



Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry Newsletter

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*Suffering is not what destroys people, rather “suffering without meaning”.
(Victor Frankl)*

A Quarterly Newsletter

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VCC Response to Victorian Fires

VCC EM continues to support affected communities in emergencies

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Operations

VCC EM has responded to or been placed on stand by for number of events across Victoria.

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Training & Development Page 3



State Conference

VCC EM State Conference held on 23rd October. More than 40 delegates represented.

Research

Stuart shares his understanding on recent research

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VCC EM has provided support to more than six emergency events and over 12 Municipal Emergency Exercises since January 2013

This year has been a busy one for volunteers and staff of the VCC Emergencies Ministry program.

To date, we have been deployed to six emergency events and more than 12 Municipal Emergency Exercises.

Volunteers are indicating that participating in exercises has helped them to feel more confident in responding to actual events, and therefore

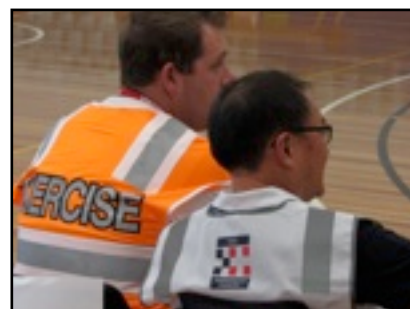


increases their likelihood of agreeing to a deployment.

The VCC EM will engage the fire affected areas in Wellington Shire in December, making this the third outreach in the area in 2013.

In early November, there was a recovery exercise at Melbourne Airport, where 13 VCC EM volunteers and staff attended and gained a great appreciation of the

complexity of responding to events in a security controlled environment.



Operations:

Debbie Laphorne

A significant amount of work has occurred in the operations area of the program.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

Summary of Activities

Deployment

- Yarra Ranges Powelltown Community meeting
- Hume City Coolaroo 2012 MVA, 1st anniversary
- Surf Coast (Torquay house fire, Outreach)
- Manningham City (Warrandyte Community meeting)
- Wellington Shire (Heyfield Ladies night)
- Wellington Shire Seaton / Glenmaggie Outreach

Exercises

- Manningham City Council (5)
- Surfex (Surf Coast / Colac Otways / Corangamite) (8)
- Inverloch (3rd Gippsland exercise) (14)
- Exercise Derrimut - Wyndham and Melton, NWMetro collaboration project (25)
- Melbourne Airport - Operation Reunite (12)
- Macedon Ranges - Exercise Picnic (8)
- Hobsons Bay - Exercise Devine (2)
- Campaspe VCC EM Area callout test
- Yarriambiak (4)

Meetings

- Gippsland 2013 Fires Recovery Review
- Gippsland collaboration Exercise Review
- NW Collaboration meetings
- Melton City Council Recovery Partner meeting
- Macedon Ranges MEMPC, Recovery Committee, exercise planning group
- Yarra Ranges Powelltown debriefing
- Macedon Ranges Suicide Prevention Round Table
- Manningham City MEMPC
- Central Goldfield MEMPC
- Whittlesea MEMPC
- DHS Working with Children in Emergencies
- DHS Summer Fire Outlook

Area Support

- Bendigo Team Gathering
- Mt Alexander Team Gathering
- Macedon Ranges Team gathering
- Baw Baw Team gathering

Preparedness

Training

State Coordinator Conference - Operational preparedness for season 2013-4
EMMC training

IAC training

Euroa

Team Leader Training

Rochester
Western Metro AC and RC

ERC Facility Audits

Hume City
Brimbank
City of Greater Bendigo

Regional Meetings

Hume region (10)
Barwon South West (3)
Loddon Mallee North (6)
Loddon Mallee South (4)
Metro South Inner (4)
Metro South Outer (4)
Barwon South West Inner & Grampians (5+)

Meeting with AC /RC

- Whittlesea / Knox / Bendigo / LaTrobe

Training & Development

Craig Campbell

Training and Development Report as of 15th November 2013

Team Leader Training

As reflected in the 51 people trained as Team Leaders, we are much better placed than previously as we come towards the fire season. Further TL training will need to wait for 2014, when we anticipate further progress towards an initial goal of 200 people.

Capabilities Framework and Quality Assurance

The Capabilities Framework was introduced to Coordinators at the October Conference. These Coordinators readily understood its potential for recruiting the best people as volunteer Personal Support Workers and Chaplains, and for identifying training gaps and possibilities for development of existing volunteers.

