

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY



A.I.E.S.

## RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services

VOLUME 37 NO. 1 AUTUMN 2024

PRINT POST PUBLICATION NO. PP100018976





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*National Emergency Response* is published by  
Countrywide Austral  
1, 460 Bourke Street, Melbourne  
GPO Box 2466, Melbourne 3001  
Ph: (03) 9937 0200  
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# NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services

Autumn 2024 • National Emergency Response

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### FRONT COVER

Around 250 female VIC SES volunteers came together in March for the largest 'Women in Rescue' event yet. Six training events ran concurrently across Victoria focusing on the practical components of rescue operations.

Photo source: VIC SES



# NEW MEMBERS

The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services is pleased to announce the following emergency services people joined the AIES between November 2023-March 2024.

NAME	ORGANISATION	NAME	ORGANISATION
<b>NSW/ACT/International</b>			
Simon Batge	NSW Rural Fire Service	<b>QLD/NT</b>	
Andrew Doohan	NSW Police	Courtney Black	SES (Moreton Bay)
Scott Dove	SES NSW	Tamara Campion	SES (Moreton Bay)
Marnie Edwards	Marine Edwards Management	Donald Davis	SES (Moreton Bay)
Matthew Hawke	NSW Ambulance	Peta Foster	Urban Utilities
Andrew Hubbard	SES NSW	Tess Hope	Mater Group
Callum Johnston	Transport NSW	Margaret Lessells	QLD Police
Sarah Jane Nilsson	NSW Health	Sven Lotzvie	SES (Brisbane)
Yvonne Maria	Soil Conservation Service	Kylie Newman	SES (Moreton Bay)
Edward Orrego Ruiz	SES NSW	Gordon Wockner	SES (Moreton Bay)
Andrew Relf	Mines Rescue		
Robert Schilder	Sydney Trains	<b>TAS</b>	
Brody Wickham	NSW Forestry Corporation	Helen Jenkinson	Ambulance
<b>VIC</b>			
Tamara Watson	Mansfield Shire Council		
Leah Thompson	North East Water	<b>SA/WA</b>	
Mandira Panday	Johns Lyng Disaster Management	Paul Roberts	Fire & Emergency Services WA
Jai Edwards	Australian Red Cross	Abigail Waters	SES SA



[www.facebook.com/aies.online](https://www.facebook.com/aies.online)



[www.linkedin.com/groups/3844281](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3844281)

Articles, photographs and short stories are sought for the *National Emergency Response Journal*. Please submit items for the next edition to [editor@aies.net.au](mailto:editor@aies.net.au) by **20 May 2024**. There is an annual award for the best article submitted by an AIES member.

# NOTICE, AND AGENDA, FOR THE AIES 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



All Members of The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services (AIES) are cordially invited to attend the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held at QFESA, 15 Howard Smith Drive, Port of Brisbane on Saturday 11 May 2025 at 6pm (AEDT), and the AIES Annual Dinner which will immediately follow the AGM will be at the same location.

The 2024 AIES AGM will also be conducted as a hybrid event, thus allowing virtual attendance by those not able to travel to Brisbane. Further advice in relation to registration and login details for virtual attendance will be disseminated in due course.

The Order of Business (Agenda) is as follows:

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of the Financial status of Members Present, Proxy Holders / Submitters
4. Confirmation of Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting
5. President's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Rotation of Directors
8. Notice of Motions
9. 2025 AIES AGM

AGM attendance either in person or virtually and for any apologies please the National Secretary via email at [secretary@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary@aies.net.au) RSVP for the Annual Dinner via email to [secretary@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary@aies.net.au) by COB Friday 26 April 2024 and

advise if there are any dietary requirements. Note that late RSVPs for dinner will not be accepted.

Kindly note that proxies for the AGM must be forwarded to the National Secretary via email at [secretary@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary@aies.net.au) to be received no later than 5pm Friday, 10 May 2024. In accordance with the Constitution and Rules, Proxies received after this date and time cannot be accepted.

Members may wear their medals and awards at this meeting and dinner.

*CJ Miller*  
Christine Miller FAIES  
National President



**FREE  
GUIDES**

## **ARE THEY TRIPLE OK?**

An R U OK? conversation guide for  
family and friends of police and emergency  
services workers and volunteers

**ARE  
THEY  
TRIPLE  
OK?**

An R U OK? conversation guide for  
emergency services workers and volunteers

**RUOK?**  
A conversation could change a life.

Are They Triple OK? Trailer  
Are They Triple OK?

**ARE  
THEY  
TRIPLE  
OK?**

**RUOK?**

**RUOK?**  
A conversation could change a life.

**PODCAST NOW  
STREAMING**

# **ARE THEY TRIPLE OK?**

Even the most resilient emergency services workers and volunteers can be affected by stress and trauma related to their work, or as a result of other life challenges. Are They Triple OK? resources provide practical tools and tips on how to start an R U OK? conversation with a workmate, friend or family member in the emergency services, to help them feel connected and supported, long before they're in crisis.



Scan to  
learn more

[ruok.org.au/triple-ok](https://ruok.org.au/triple-ok)

**RUOK?**<sup>TM</sup>  
A conversation could change a life.

# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Christine (Chris) Miller, FAIES F.ISRM AMBCI

*National President*



*Massey Uni Short Course fieldwork group at the Mt Victoria Lookout, Wellington, New Zealand. March 2023.*



**C**ongratulations to our new Company Secretary, Dr Marilena Salvo. The AIES is fortunate that Marilena has joined the Board bringing previous Company Secretary experience as a volunteer with the Australian Women in Security Network (AWSN) and her work in several paid governance roles for a number of associations, and now the CSIRO.

I have recently emailed all AIES members sharing highlights from our February 2024 (National) Board Meeting. This is a new initiative, which we are trialling as another of your Board's efforts to keep AIES members better informed. If you have anything you would like to share about further improvements to members' services that you would like us to consider, please email [president@aies.net.au](mailto:president@aies.net.au)

The NSW/ACT/INT, QLD/NT and VIC Division Management Committees continue to email monthly newsletters to their division members. Other state division committees share these newsletters by email with their members. These newsletters provide updates on AIES activities, including webinars and other meetings, as well as information on emergency management conferences, seminars, training courses, etc, being run by government and private sector organisations throughout Australasia.



