

Victorian Council of Churches

# Emergencies

## ministry

SUFFERING IS NOT WHAT DESTROYS PEOPLE, RATHER  
"SUFFERING WITHOUT MEANING". VICTOR FRANKL

*Being a healing and helping presence is an essential part of the work undertaken by VCC Emergencies Ministry volunteers. More and more people are seeing the value of the presence of VCC in the Emergency Management sector.*

A relatively benign summer has given all emergency service organisations, including the relief and recovery sector, a welcome breather.

The VCC EM responded to a number of events this year, many of them single incident type events such as search and rescues, drownings and building fires eg. Docklands and Victoria Street City.

This has meant that we have been able to undertake the planning and preparation works for the coming year earlier.

Thank you to all volunteers and volunteer leaders, who have been ready and prepared to support this program at a moments notice.



## TRAINING

Pass on this newsletter to friends you think would like to join this vital ministry. If you are a current volunteer and have not re-trained in the last 2—3 years, you are encouraged to look at the training dates for 2015 on our website and sign up for a refresher course in Personal Support. [www.vccem.org.au/training](http://www.vccem.org.au/training)

**E**mergency Management Victoria promotes, fosters and supports a sector-wide approach to achieve joined up outcomes that are community-focused. These joined up outcomes will occur only through significant collaboration, ongoing change and a shared goal and vision that as a sector *collectively* we strive to achieve.

Victoria's emergency management sector is maturing, and understands that it is only by agencies, departments, industry, business, all levels of government and community working together that we will fully realise a sustainable and efficient emergency management system that reduces the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies.

## **Working in conjunction with Communities, Government, Agencies and Business**

As a new organisation, Emergency Management Victoria is working to set a vision, goal, role statement, values and supporting behaviours as a foundation. However, we can't do this in isolation.

Each organisation has its own vision and its own mission. As an emergency management sector, it is important we have a shared vision and shared goal, with an understanding that is sector-focused, that guides how we operate together as a collective.

### **Shared Vision**

*"Safer and more resilient communities"*

### **Shared Goal**

*'A sustainable and efficient emergency management system that reduces the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies'.*

We will work to embed and use as a foundation the Shared Vision, Shared Goal, Values and Supporting Behaviours into EMV the organisation and the sector. We also ask that you support this in and throughout your organisations. At its heart this is about communities and the very simple mantra of "we work as one".

A short publication and video are available on the Emergency Management Victoria website to explain and support these principles.

Craig Lapsley  
Emergency Management Commissioner.



# OPERATIONS

Debbie Laphorne—Operations Manager

**TESTED  
AND  
PROVEN:**

Late November and December brought significant operational requests, starting the 2014-15 fire season early. There have also been a significant increase in the request for support in Single Incident and mid range events, reflecting the strengthened relationship we have with many local government EM teams. This is the fruit of very diligent and substantial work by several Regional and Area Coordinators. Their work is greatly appreciated and deeply valued.

During the busy time, we were able to initiate our newly developed EOC protocols and standby arrangements. These worked extremely well and placed us in a space where response to deployment requests was significantly easier – though still not easy!

Since mid January, we have been much quieter and this has brought a very welcome breather to the operational role. Taking some accrued TIL has even been possible and very welcome.

While we cannot say that we are “out of the woods” yet, each week that passes, with no significant heat event, brings us closer to finishing a quieter fire season. This will be a welcome outcome for all.



## PURCHASE A VCC EM LAPEL PIN

Pictured right is a photo of the VCC EM Lapel Pin available from the State Office.

PRICE: \$5.00

HOW TO ORDER: Contact Stuart on 9650 4511 or email [ssstuart@vcc.org.au](mailto:ssstuart@vcc.org.au)



# OPERATIONS

Debbie Lapthorne—Operations Manager

## Summary of Activities

### Deployment

- Hume region fire events Dec 2014
  - Strathbogie, Benalla and Wangaratta Shires for relief and recovery
  - Benalla and Wangaratta Shires for Outreach
  - Hobson's Bay (Altona North) siege – outreach support
  - Great Victorian Bike Ride (fatality) Mansfield Shire
  - Hastings / Crib Point fire (Mornington Peninsula)
  - Somerville Storm event (Mornington Peninsula)
  - Black Hill fire (Macedon Ranges)
  - Docklands Lacrosse building fire (City of Melbourne) relief, recovery and outreach
  - Surf Coast Resilient Communities project (6 events)
  - Torquay house fire resident support (Surf Coast)
  - Torquay Surf Club support (Surf Coast)
  - Lorne search and rescue support (Surf Coast)
  - Jan Juc drowning (Surf Coast)
  - Warrnambool House fire resident support
  - State Emergency Operations Centre activated Jan 2nd – 3rd and on standby for Jan 4-6 Jan
  - Victoria Square residential fire (Feb)
  - Altona North VicPol incident, Hobson's Bay
  - Manor lakes Community, Wyndham Vale, Wyndham City Council
  - Warrnambool House fire, City of Warrnambool
  - Standby – Geelong area incident, City of Greater Geelong
- 