The Quality Assurance framework assists by naming VCC EM processes for safety checks, essential training, faith community referee support, debriefing following deployment and a deployment reflection paper, all designed to ensure our volunteers are safe and effective. It names the red lights that should alert us to unhelpful practice, and offers language and processes for addressing unhelpful practice.

Good use of both documents anticipates the Emergency Management Performance Standards and Assurance Framework currently being developed within the Office of Emergency Services Commissioner.

Coordinators Handbook

October's Coordinators Conference saw the release of Version 2 of the Coordinators Handbook. This version includes a number of Policy Documents, and the addition of several new documents that support our operations. Interestingly the changes overall have been much smaller than we anticipated with the release of Version 1 two years ago. This Handbook is central to effective and safe operation when we are called out.

Training Statistics for Year To Date

Accreditation Training	285
Team Leader Training	51
Coordinator Training Module A	23
Coordinator Training Module B	30
- (Incident Activity Coordination)	
Total persons to date 2013	389

Refresher Training

All volunteers trained more than three years ago are urged to attend refresher training. At this stage

refresher training is the current Accreditation Training. (See website: www.vccem.org.au select 'Training' menu option, register online). It is important that our capabilities keep pace with the rising expectations of the quality of our service to the Victorian community.

ESTABLISHMENT SUMMARY			
REGIONS			
METROPOLITAN REGIONS	REGIONAL COORDS	AREA COORDS	TRAINED VOLS
CBD	1/1	1/1	308
NORTHERN & WEST	2/3	10/13	
SOUTHERN	2/2	7/10	177
EASTERN	1/1	4/7	272
RURAL REGIONS			
GIPPSLAND	3/3	6/6	135
HUME	1/1	10/12	164
LODDON MALLEE	1/1	9/10	291
GRAMPIANS	1/1	5/11	109
BARWON SOUTH WEST	2/2	6/9	86
Unassigned to Region			150
TOTAL	14/15 = 93%	58/79 = 73%	1696**

There are a number of regions and local government areas still requiring a coordinator. If you are interested in this, please contact Craig Campbell at the State Office. **Training for this will be provided.**

CURRENT TOTAL VOLUNTEER NUMBER:

1696



Collaboration Projects

Collaborative arrangements (Red Cross)

The VCC EM continues to work with a number of partner agencies to support a coordinated and integrated response to relief and recovery.

In 2011, the VCC drafted a draft Memorandum of Understanding to work with the Australian Red Cross, Emergency Services Victoria.

I am pleased to report that the Australian Red Cross, Victorian Emergency Services branch have agreed to the Memorandum of Understanding. This will go along way to helping each agencies volunteers and municipalities understand how each agency operates in the emergency arrangements.

Both the VCC and Red Cross are also working on a set of Standard Operating Procedures that will clarify role, and responsibilities in relief and recovery. This would then be used partly as an educating tool to help municipalities understand the similarities and differences in operational capabilities across the State.

Working with Regional Municipal Collaboration Projects

The VCC EM has been working with the Northern and Western Metropolitan Collaboration Project, Eastern Collaboration Group, Loddon Mallee Collaboration and Gippsland Collaboration Group in the establishment of consistent MEMplans, resource sharing arrangements, and MoU's with external providers.

The VCC EM has successfully negotiated MoU's with NWMCP, Gippsland, and is currently negotiating with the Eastern Metropolitan Collaboration Group to be included on their regional MoU.

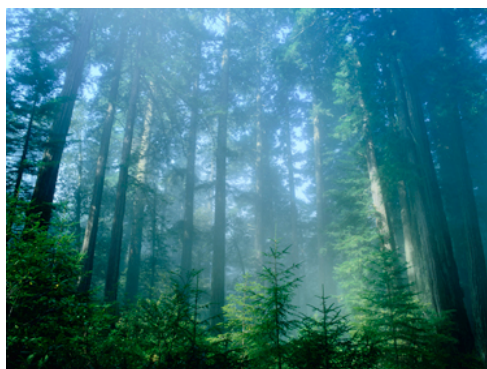
2013 State Conference

This year saw over 40 Regional and Area Coordinators attend the State Conference. The conference was launched by DHS Emergency Management Coordinator, Mr. Frank Armstrong who talked about the strengthening ties between the two agencies. He presented the VCC with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the Western and Northern Districts.