*AIES President Chris Miller makes opening remarks on behalf of the World Bank before the SIMEX begins, Eswatini. November 2023.*

Under the chairmanship of David Parsons ESMA, FAIES, and with the AIES Board's approval, more applicants have become Certified Emergency Services Managers (CESMs). Congratulations to you all with another post nominal for some AIES members and fellows to recognise their continuing commitment to learning and leadership in emergency services. Thanks to David and AIES webmaster and Independent Director AIES Board Costa Zakis there is a page on our website listing those AIES members and fellows who have achieved CESM certification, plus another page devoted to CESM submissions. You can apply to be considered for

CESM certification through the AIES Member Portal where you will find a YouTube clip to assist you to make CESM applications with the necessary details for favourable consideration.

Advocacy is one of the services the AIES offers our members. We provide a voice for the Emergency Services, by speaking out on issues that affect our members and the community in general. Your Board looks forward to more opportunities to involve members and our partner organisations in preparing these submissions and sharing the insights of our many members.

Due to the initially short timeframe, I made a personal submission to the





*AIES President Chris Miller visited Magogeni Informal border crossing before STARTEX.*



*Dr Rejoice, Deputy Secretary, Eswatini Ministry of Health at the SIMEX Closing Ceremony.*



*Acting CEO Eswatini National Disaster Management Agency Victor Mahlalela and Chris Miller.*

Australian Government's COVID Inquiry. That closing date has now been extended with the Inquiry members deciding to keep its submission page available. They are now willing to consider late submissions. Please note the reporting date to Australian Government for this Inquiry remains September 2024. If you would like to contribute to, or perhaps lead a small team, to prepare an AIES submission to this Inquiry, please email me. Personal submissions can be made via the portal. More details on the Inquiry's progress are available on page 8.

During mid-November 2023, I observed and evaluated a full scale,

public health emergency simulation in the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) with more than 100 participants including the Royal Eswatini Police and Defence, Ministry of Health representatives and role players as well as partners from the WHO, IOM, UNICEF, and Africa CDC. It has been one of the highlights of my long career in emergency management to observe how our Eswati brothers and sisters have matured in their health sector emergency management capability since we started working together in April 2022. I will be sad to wrap up my World Bank contract with the Kingdom on 31 March 2024.

In early May 2024, I am scheduled to fly to Colombo, Sri Lanka as the lead exercise facilitator for the World Bank, a seven-country tabletop simulation covering most countries in the South Asia Region. I have never visited Sri Lanka or Southern Africa until the World Bank sent me to both. It used to be: "Join the Navy to see the world". Now it seems becoming an emergency manager can send you to the most surprising places too.

A more familiar place to many of us, including our local AIES members, is New Zealand. From 4 to 8 March 2024, I attended another excellent short course in emergency



AIES President Chris Miller joined by Dr Joseph (Joe) Musubao, Dr Masitsela (Patrick) Mhlanga and Lungile Sipehele Sansile Hlatshwayo, another World Bank consultant at the SIMEX closing ceremony.



AIES President Chris Miller kitted-out in her evaluator tabard at STARTEX.



WHO Country Representative, Dr Susan Tembo, briefing key stakeholders at the SIMEX Closing Ceremony.



AIES President Chris Miller (third from the left) being briefed before heading to Mbabane to evaluate and observe the Government briefing at the National Disaster Management HQ.

management at Massey University, Mt Cook, Wellington campus.

Aside from the networking, keynote addresses included Dave Gawn, CEO, (The future of emergency management) and Dr Tom Smith, Scientific Advisor (Catastrophic Response Planning), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), NZ.

Other presentations covered a wide range of vulnerable groups or issues that our emergency plans may not address as well as they could such as:

- animals – not only pets, but stock and larger animals like horses
- larger bodied people
- environmental health
- communicating uncertainty
- human factors
- wayfinding (signage) and
- weather warnings from the NZ and Solomon Islands Bureaus of Meteorology.

Day one concluded with a public talk titled 'Before the 'Big One' hits, What should we do?' by Maximilian Dixon, Washington State Emergency Management.

Day four concluded with the announcement of the Professor

Douglas Paton awards. The late Professor's family is honoured to share three awards – 1) to fund attendance at future short courses targeting Pacific Island representatives; 2) to assist in publishing a PhD thesis in areas related to the Professor's research; and 3) to recognise another long-term leader in this field.

The final day is 'Classroom in the coach', which includes a field excursion to explore many aspects of emergency management planning, and options for mitigation in the Wellington and Hutt Valley as well as a visit the GeoNet operations centre (earthquake and tsunami monitoring in NZ). Participants also:

- visit tsunami hazard zones
- discuss tsunami warnings
- explore the Wellington fault
- look at land-use planning for earthquakes, tsunami, landslides, and flooding
- examine community-based preparedness activities.

The AIES is a co-host of the Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference in July (see page 13 for details).

Abstracts from speakers to present in parallel sessions to the keynotes are currently being reviewed by the conference committee, which includes AIES Independent Director and Vice-President, AIES Victorian Division, Doug Caulfield OAM RFD FAIES. The AIES will also be exhibiting with Jenny Crump and John Moy staffing our stand.

The AIES will also be exhibiting at the 2024 Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) Conference with the theme 'Disasters have no boundaries: Navigating the increasing frequency and complexity of events' on 16 – 17 July 2024 at the Pullman Melbourne Albert Park.

We look forward to meeting more AIES members on 11 May 2024 in Brisbane when the Queensland/ Northern Territory Division hosts our 47th Annual General Meeting. This time together includes a hybrid daylong meeting for the Board and all AIES members available to join in person or remotely for the AGM. More information about the AGM is available on page 2.

Stay safe, well, and careful in another long and challenging disaster season. •





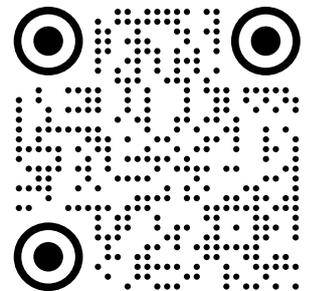
# Keeping Australia's emergency service workers mentally fit and strong.