### Exercises

- Exercise Noah (NWMR Collaboration)
- Recovery Partner Exercise, facilitated by Red Cross
- Scheduled
  - ◊ Wyndham
  - ◊ Melton
  - ◊ North West Collaboration Exercise (August)

## Working with Disaster—Clergy and Bushfire

The YIRSP, in collaboration with the VCC Emergencies Ministry and Creative Ministries Network of the Uniting Church, have recently completed a project titled “Working with Disaster, Clergy and Bushfire”. This research project looked at the affects of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires on Ministers in the fire affected areas of Kinglake, Marysville, Whittlesea and surrounding areas, across a number of denominations. Lisa Jacobson, project officer, has completed the project and the results are to be released in the coming months with a launch by Emergency Management Commissioner, Mr. Craig Lapsley.





# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Craig Campbell—Assistant State Manager

**CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY:**  
Experience vs. Discipline



## **Training Statistics for Calendar Year 2015 to Date**

|                                           |           |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Personal Support Training</b>          | 11        |
| <b>Team Leader Training</b>               | 0         |
| <b>Coordinator Training Module A</b>      | 0         |
| <b>Coordinator Training Module B -</b>    | 0         |
| (Incident Activity Coordination)          |           |
| <b>EOC Training</b>                       | 0         |
| <b>LGA Intro to PST</b>                   | 20        |
| <b>Professional Development delivered</b> | 0         |
| <b>Annual Conference</b>                  | 0         |
| <b>Total persons to date</b>              | <b>31</b> |

As of April 25<sup>th</sup>, 145 volunteers, across the state, have participated in new, refresher or advanced training.

During the high risk fire season, scheduled training events are limited to those that can be cancelled on short notice, should that be required.

## **Personal Support - Psychological First Aid Training**

One training event has been held in February, with 11 volunteers attending.

## **LGA Introduction to Personal Support Training**

The **Introduction to Personal Support** has widened beyond the Metro North West Collaboration and has been delivered in Mitchell Shire.

This training prepares municipal staff members, who volunteer to come off-line from their customary role, to support emergency management and relief and recovery arrangements with people affected by emergencies.

A further value in delivering this training is partnership building with the municipalities involved, greatly enhancing their awareness of VCC EM and our service delivery with them.

## **Team Leader Training**

Team Leader Training events will be scheduled later in the year.

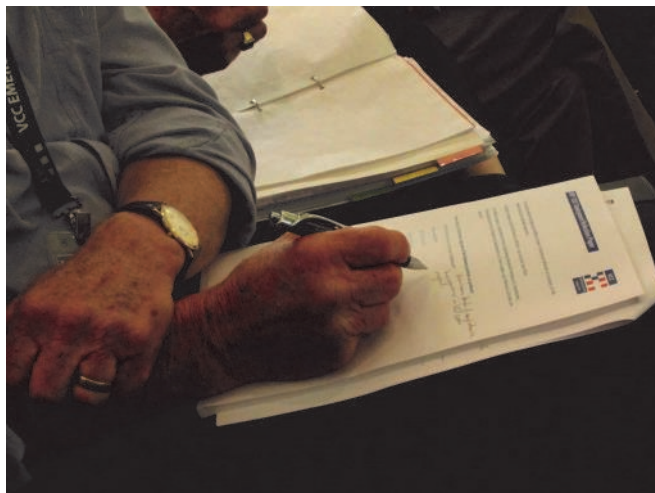
Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.  
Aristotle

# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Craig Campbell—Assistant State Manager

## Module A Training

This advanced training module prepares newly appointed Area and Regional Coordinators for the preparation tasks central to their role: Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers; knowledge and support of VCC EM policy frameworks; and Partnership Building with other Agencies,



