

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[View this email in your browser](#)

ESF IMPACT

newsletter

July 2026



It's a wrap. Emergency Management Conference 2026

The Emergency Management Conference (EMC) 2026 was held last week in Melbourne and brought over 350 delegates to network, listen, learn, discuss, and share insights. Bringing together emergency management professionals and subject matter experts over two days, the conference featured four keynote speakers, four empowering workshops, presentations, and panel discussions.

Cohesion, and Trust' challenged agencies and participants to demonstrate their ability to work together across organisations and with communities to plan for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

Day One

The conference was opened by **John Lister**, Member of Parliament for Werribee and a passionate CFA volunteer at one of the State's busiest brigades. He emphasised that whether you're wearing yellow, orange, blue, red, green, or another uniform altogether, we're all working toward the same goal of helping Victorian communities around emergencies, recognising that the sector's strength lies in its ability to listen, learn, grow, and work cohesively as one.



Therese Fitzgerald, Acting Emergency Management Commissioner Victoria, noted on the 2024–25 with its biosecurity incidents, storms, floods, an eight-day heatwave - the longest since 2009 - flash flooding, and major fires. As she reflected on these incidents, she said that what carried Victoria through was not just capability, but also the relationships between agencies and communities. Using a netball analogy, Therese said, "In netball, no single player can move

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

ball, the whole transition breaks down. And emergency management has a very similar court.”

Katarina Carroll, Deputy Coordinator-General, National Emergency Management Agency, delivered the first keynote, reflecting on the latest high-risk weather season while highlighting the importance of jurisdictional cohesion and connection for better preparedness, response, relief, and recovery. She also introduced the OIL methodology: Observations, Insights, and Lessons Learned, as a tool to capture organisational knowledge, identify opportunities, and ensure that experience is translated into tangible improvements.



[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

Ryan, Cicada Research and Communication, shared a presentation titled Defeating Disaster Information - Your Communities Are Your Allies. "It's not an information problem, it's an operational problem," said Barbara, emphasising that disinformation is not only a communications problem. Disinformation can affect volunteering capacity and trust in organisations, as it can impact evacuation plans, evacuation centres, and even organisations' intelligence. She highlighted that trust between agencies and communities is a critical enabler in combating disinformation.

ESF's scholarship recipients, **Paul Fitzgerald** and **Mark Welch**, Fire Rescue Victoria, shared research they undertook during their study tours overseas. Paul presented on servant leadership, which he explored primarily through the Swedish Police Authority. Mark presented on how to ensure operational debriefs don't cause more harm than good which he explored during a study trip to the UK.

[Read Paul's and Mark's research here](#)

Conference Dinner and Special Guest Speaker: Jaswinder Singh

The delegates then had the opportunity to connect further at the conference dinner where guests were treated to a fascinating presentation from special guest **Jaswinder Singh**, CEO and Co-Founder of Sikh Volunteers Australia. Jaswinder shared the principle of Seva (selfless service), the Sikh culture of helping others, and the organisation's contributions during the Grampians bushfire, providing over 1,000 meals to those in need.



[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

recognised **Kat Horton**, DEECA, **Irina Tchernitskaia**, Fire Rescue Victoria, and **Thomas Barber**, Fire Rescue Victoria, as the 2026 ESF Scholarship recipients. All will all head to Canada to deepen their knowledge on chosen subjects. Also, it was announced that applications for the **ESF Scholarships 2027 open on 1 September 2026**.

[More information about ESF 2027 Scholarships here](#)

Day Two

Day two of EMC 2026 opened with ESF announcing that funding had been secured from WorkSafe Return to Work Innovations to expand the Residential Wellbeing Program for eligible emergency service workers from Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria, and Triple Zero Victoria with approved mental injury claims. This partnership will allow ESF to support more emergency service workers as they navigate their return-to-work journey.

“What’s so unique about this program is that no one else in Australia is doing this for workers with a mental injury claim. We are so fortunate in Victoria to have this as an option to help people recover and get back to work,” said Siusan.

[Learn more about the Residential Wellbeing Program here](#)

[Read WorkSafe media release here](#)



Dr Jo Kippax, Trauma Specialist at Royal Hobart Hospital and Retrieval Coordinator at Ambulance Tasmania, shared the breathtaking story of the perilous rescue of a trapped kayaker on the Franklin River and stressed the importance of collaboration during the rescue where everyone involved literally trusted others with their lives. His presentation also highlighted that the rescue was about teamwork, fluid leadership, and training.

The conference then continued with presentations across two streams. One of them was a panel that explored community collaboration and post-traumatic growth after the Grampians fire, featuring **Rohan Gow** (Nth Grampians Shire), **Josephina McDonald** (Halls Gap Lakeside Tourist Park), **Charlie Richardson** (Parks Victoria), and **Mark Gunning** (CFA) where the key message was it is not just plants that regenerate, communities too can come back from adversity to be stronger and healthier.

The conference concluded with a closing keynote from Police Chief Commissioner **Mike Bush**. Mike drew on his experience leading major disaster responses in different parts of the world to reflect on issues of leadership, the interplay of politics in emergency management, and the importance of self-care.

Four engaging workshops were held over the two days, which enabled participants to interactively delve into topics including Leading a Multi-Generational Emergency Workforce, Building Trust with Communities,

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

More event info and photos

“I wasn't sure what I was going to get out of it. I was a little bit blind, but EMC is absolutely fantastic. The panel I just came from about volunteering was really fascinating.”

Logan, St. John Ambulance Victoria

“Franklin River presentation this morning, that resonated highly with me. And in that whole team, you know, were a group of highly qualified, skilled individuals, and they all trusted each other. And listening to the doctor talk about his own experiences, he seemed to have had really good resilience and mental strength, even maybe post-traumatic growth from that incident.”

Jamie Baker, Fire Rescue Victoria

“One presentation in particular from the Sikh volunteers, which explained the work that they do in the community after major disasters and the reasons for doing that was really interesting.”

John Schauble, Country Fire Authority

“The Emergency Management Conference has been very enlightening in how the speakers are really engaging, especially in resilience and how to deal with different types of trauma and things like that. It is my first year attending this event. I've been to a couple of other conferences, and I really appreciate the ease of getting to this conference for starters and just how welcoming everyone is.”

Steve Kaiser, Fire Rescue Victoria

Contact Us:

ceo@esf.com.au

Siusan MacKenzie – CEO
0438 405 406

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

Copyright © 2023 Emergency Services Foundation, All rights reserved.