## National Emergency Worker Support Service

Australia's emergency service workers and volunteers keep our communities safe, but stress and anxiety are often part of the job. Experiencing mental health challenges after a traumatic event is normal and very common – and it's treatable, too.

### Confidential support is available now:

- Take a quick online mental health check and receive a report that identifies your symptoms and provides recommendations for support.
- Book up to 12 sessions with leading, trauma-informed clinicians via telehealth or face-to-face. Free of charge, with no Medicare or GP referral required.
- Access information and resources to help manage your symptoms.



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Visit our website [nationalemergencyworkersupport.org.au](https://nationalemergencyworkersupport.org.au)



**Black Dog  
Institute**



Panel Members L-R: Dr Angela Jackson, Ms Robyn Kruk AO (Chair) and Professor Catherine Bennett.

# COVID-19 RESPONSE INQUIRY

Bringing the jigsaw puzzle pieces together

By Ms Robyn **Kruk** AO Chair, Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry

*"The missing piece is to look at it as a national response, not on a state-by-state basis. That has not been done before."*

Following an incredibly good response to our public submissions, we've made great progress on the Covid inquiry. This has been largely due to the high level of interest from people who were directly involved including those severely impacted by the response measures, and frontline organisations.

We have also made significant headway talking with decision makers and key advisors at a national, state and territory and local government level as well as representatives from industry

bodies, community groups and the research sector.

We still have more work to do in this area which will continue over the coming months.

Looking forward and preparing for another 'unprecedented incident'.

The Australian community should feel confident that our nation is prepared to deal with a future pandemic.

We all hope that it will be 30 or 50 years away. But complacency is never a friend.

We've seen how quickly an incident like COVID-19 can occur. And we

have also seen the importance of good evidence in driving a proportionate response.

That is why an inquiry like this is so necessary. It gives people a chance to share what they learned, what they hope could be replicated if needed in the future, and what they would not do again.

Those lessons need to be captured. We can't risk them being lost through the passage of time or because people are no longer in those positions.

We owe that to everyone who worked so hard to keep the community safe.





# EASTERN GURUMA

*engaging ethnicity, delivering diversity*

08 9325 2424 • [www.easternguruma.com.au](http://www.easternguruma.com.au)

Eastern Guruma (EG) is a highly regarded Australian independent First Nations Company, enriching the communities and clients it serves through growth, sustainability, and diversity. EG uses state-of-the-art technology for surveying, auditing, and compliance processes, improving and exceeding client expectations and delivering mutually beneficial stakeholder outcomes.

Eastern Guruma has been in operation for 15 years as a successful and respected First Nations owned business, providing services in construction, landscaping, facilities management, traffic management and more. EG is owned by members of the language group Muntulgura Guruma, the lands of which surround Tom Price in the Pilbara region of WA, the team has delivered services to Australia's largest mining companies, Rio Tinto, BHP, and Fortescue Metals Group.

Its facility management services alone provide cleaning and maintenance services for mine sites, Eastern Guruma employs opportunities to 80+ First Nations people across 25 different language groups. Opportunities are created through the jobs directly available, including traineeships, apprenticeships, cadetships, scholarships, and graduate program.

A 5 year concurrent contract for facilities management between Eastern Guruma and Rio Tinto fuelled jobs and growth in the Pilbara region while keeping the site's mine site facilities clean and sanitised. A full list of past and current projects can be found on Eastern Guruma's website.

Samantha Connors and Tania Stevens are the owners and directors of Eastern Guruma. Ms Stevens has been the company's owner since its foundation in 2004, Tania is an Eastern Guruma Traditional Custodian of the Muntulgura Guruma in the Pilbara of Western Australia.

Ms Connors was born and raised in Roebourne Western Australia and is a Muntulgura Guruma Member from the Tom Price area. Samantha's father was a Ngarluma man, and her mother is a Bunjima/Muntulgura Guruma woman.

A strong culture of teamwork and collaboration has led Eastern Guruma to enter partnerships and joint ventures with other First Nations groups such as Wirlu-Murra Enterprise & Karlayura Group. Karlayura Group is 100% owned by the traditional owners of the Nyiyaparli and Banyjima country, while Wirlu-Murra is also a 100% owned First Nations company.

EG partnerships with First Nations businesses have seen the growth of new business opportunities and further employment and training for First Nations people. Our joint venture with Wirlu-Murra Enterprises has led to a successful project at Solomon Mine. The Road Maintenance contract has a growing number of First Nations employees, over 50%, and has led to further business for both Eastern Guruma and Wirlu-Murra, as joint venture partners and individual businesses.

This partnership has seen Eastern Guruma become the major partner mentor, helping Wirlu-Murra to build their capability and operations and take on 50% of the Road Maintenance contract as well as grow their business.

Eastern Guruma endeavours to grow the number of First Nations people within its company through direct employment and subcontracting. Our vision is to create pathways to empowerment for First Nations people to participate in the Australian economy.

Eastern Guruma and Karlayura Group have established a joint venture that provides services across different "native title" land areas. The Eastern Guruma Native Title Agreement states the area of about 6,774 Square kilometres is located 40km north of Paraburdoo Western Australia.

Ms Stevens and Ms Connors strongly believe that the knowledge, skills, and experiences of First Nations people provide a rich learning environment for all people who contribute to improving the design and delivery of services for Eastern Guruma.

To find out more about high-quality facilities management, construction and landscaping services that enrich a vibrant and diverse community, please visit

[www.easternguruma.com.au](http://www.easternguruma.com.au)



# THE QUEENSLAND AMBULANCE RESPONSE TO PANDEMICS SINCE 1900

A two-part series on some of the nation's greatest challenges by Dr Mick Davis AM ASM

By Dr Michael John (Mick) **Davis** AM, ASM, Hon Doc Uni CQU, LMFACP, FCHSM, LFAIES, MBA.