Mr. Craig Lapsley, Fire Services Commissioner discussed matters pertaining to collaboration, cooperation and community initiative. He also talked about the importance of recovery agencies and the work they perform in supporting affected communities.





Get prepared for fire this summer

Get prepared for fire this summer

This year, summer forecasts show that parts of Victoria are at above average risk of bush and grassfire.

Although it's important to prepare your property for fire, it's also essential to plan for what you're going to do if a fire starts this summer.

The most important preparations you can undertake are to understand your risk, talk to your household about what you will do if a fire starts, and know how to use Fire Danger Ratings and warnings.

Fire risk is different depending on whether you live on a city fringe next to grassland, or in a rural area close to scrub, grass or bushland. For information on the risk in your area and tips on leaving early, you can talk to your local CFA brigade or visit cfa.vic.gov.au.

Fire planning and preparation should include a discussion with your household at the start of

summer about when you will leave before a fire and where you will go. You also need to decide where you will shelter if you get caught out and cannot leave your property or area.

Understanding how to use Fire Danger Ratings is an important part of your preparations. Fire Danger Ratings tell you how bad a fire would be if one started. On a Code Red day, if a fire starts it will be uncontrollable. This means you need to leave the area the night before or early in the day that the Code Red rating is declared. On a Severe or Extreme day, if your house is not prepared and you are not able to defend it, leaving early in the day is your safest option. Remember, leaving early is always the safest option to protect yourself and your family.

Wherever you live, you need to know where to check fire warnings. Fire warnings are available at cfa.vic.gov.au, by calling the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667, or on the FireReady smartphone app. You should always access more than one

source for warnings, and you can also listen to local radio or follow CFA's Facebook page and Twitter feed for this information.

For more information on fire planning and preparation, go to cfa.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667



Research

New research is emerging related to the benefits of providing an holistic broad based psycho-spiritual care framework for disaster trauma affected individuals and communities

Readings from Neil Pembroke's book, "The Art of Listening - Dialogue, Shame and Pastoral Care".

Chapter 3 of the book is titled 'Pastoral Availability - The Foundation for Care'. As a Social Worker and therapist, one of the main ingredients to my practice is to be totally and completely available to the client at the time of the conversation. This is easier said than done.

Pembroke asks the question, 'what is foundational in the ministry of care? Is it interpersonal skills and counselling techniques? Or is it something else, something more fundamental?' He goes on to say that he believes availability is the personal quality which is foundational to pastoral care.

We are not talking about ones diary and simplifying the term to ones availability of time. The kind of availability that Pembroke discusses is one which is rich, deep and inclusive of compassionate care, acceptance, empathy and complete receptivity to the other.

A challenge in the modern world of emergency management practice, is that there are a myriad of 'experts' who provide a service to affected individuals and communities by doing things 'to' those affected by the emergency. You only have to spend a small amount of time in an emergency relief centre to see how many people are rushing around 'doing things' for and to others.

The art of pastoral care is not so much about 'doing' to and for others. It is the art of availability. Yes this includes the provision of time. But the time discussed here is quality time where the pastoral carer is not so distracted by the events around them and the many people that may need support. It is about intentionally slowing time down enough to be completely available and present with the one person you are with at that moment.

What is important to recognise here is that it is no so much a skill as it is an attitude. It is an attitude that says I am completely available and present with THIS person for THIS moment in time. I cannot be distracted from this position. Some would argue that this is also a skill and there maybe some truth in that, however, I would strongly suggest that being able to sit with one person for the period of time they require you is also an attitude. It says that for this time I am not available for another. It says for this time, I am completely disposed to this individual. It says that I don't need to look busy in order to be accepted by others.

In fact, whilst emergency relief centres can be chaotic, it is vitally important for affected people's wellbeing that there is a space for calmness, quietness and rest. A place where people can be still. A place where the affected person can talk to someone who is truly available and present with them in that moment.

The value of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care is that it can seem as though the practitioner is not busy or seems to be doing very little. This should be the perception!!! If the Chaplain or Personal Support Worker/Pastoral Carer is running around, then there is something that is not quite right about that scenario.

The challenge is to help the other support agencies understand this process and not judge on the basis of observation alone.

**The Rev Stuart Stuart - State Manager
M Em Mgt., B Soc Wk. MAASW**