
 volunteers for their hard
 work and dedication to the
 community"*

MARK DREYFUS MP
 Federal Member for Isaacs
 Commonwealth Attorney-General

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Authorised by Mark Dreyfus MP ALP, 566 Main Street Mordialloc VIC 3195.

*"Thank you to all the
SES volunteers
 who keep us safe every year.
 We couldn't be more proud or
 grateful for your tireless
 contribution and dedication
 to the Albert Park and wider
 Victorian community"*



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NINA TAYLOR
 Labor
 Member
 for
 Albert
 Park

Gayle Tierney MP
 Labor Member for Western Victoria



**Thank you
 to our amazing
 SES volunteers
 for your tireless work
 assisting our
 communities.
 We couldn't be more
 proud of you.**

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 FOR THEIR DEDICATED COMMUNITY SERVICE

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RUTHERGLEN SES UNIT ANZAC DAY 2024

A LARGE CROWD GATHERED IN RSL PARK, RUTHERGLEN,
TO COMMEMORATE ANZAC DAY 2024.

The Rutherglen SES Unit received applause from onlookers as we made our way with other community groups and organisations down Main Street.

Following the official ceremony, which complemented the official proceedings, the flypast organised by the Royal Australian Airforce was a highlight.

Rutherglen Unit Controller Darren Trevaskis and Deputy Controller Irene Cracknell presented this year's wreath, a unique creation by the Rutherglen SES. The wreath, crafted with local vines, flowers, and symbolic rosemary sprigs, poignantly reminded us of our shared remembrance.

Photographers: - Toni Harris, Darren Trevaskis and Emma Trevaskis



Sarah Trevaskis (Flag Bearer) led the Rutherglen Unit to RSL Park



Rutherglen SES Unit and wreath



The Trevaskis SES family - photo taken by proud mother Emma Trevaskis



Rutherglen RSL Park ANZAC Day ceremony 2024



Rutherglen RSL Park ANZAC Day ceremony 2024

Being online has made meeting and interacting with others easier than ever before, but it's important to know how to stay safe.

Here are ThinkUKnow's top tips for safer online interactions:

- Question suspicious accounts, and trust your instincts if something doesn't seem right - not everyone is who they say they are.
- Avoid meeting someone in person that you have only ever spoken to online. However, if you do meet, choose a public place and take someone with you.
- If something goes wrong, know how to block or un-match and report.
- Your safety should always come first!

Sometimes things don't go to plan but there is always help available.

For more information, visit www.thinkuknow.org.au

ThinkUKnow is a national online child safety program led by the Australian Federal Police, delivered in schools through educational presentations and resources for young people and their parents and carers.



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