*"State and Territory Governments have been developing plans for the delivery of a vaccine program to their populations... and it has been recommended that this begin from..."*

**D**oes this sound familiar? Certainly, in these COVID-19 times we have been hearing such messages regularly. But these words were from the QAS Medical Director's directive to QAS paramedics in September 2009!

Queensland has experienced several pandemics over the years, so let's look at those the QAS has worked though since 1900, eight years after the Queensland Ambulance began.

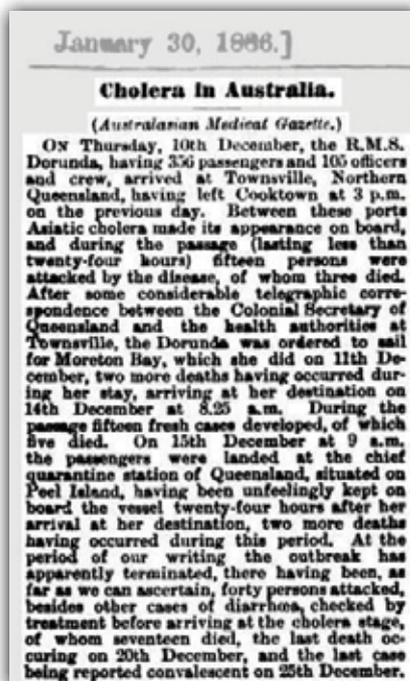
## 1900: THE PLAGUE

In 1900, bubonic plague had broken out in The Rocks in Sydney bringing fears of "the Black Death" (as it was known) spreading through the community. This was the third time the world had seen the plague with the first recorded pandemic in 1346 in Constantinople. In Australia, relatives of the infected were sent to quarantine stations and the fatalities were far less than the previous iterations of the plague, with 535 deaths and a total of 1371 cases.

While a limited immunisation program saw Haffkine's Serum, the first vaccine developed to treat the plague (cultivated in mutton broth), used successfully, this provided only a few hundred doses and the plague had already spread across the colonies.

It took two decades for Australia to be plague-free. None the less, there were lessons learnt by the fledgling Queensland Ambulance (still CATB in 1900). One of these was the value of disinfection of equipment and utensils, and this would set a foundation for what was to come.

In November 1898, a fumigating shed was built at the rear of the QATB Brisbane Wharf Street Centre, to improve disinfection of brigade equipment, which was previously disinfected at the Brisbane General Hospital. The value of this facility during the plague was immeasurable.



## 1910-1911 (AND LATER IN 2005): CHOLERA

With the plague still in the Queensland communities, the QATB officers now found themselves facing a new cholera outbreak, known at the time as "The Sixth Cholera Pandemic" which hung around from 1910 to 1911.

Like its five previous incarnations, this pandemic originated in India where it killed more than 800,000 people, before spreading to many other countries. Our ambulance officers had learnt to take precautions (however primitive), including disinfection to protect themselves from contamination.

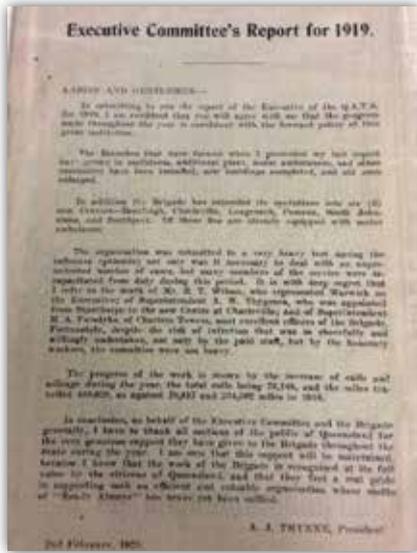
*The Queensland community was learning very slowly that open drains and sewers and "night carts" were unhealthy and better sanitary systems were needed.*

The Queensland community was learning very slowly that open drains and sewers and "night carts" were unhealthy and better sanitary systems were needed.

More recently in 2005, a QAS team worked in Banda Aceh delivering aid to the Tsunami-devastated Indonesian province, as part of Team Foxtrot, a 24-person specialist health team tasked with providing emergency medical support to the local precinct.

Cholera had broken out in the local community and was again a major concern for them.





Coolangatta's border quarantine camp during the Spanish Flu in 1919.

## 1919-1921: SPANISH INFLUENZA

The following is an extract from QATB Report from November 1919:

*"The organisation (QATB) was submitted to a very heavy test during the influenza epidemic; not only was it necessary to deal with an unprecedented number of cases, but many members of the ambulance service were incapacitated from duty during this period.*

*It is with deep regret that I refer to the death of Mr R T Wilson, who represented Warwick on the QATB Executive Committee, of Superintendent A W Thygesen who was appointed from Stanthorpe QATB to the new Centre at Charleville and of Superintendent H A Forsdyke of Charters Towers, most excellent officers of the Brigade.*

*Fortunately, despite the risk of infection that was so cheerfully and willingly undertaken, not only by the paid staff, but also by the honorary officers, the casualties were not heavy."*

As this excerpt indicates, from 1919 to 1921, QATB was busy dealing with influenza cases which affected our own officers too. This global event tested the relatively new ambulance service across the state in its 26th year of existence.

"Spanish influenza" began overseas in 1918 and was introduced to Australia with infected troops returning from World War I.

The first Queensland cases were recorded in Brisbane from May 1919. More than 50 million people died worldwide, and Queensland recorded more than 17,000 cases and 830 deaths.

This pandemic began in 1918, in WWI's final year and passed through soldiers in Western Europe in successively more virulent waves.

Unusually, the Spanish flu affected healthy young adults much more than its usual targets; children, the elderly or those with weakened immune systems. In Australia, the virus became known as 'pneumonic influenza.'

The virus spread rapidly around the world as soldiers returned from active service at the end of the war. Because of its remoteness from Europe, Australia had months to make necessary preparations.

The Queensland government closed its borders and established quarantine camps along its southern boundary.

The main camps were at Wallangarra and Coolangatta. Travellers were required to remain in the camps for seven days before being allowed to enter the State. (Does this sound familiar?)