## Establishment Summary

| ESTABLISHMENT SUMMARY  |                     |                    |              |
|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| REGIONS                |                     |                    |              |
| METROPOLITAN REGIONS   | REGIONAL COORDS     | AREA COORDS        | TRAINED VOLS |
| CBD                    | 1/1                 | 1/1                | 277          |
| NORTHERN & WEST        | 3/3                 | 11/13              |              |
| SOUTHERN               | 2/2                 | 9/10               | 147          |
| EASTERN                | 1/1                 | 3/7                | 271          |
| RURAL REGIONS          |                     |                    |              |
| GIPPSLAND              | 2/2                 | 6/6                | 159          |
| HUME                   | 1/1                 | 9/12               | 162          |
| LODDON MALLEE          | 1/1                 | 9/10               | 274          |
| GRAMPIANS              | 1/1                 | 6/11               | 109          |
| BARWON SOUTH WEST      | 2/2                 | 8/9                | 124          |
| Unassigned to Region   |                     |                    | 140          |
| Awaiting safety checks |                     |                    | 50           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>           | <b>14/14 = 100%</b> | <b>62/79 = 78%</b> | <b>1713</b>  |
|                        |                     |                    |              |

These figures indicate an excellent capacity across the State to respond in a timely, scale-able and sustained manner.

# VOLUNTEER CONSULTATION FORUM

## Volunteer Consultative Forum Terms of Reference

### Role of the Volunteer Consultative Forum (VCF)

Volunteers play a critical role in the delivery of emergency management across Victoria. There are over 100,000 volunteers throughout the State across a wide range of agencies, supported by paid staff.

The Victorian Government's Emergency Management reform program highlights a fundamental shift in the way we think about the links between response, relief and recovery. Emergency management needs to reflect an 'All-Hazards, All-Agencies, All-Seasons, All-Emergencies, All-Together' approach.

As part of this reform process, the VCF has been established to facilitate the Government's commitment to consult and engage with emergency management volunteers and their representative bodies on matters that affect them, as outlined in the *Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper*.

The VCF will provide a voice for volunteers through direct feedback to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and government on proposals (current and future) impacting Victoria's emergency management volunteers. Members of the VCF will be responsible for representing and expressing the views of emergency management volunteers, and reporting back to agencies, volunteers and government on actions, initiatives and outcomes of the VCF.

The VCF will compliment, not replace, existing arrangements within the emergency management sector.

### VCF Objectives

The VCF will provide a forum for direct volunteer input and advice to the Minister on matters relating to:

1. Issues affecting Victoria's emergency management volunteers, and matters relating to the capacity of volunteers to deliver emergency management services in Victoria.
2. Strengthening the culture of volunteerism in Victoria and building a shared understanding of, and respect for, the critical role that volunteers play in the emergency management sector.
3. Improving the understanding within communities and non-volunteer agencies of the fundamental importance and value of emergency management volunteers.
4. Maximising the capacity, capability and utilisation of volunteers through a collaborative sector-wide approach to issues such as recruitment, retention, training, welfare, development pathways and diversity, including recognition of their employers as key partners.
5. Monitoring the health and wellbeing of the volunteers and provisions to ensure a systematic approach to their protection.
6. Developing and reviewing the broader emergency management strategic direction, reform processes and legislative obligations to volunteers.
7. Consolidating a Victorian position on volunteer related issues for the national emergency management agenda.
8. Facilitating a communications/information sharing network between volunteers, agencies and government.

### Reporting

The VCF, through the Chair, will brief the Minister as required.

VCF reports and recommendations to the Minister on any matter will be advisory in nature, and are not binding on the Minister or government.

# VOLUNTEER CONSULTATION FORUM

## Volunteer Consultative Forum Terms of Reference

### Membership

VCF membership, as guided by the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV), comprises emergency management volunteers and agency nominees from the following departments and agencies:

| Agency                                   | Nominees | Volunteers | Total     |
|------------------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------|
| Ambulance Victoria                       | 1        | 1          | 2         |
| Australian Volunteer Coast Guard         | 0        | 2          | 2         |
| Country Fire Authority                   | 1        |            | 3         |
| – Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria       |          | 2          |           |
| Life Saving Victoria                     | 1        | 1          | 2         |
| Red Cross                                | 1        | 1          | 2         |
| Salvation Army                           | 1        | 1          | 2         |
| St John Ambulance                        | 1        | 1          | 2         |
| Victoria State Emergency Service         | 1        |            | 3         |
| – Victoria Emergency Service Association |          | 2          |           |
| Victorian Council of Churches            | 1        | 1          | 2         |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>8</b> | <b>12</b>  | <b>20</b> |

### Government Representatives

- ☐ Office of the Minister for Emergency Management
- ☐ Fire Services Commissioner

Where a member is unavailable to attend a meeting, a proxy may be nominated or teleconferencing facilities may be arranged.