All ships entering Queensland underwent strict inspections and regardless of these measures the epidemic reached the Sunshine State on 3 May 1919 when laundresses were diagnosed at Kangaroo Point Hospital in Brisbane.

It then spread across the state and defied all attempts to control it, including population isolation, inoculation, and the closure of places where groups of people would gather, like theatres and churches.

Hospitals overflowed and 400 temporary beds were set up in huts at the Brisbane Exhibition Grounds (the Ekka site).

St Laurence's Christian Brothers School in South Brisbane catered for the overflow from the Mater Hospital, while shire and church halls

provided temporary accommodation across Queensland.

In 1918-19, in Brisbane 9,570 influenza cases were reported and 11,099 in other parts of Queensland.

In 1919-20 cases reported in Brisbane declined to 1,483 but increased to 17,319 in the rest of the State.

Unlike previous outbreaks, many of the 830 influenza deaths in Queensland in 1919 were young adults.

The epidemic caused 69 deaths among the 596 residents of the Barambah (now Cherbourg) Aboriginal Settlement.

The QATB could not cope, and it was not uncommon for patients to be transported by private vehicle.

The Red Cross Women's Emergency Corps, which had worked hard during the war years, swung back into action.

The Toowong branch started operations at Dr Helen Shaw's residence, providing beef tea, barley water, and other food for ill people.

With so many men still away or returning from the war, the bulk of the work fell upon the women and the general community.

According to the North Qld Register (18 June 1919) Mr A E Weston, who became the first QATB Superintendent of Hughenden, was praised for the care he provided during this pandemic.

It provides a little insight on what the communities experienced at the time:

In 1921, Mr A. E. Weston volunteered to assist Dr. Rorke at the isolation hospitals. He worked very hard preparing both hospitals and lent his assistance at all times to the patients and the nursing staff. Too

much praise cannot be bestowed upon a man who so willingly assists in the cause of humanity in a crisis like this, and we are lucky in having such an able and willing worker in our midst. The schools have been closed down for two months, or until the influenza epidemic abates.

The 1933, in the QATB's publication "Safety First" the following advice was published:

THE EVER-PRESENT Epidemic - One of the notable features of medical practice today is the attention that is given to the prevention of disease. Until comparatively recent times, the medical profession devoted itself mainly to curing the sick or alleviating their sufferings. Then came a period distinguished by the discovery of germs, serums, vaccines, and anti-toxins and by increasing recognition of the beneficial effects of sanitation and isolation, and of the value of Preventive measures in general. As a result of the newer points of view, we are no longer afflicted with plagues and with ravaging epidemics of typhus, yellow fever, smallpox, and diphtheria.

We had an especially disastrous influenza epidemic some years ago, but that was because there is still a great deal to be learned concerning the prevention and control of this disease. It is also true that even when we have an exact knowledge of the cause of any human ailment, and of the measures that should be taken for its control, we still may have, from time to time, sporadic attacks of it, attended by several deaths. One reason for this is that there are many persons who will not apply the preventive measures effectively, even when these are simple and obvious - a personal idiosyncrasy with which it is most difficult to deal.

Does this sound familiar?

### 1920s-1950s: POLIO

Poliomyelitis, commonly shortened to polio, is an infectious disease caused by the poliovirus which can lead to long-term disability, paralysis and death.



Above: Iron Lung breathing machines in a Polio ward in the 1950s.

Australia has been officially polio free since 2000 but it has lingered on in a few countries.

In about 0.5 per cent of cases, it moves from the gut to affect the central nervous system, and muscle weakness causes a flaccid paralysis.

This can occur over a few hours to a few days.

The weakness most often involves the legs but may less commonly involve the head, neck, and diaphragm muscles.

Many people fully recover but in those with muscle weakness, 2 to 5 per cent of children and 15 to 30 per cent of adults die. In the 20th century, it was one of the most worrying childhood diseases in these areas.

The first polio vaccine was developed in the 1950s by Jonas Salk and soon after, Albert Sabin developed an oral vaccine, which has become the world standard polio vaccine.

QATB Officers transported many sick and/or crippled children during this prolonged episode of polio in Australia.

This is an excerpt from 'Les and 'Auntie Mabel' - Compiled by Bernie Pigott, 14 Nargong St - Date Unknown.

*With the intervention of the Second World War and lack of financial support, progress towards a QATB Cairns Aerial Ambulance was delayed. But Cairns Superintendent Les Clark persevered with this goal. He received the first glimmer of achievement in the latter part of the war when a 'Dragon' aircraft which could carry seven or eight persons was bought for six hundred and seventy pounds from Army Disposals Commission. The task of fitting out the 'Dragon' for ambulance work began with various money raising efforts. A station owner who was approached to contribute finance refused support until his own daughter became a victim of the polio epidemic. Realising the urgency of getting her to hospital, he then became an appreciated donator. For a further eight hundred and thirty pounds, which included insurance cover for one thousand pounds, the aircraft registered VH-AMB (Ambulance) was ready to answer the first call in December 1945.*

**TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT EDITION... •**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**DR MICHAEL JOHN (MICK) DAVIS**  
AM, ASM, HON DOC UNI CQU,  
LMFACP, FCHSM, LFAIES, MBA.

Mick retired from Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) in 2013 after nearly 50 years-service in operational and management roles and was appointed Volunteer Manager Qld Ambulance Heritage & History. In 1964, he began as an Honorary Officer in Rockhampton QATB and was appointed to the permanent staff in 1969. He now has 59 years with Qld Ambulance. Mick is President QAS Retired Officers' Assoc, Deputy Chairman/Treasurer of the KJ McPherson Education & Research Foundation, past director, Board of the Order of Australia Association, past Qld Branch Deputy Chairman/Treasurer and Past Chairman and currently Queensland Branch Deputy Chairman. He is a past Institute of Ambulance Officers (Aust) President and has served in most executive roles of the Institute, which became ACAP, Paramedics Australia and is now Australasian College of Paramedicine, and was Treasurer/Director until 2016, playing a key role in that organisation's

evolutionary transitions. He served 15 years as Director and Treasurer of the Health and Community Services Workforce Council and is currently a member of the Central Qld University Brisbane Campus Community Engagement Committee. Mick has served as Branch President and Director of Australasian College of Health Service Managers (ACHSM). He was appointed "Member" (AM) of the Order of Australia in June 2000 and awarded the Ambulance Service Medal (ASM) in 2012. In 2013, he was awarded the Surgeon-General John White Medal for Services to Health. In Dec 2016 he was awarded the status of "Doctor of the University" by the Chancellor of the Central Queensland University. In 2020 He was awarded the Centenary Medal by RQHS for services to Qld History. Mick started his work life as an apprentice Fitter in 1960 and became a member of the Qld Railway Ambulance Corps upon starting his worklife, this experience led to his long ambulance career.



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Rob and his team would like to thank all the first responders for their tireless effort within our community.



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# VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2024

There is a feast of training and networking opportunities offered by the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (AIDR). Here are some highlights from the 2024 program.

Christine (Chris) Miller, FAIES FISRM AMBCI National President

## LESSONS MANAGEMENT FORUM (LMF), 28-30 MAY 2024, ADELAIDE (ALSO OFFERED ONLINE)

### ONLINE MASTER CLASSES

I have attended two of these annual LMFs in person (Melbourne and Canberra) and one online (Brisbane). These are great learning opportunities focusing on a structured framework to lessons management that can move your observations, insights and lessons identified into lessons learned, where action has been taken to make the necessary improvements following incidents, near misses and simulation exercises. If my schedule permits, I look forward to joining other lessons practitioners later this year.

## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (ONLINE)

The Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum is pleased to offer a new Online Introduction to Leadership Program for all emergency management volunteers. This training is full of useful learnings and tools to help you discover and grow your leadership capabilities. This workshop covers basic leadership principles and approaches and provides take away tools to help put your skills into practice. These 45-60 minutes online courses can be done at your own pace.

## VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (FACE-TO-FACE)

The Volunteer Leadership Program equips volunteers from community organisations, not-for-profits, disaster relief organisations and local government within the emergency management sector, with the skills and confidence to grow as leaders. The program experience is immersive and collaborative, bringing together volunteers from different organisations and agencies to build knowledge and share experiences with each other. The program explores practical leadership frameworks through interactive learning, and participants gain both self-awareness and an enhanced ability to understand and contribute to their organisations. •

## 2024 DATES

LOCATION	PROGRAM DATES	APPLICATION DUE DATE
Darwin, NT	17-19 May	19 April
Sunshine Coast, QLD	7-9 June	10 May
Port Macquarie, NSW	26-28 July	28 June
Melbourne, VIC	16-18 August	19 July
Tasmania	20-22 September	23 August
Canberra, ACT	18-20 October	23 September

**Please note:** Locations are subject to change based on availability of suitable venue. Program dates may change based on operational incidents across the sector.

## AIES LEADERSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION

Apply for an AIES-sponsored place with one of the AIDR's face-to-face Leadership Programs in your state.

Contact AIES Immediate Past National President Steve Jenkins FAIES via email [steve.jenkins@aies.net.au](mailto:steve.jenkins@aies.net.au) to find out more or to apply.



# VICTORIAN DIVISION ANNUAL MEETING

The AIES Victoria Division held its 2024 Annual Meeting at the Aviary Hotel, Abbotsford, on 1 February.

By AIES Victoria Division Vice-President Doug **Caulfield** OAM, RFD, FAIES

It was attended by 20 members and guests who enjoyed a pleasant and very social atmosphere with a great deal of networking and fellowship being had by all.

Following the formal proceedings of the mandatory business relating to the acceptance of minutes and a financial report, AIES Victoria Division President Grant Coultman-Smith, OAM VA BJ JP FAIES announced the winner of the Alan Alder Award for 2024.

This year the award went to long standing member of AIES in Tony Oxford, OAM ASM CSTJ MAIES.

Tony has made a significant contribution to emergency management over many years and, in addition to receiving the annual Alan Alder Award for 2024, he was also presented with his 35 years of service pin.

The Alan Alder Award was initiated by the Victorian Division in 2021.

The award recognises the significant contribution by Alan Alder to emergency management and to the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services and supports the Objectives of the Institute.

The Criteria for the Alan Alder Award are:

- To have been an active, paid or volunteer, member of an emergency management agency or organisation in Victoria
- to have been a member of that agency or organisation for a minimum of 10 years
- to have displayed exceptional commitment to the delivery of emergency management services.

The following is a précis of 48 years of dedicated service to the emergency management sector particularly in the Ambulance Service.



Guests enjoying dinner at the Annual Meeting.



2024 Alan Alder Award Recipient Tony Oxford, OAM ASM CSTJ MAIES receives his certificate from AIES Victoria President Grant Coultman-Smith, OAM VA BJ JP FAIES.

Tony joined St John Ambulance Northern Territory as a cadet in 1976 at age 12 and commenced working as an Ambulance Officer in June 1983 at 19 years of age in Tennant Creek.

In December 1998, Tony moved to Portland Victoria and began working as an Ambulance Paramedic with Rural Ambulance Victoria.

In July 2007, RAV and MAS merged and became Ambulance Victoria.



Tony Oxford received his AIES 35 year service pin from AIES Victoria President Grant Coultman-Smith, OAM VA BJ JP FAIES.

There was also the opportunity at the meeting to present Tony with his 35 year service pin. In addition to Tony's award there were a number of membership milestones reached during 2023 and Certificates and award pins were distributed to members totalling 265 years of association with AIES Victorian Division. The President passed on congratulations to all members who were recognised in 2023 for such an outstanding achievement but again challenged every current member of the Institute to recruit one new member to continue to grow the ranks of AIES into the future.

Tony became a Group Manager for Southern Grampians and remained in this role until July 2019. During his time with RAV and AV, Tony has held many acting roles such as Regional Manager and completed numerous secondments to the Emergency Management Unit. In 2019, he took on the role of Emergency Management Planning Coordinator.





*Kate Goldsmith receives her CESM Certificate.*

In 2023, the Institute introduced the CESM, which is designed to recognise members that are both remaining contemporary through continuing professional development and contributing to development of the emergency management sector.