The VCF membership will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Subject matter specialists may be called upon, if required.

### Chair

An independent Chair will be appointed by the VCF for a period of time to be determined by the VCF. The Emergency Management Commissioner will act as the interim Chair until such time as a permanent chair is appointed.

The role of the Chair will be to represent the VCF to the Minister, government and emergency management agency CEOs.

### VCF Members Role Description

VCF members are responsible for:

- actively participating in the VCF
- representing and expressing the views of emergency management volunteers
- fostering new ideas to assist discussion at the VCF
- reporting to agencies, volunteers and government on actions, initiatives and outcomes of the VCF.

# VOLUNTEER CONSULTATION FORUM

## **Volunteer Consultative Forum Terms of Reference**

### **Funding and Resources**

There has been no funding allocated to the VCF.

Expenses associated with holding VCF meetings will be met by the Department of Justice (Emergency Management Victoria).

Out of pocket expenses for VCF volunteer members will be met by the agency for which they volunteer. That agency will have the opportunity to seek reimbursement from the Department of Justice (Emergency Management Victoria).

### **Meetings**

The VCF will meet a minimum of four times in a calendar year.

### **Secretariat**

EMV will provide secretariat and administrative support for the VCF.

### **Communications Strategy**

A communications strategy will be developed by the VCF.

### **Terms of Reference - Review**

A review of the Terms of Reference will be conducted 18 months following the first VCF meeting. A review may be conducted earlier if required and agreed to by the VCF membership.



# RESEARCH

Stuart Stuart—State Manager

## *“Trauma, Spirituality and Recovery: Toward A Spiritually—Integrated Psychotherapy”*

*Meichenbaum, Ph.D. Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.*

As we continue in this newsletter the theme of spirituality, religion and its affect of coping during stress and trauma, we look to the above mentioned article by Meichenbaum.

I will review but a small part of the document for the purposes of this newsletter.

In Australia, there is sufficient evidence of religiosity / spirituality.

Victoria is one of the most culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse states in Australia. What is more, census figures tell us it is becoming more diverse. The 2011 Census data states:

- 26.2% of Victorians were born overseas in more than 200 countries (an increase from 23.8% in 2006)
- 46.8% of Victorians were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas (an increase from 43.6% in 2006)
- 23.1% of Victorians spoke a language other than English at home (an increase from 20.4% in 2006)
- 67.7% of Victorians followed 135 faiths - compared to 68.7% following 130 faiths in 2006

Religious diversity in Victoria is particularly striking:

The number of Victorians with a religion increased by 249,091 persons (7.4%), although there was a slight decrease in terms of the proportion of Victorians with a religion (from 68.7% in 2006 to 67.7% in 2011)

The three dominant religions – Western Catholic, Anglican Church and Uniting Church - have not changed significantly (5.3%, -2.2% and -8.4% respectively)

Given the evidence above regarding Victorian’s own perception of their beliefs, it is then not too difficult to determine that there is a need to include some form of spiritual care into the emergency management arrangements integrated with psychological interventions.

“Religion can play a significant role in helping people to cope with stress or to protect against stress. For many, if not most, when disaster or trauma strikes, it is religion, ritual and faith/spirituality that is embraced as a central means of coping (Bergin, 1983; Gartner et al., 1991; Meichenbaum, 1994).

Consider the following examples:

- A National survey conducted by Schuster et al. (2001) found that, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, 90% of Americans reported that they turned to prayer, religions or some form of spiritual activity with loved ones in an effort to cope;
- Following Hurricane Katrina, 92% of those who survived and who were evacuated to shelters in Houston said that their faith played an important role in helping them get through ([www.kff.org/newsmedia/7401.cfm](http://www.kff.org/newsmedia/7401.cfm));
- When a tornado struck a small southern town in Piedmont Alabama, destroying a church filled with parishioners and killing several children, including the minister’s four-year-old daughter, the survivors struggled with such questions as “Why? Why a church? Why those little children? Why? Why? Why?” The minister and parishioners commented:

# RESEARCH

Stuart Stuart—State Manager

## *“Trauma, Spirituality and Recovery: Toward A Spiritually—Integrated Psychotherapy”*

*Meichenbaum, Ph.D. Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.*

*“Their faith is shaken, it is not the same as losing it. Events like this only strengthen our faith... Our faith is an anchor in a turbulent sea... Those who die inside a church will find the gates of heaven open wide.... As long as we have faith, we are strong. No matter how dark it is, if I have faith, I have a song in the night.... Our beliefs are trembled and bent, but they did not break.... There is no reason. Our faith is not determined by reason. Our faith is undergirded by belief, where there is no reason.” (Meichenbaum, 1994, p545)*

We have discussed numerous times in these newsletters, that people, who have faith and spirituality as part of their coping mechanism, demonstrate a greater ability to recover quickly.

Spiritual rituals function as a protective factor psychologically.

Working with psychologists, social workers and other therapists, in a collaborative way, will go a long way to help each discipline better understand each other, without fear or favour, and better support affected communities.

Each discipline has much to offer the other.

Meichenbaum identifies a number of coping activities in which people may engage, some helpful, some unhelpful to recovery; and they include:

- Engaging in spiritually based activities such as prayer and worship.
- Development of a ‘hope’ mentality
- Forgiveness
- Undertaking spiritual acts, such as good deeds, fasting, spiritually guided imagery
- Seeking out spiritual support, attend spiritual services
- Constructing meaning— contemplation, reflection, questioning
- Pleading with God
- Engaging in avoidant coping strategies
- Viewing traumatic events from a punitive perspective

The last three are seen as unhelpful to effective recovery.

In terms of helping clinicians understand how they can effectively engage someone from a religious or spiritual perspective—given this will be an important part of the conversation toward healing, and in supporting a continuum of care approach to recovery, Meichenbaum suggests the following for psychologists and social workers in absence of a Chaplain or faith leader.

*There has been much discussion about what are the mechanisms and processes that contribute to the benefits of engaging in religious and spiritual acts (Cacioppo et al., 2005; Davis et al., 2000; Falselt et al., 2003; Gall et al., 2005; Koenig et al., 2001; Meichenbaum, 1994; Pargament, 2007; Pennebaker, 1997; Snyder, 2002; Spilka et al., 2003). The proposed mechanisms include the following:*

# RESEARCH

Stuart Stuart—State Manager

## *“Trauma, Spirituality and Recovery: Toward A Spiritually—Integrated Psychotherapy”*

*Meichenbaum, Ph.D. Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.*

1. Normalize reactions and internal spiritual struggles.
2. Encourage emotional expression, emotional control and emotional comfort
3. Convey a sense of “control” and “mastery”
4. Foster social connectedness
5. Promote group cohesiveness, connection and a sense of communion, both with the past and the present.
6. Provide opportunities for public expressions of shared grief and mutual support and reassurances that victims’ sacrifices and lives will be remembered, honored and commemorated.
7. Offer a degree of closure on a painful period and nurture hope.
8. Nurture meaning-making in the face of misfortune
9. Provide guidance in the form of coping models

These coping strategies may be helpful, especially in circumstances where there are issues of control, guilt and misguided responsibility by the affected person.

Meichenbaum goes on to explain how psychologists and social workers can adequately assess how an individual’s spiritual or religious connection is affecting their recovery and healing. He provides some specific questions that can be asked by the clinician to determine this.

*“Griffith and Griffith (2002) and Pargament (2007) discuss how to talk with people about their spiritual lives and they suggest using “psycho-spiritual language,” exploring the client’s views about courage, peace, purpose in life, that frequently leads into a consideration of the client’s notions about faith and spirituality. For instance, consider the following questions:*

***When you are afraid or in pain, how do you find comfort and solace?***

***What sustains you in the midst of your troubles?***

***From what sources do you draw the strength and courage to go on?***

***What are the deepest questions your situation has raised for you?***

***How has this situation shaken your faith?***

***When in your life have you experienced forgiveness?***

***What legacy would you like to leave behind in your life?”***

What is all of this saying? It is a validation of the need to acknowledge that people’s religious and spiritual journey is impacted by a disaster event and yet also influences and shapes psychological and emotional recovery and healing. It is evidence that in Australia, we need to explore this more and not be sidelined by well meaning but ill informed psychologists and social workers (clinicians) who dismiss these very important contributions to a persons life, meaning and behavior.