Ms Goldsmith is the first recipient of the award and was presented with Registered Certificate No.1 at our Annual Meeting. Kate is the Acting Emergency Management Coordinator at Moira Shire Council, where she leads the planning, coordination, and evaluation of emergency management activities.



*(L-R) Karen van Huizen MAIES (Alpine Shire) and Kate Goldsmith MAIES CESM (Moira Shire) proudly display their Challenge Coins, which were presented in recognition of their guest speaker spot at the Annual Meeting.*



*(L-R) Karen van Huizen MAIES (Alpine Shire) and Kate Goldsmith MAIES CESM (Moira Shire) co-present the successful collaboration project they have produced for their respective communities in Victoria.*



*(L-R) Karen van Huizen MAIES (Alpine Shire), AIES Victoria Division President Grant Coultman-Smith and Kate Goldsmith MAIES CESM (Moira Shire). Karen and Kate received AIES Challenge Coins for their presentation.*

## CERTIFIED EMERGENCY SERVICES MANAGER

It was a pleasure to be able to present the Institute's first awardee of the Certified Emergency Services Manager (CESM), Kate Goldsmith MAIES with her certificate and to enable those present to congratulate Kate on her outstanding achievements.

She also has a strong background in hospitality and business development, which enables her to build effective relationships with key stakeholders and partners. Kate was responsible for coordinating the Moira Shire Council flood response during the October 2022 event, including speaking at the subsequent Parliamentary Inquiry into the flood response.

Another exciting achievement for Kate is the 'First 72 – What Are You Going To Do?' program, which is a pioneering community resilience initiative that has emerged through a collaboration between Moira Shire Council and Alpine Shire Council. Inspired by the success of neighbouring Corangamite Shire's 72-hour program, Karen van Huizen MAIES and Kate Goldsmith CESM MAIES spearheaded this project with the goal of preparing communities for emergencies in alignment with the Victorian State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP).

Kate is passionate about enhancing the resilience and safety of communities in the face of disasters and emergencies. She is a member of several professional networks,

such as the Australasian Women in Emergencies Network (AWE) and the International Association of Emergency Management (IAEM). She has completed a Bachelor of Emergency Management at Charles Sturt University, where she has also twice received the Executive Dean's Award for academic excellence.

Kate is a worthy recipient of the Certified Emergency Services Manager designation and has recently stepped forward and accepted a nomination for appointment to the AIES Victorian Division Committee.

Details about the Certified Emergency Services Manager (CESM) program are now available on the AIES website along with a video that explains the application process. Visit the website and see if you qualify for certification. •

# NEW CESM MEMBERS

The AIES awards the Certified Emergency Services Manager (CESM) designation to recognise members that are remaining contemporary through continuing professional development and sharing their knowledge with the emergency management sector.

By AIES NSW Division President David **Parsons** and

VIC Division Vice-President Doug **Caulfield** OAM RFD FAIES

To qualify, AIES members are required to undertake 100 points of continuing professional development and knowledge sharing activities each year. If successful, AIES members are entitled to use the CESM post nominals for a period of three years.

## NSW/ACT/INTERNATIONAL



### KAREN AKEHURST CESM MAIES

Karen was recently appointed as Manager, Strategy and Community Engagement with the NSW State Emergency Service, working with a new team to enhance the agency's capability to engage with communities, statewide.

She brings 30 years' experience in community development with 'at risk' communities, including people living with disabilities. Most recently, she was working with Carers NSW to help develop a pilot a bushfire and flood preparedness program (Care2Prepare), specifically for high priority (vulnerable) people in three LGA's. Previously, she worked with the Australian Red Cross, National Bushfire Recovery Program as a Recovery Officer on the South Coast and Southern Highlands, following the 2019-20 bushfires.

Karen holds post graduate qualifications in Social Sciences, and is skilled in professional writing, project management and disaster management (social).



### SAMUEL CORBY CESM MAIES

Samuel has been with the NSW SES as a volunteer for over ten years primarily based in south Sydney and the Illawarra. He has served in numerous local level leadership roles as well as previously being the Commander of the state's Operational Support Unit. He is currently the Deputy Local Commander for the Sutherland Shire LGA overseeing four SES units, with responsibility for training and procedures as well as representing the agency on Local Emergency Management and Floodplain Risk Management Committees.

As a staff officer since 2021 Samuel has been part of the state operations team during the 2021-22 significant flood campaign, on the working group for the 2022 Independent and Parliamentary Inquiries into the flood response, Project Officer for the Interoperability Review between NSW SES and NSW RFS, and as a Staff Officer to two Directorates. He is currently an Intelligence and Warnings Officer within the State Operations Centre.

Samuel's operational experience includes many major weather events in NSW as well as deploying on support agency tasks including bushfires, searches, primary industries support and the pandemic response. He has also deployed interstate to Queensland and Western Australia for cyclone response,

and was deployed as a Logistics Officer in the Australian contingent to Canada during the 2021 wildfires.

Samuel is an active trainer within the NSW SES and has delivered a range of incident management and technical rescue courses. In recent years he has been part of the review teams for the Situation Officer and Map Reading & Navigation training packages. He has also worked to coordinate and deliver numerous multiagency exercises ranging from local inter-service engagements to the 2023 Multiagency Flood Rescue symposium with representation from four countries.

Outside of the NSW SES he has also delivered training as a tutor in emergency management programs at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), a trainer/assessor for the Australian Centre for Investigation, Incident and Management Solutions (ACIMS) and as an ESTA for the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Samuel has been awarded: the National Emergency medal (Bushfire 19-20), NSW SES Commissioner's Unit Citation, Premier's Bushfire Citation and NSW SES Young Volunteer of the Year award. He has also received an AIES Commendation for his involvement in the 2021 Canadian deployment and the ADF Long Tan Award for Leadership and Teamwork.

Samuel is a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society (with Institute of British Geographers), a member of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services and of the Royal United Services Institute.

Samuel holds a Masters in Emergency Management from Charles Sturt University, as well a Graduate Certificate in Health Security and a Bachelor of Arts both from the University of Sydney. He also holds the Advanced Diploma and Diploma in Public Safety (Emergency Management), a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and a Certificate IV in Work Health and Safety.





### GRAEME CRAIG ESM CESM FAIES

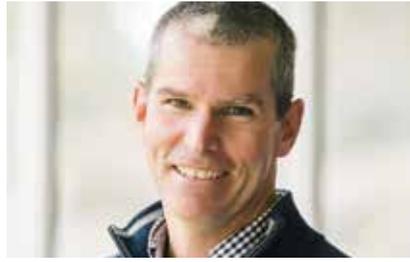
Graeme joined the Emergency Services Industry as a Volunteer in the NSW State Emergency Service at Ryde in 1993. Serving as a Local Controller for the majority of the next 14 years, he transitioned to a paid role as the Deputy Region Controller for the NSW SES Far West Region based at Cobar. After serving in that role for three months, Graeme was promoted to the Region Controllers role in which he served for a further 12 years. When the NSW SES restructured in 2018, Graeme moved to the Northern Zone Office based at Metford in the NSW Hunter Valley and remain as a Superintendent in the role of Manager – Business Services. His current qualifications and endorsements include Level 3 Incident Controller and Operations Officer. Educationally, he has attained the Advanced Diploma in Public Safety (Emergency Management).

Graeme joined the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services in 1998 and was promoted to Fellow earlier in 2023.

Over the past 30 Years, Graeme has served at a diverse range of Emergencies and Disasters. These include numerous Hailstorms, Floods, Storms and Bushfires but also include non-core Operations like the Thredbo Landslide, Land Search Operations, Crime Scene support and the vast array of Community Events.

### AWARDS AND HONOURS

- Emergency Services Medal (ESM) for distinguished service in 2007.
  - National Medal (2008) and 1st Clasp (2018)
  - Director Generals Commendation for Service (2004)
  - NSW SES Long Service Medal (2008) and 1st Clasp (2013)
  - Commissioners Unit Citation (2016)
  - State Hunter Storm Medal (2007)
  - Premiers Bushfire Citation (2020)
- Outside of the Emergency Services, Graeme is married with five children and is a qualified Pilot.



### REV. DR MARK LAYSON CESM MAIES

Mark joined the NSW Police at the age of 19, and later switched to become a firefighter. After 11 years' combined service he moved to pastoral ministry for over 20 years where he started a support ministry for emergency workers. Over the last 11 years he has served as an ambulance chaplain with his therapy dog Wallace. Throughout his career Mark has been engaged in a wide variety of roles in combating large scale disasters and caring for the wellbeing of frontline staff and managers. He is now the Operations and Connections Manager for the NSW Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network (DRCN). Mark is also an interdisciplinary researcher who completed his PhD through Charles Sturt University. His research focuses on the intersection of moral injury and psychosocial risk in first responders so as to develop and apply holistic organisational and leadership strategies that eliminate harmful practices in emergency organisations. His first-hand experience of trauma combined with extensive pastoral experience, and previous research in moral systems drives his research interests. He has presented his research across Australia and internationally. He enjoys triathlon, water polo and helping raise three teenagers.



### BRETT RICHARDSON CESM MAIES GFireE

Brett is a distinguished professional currently serving as the Senior Manager for Incident and Emergency

Response, Incident Readiness & Response, Greater Sydney, at Transport for New South Wales. His extensive career in public safety leadership has been marked by a commitment to community well-being and an unwavering dedication to managing incident and emergency response in the NSW Government. Prior to his current role, Brett held the position of leading the State Rail Fire and Emergency Service, where he demonstrated exceptional competence in overseeing fire and emergency operations across the Greater Sydney response area. His tenure in this capacity showcased his remarkable leadership skills in tactical and strategic operations.

Brett's reputation as a visionary leader extends beyond his immediate responsibilities. He has consistently represented the interests of his agency by actively pursuing collaborative opportunities with other state government and emergency service agencies. Notably, he was seconded by the Minister to serve as the 'Emergency Services Interface' for the Sydney Metro Authorities City and Southwest rail expansion project, further highlighting his ability to excel in complex, multi-agency environments.

Educationally, Brett is well-qualified. He is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Police Management, and his academic achievements include qualifications in Management, Applied Management (Policing and Emergency Services), Public Safety and Risk Management, and Aquatic Search and Rescue Management. In addition to his academic pursuits, Brett holds the accreditation of a Level 3 Operations Officer, and Incident Controller and Operations Level 2, a testament to his expertise in emergency response and management.

Brett's professional accolades include being a recipient of the National Emergency Medal and the NSW Premier's Citations for his service during the 2019-20 NSW Bushfire Crisis. His affiliation with respected organisations such as the Institution of Fire Engineers (GFireE), the Australian Institute of Emergency Services (MAIES), and the International Fire Chiefs Association of Asia reflects his professional standing and dedication

to his field. Outside of his professional endeavours, Brett is a dedicated volunteer with Surf Life Saving NSW.

He recently served as an Independent Member of the Public Safety and Lifesaving Committee, demonstrating his commitment to the safety and well-being of the community. Notably, he has also fulfilled the role of State-appointed Biosecurity Coordinator and Safety and Emergency Management Coordinator for State Operations, further showcasing his willingness to contribute to public safety efforts during COVID-19. In conclusion, Brett's career achievements, educational qualifications, and commitment to community safety make him an invaluable asset to the public service in emergency and public safety management.



#### **PAULINE ROSS CESM MAIES**

Pauline Ross is currently the Deputy Local Emergency Management Officer for Penrith City Council, a role she took on after hanging the appointments belt up following a 20-year career with NSW Police Force. During her policing career, she was involved in Emergency Operations Centres for the Covid-19 Pandemic in the Blacktown LGA, and the July 2022 Hawkesbury-Nepene Valley floods. She retired from NSW Police in 2023 officially as a Sergeant.

She acted as Region Emergency Management Officer during the February/March 2022 floods and was the State Region Emergency Management Officer Coordinator with the Incident and Emergency Management Command between March and July 2022.

Pauline is an active member of the Penrith State Emergency Service Unit, and is the Operations Coordinator and IMT member. She utilised her experience within the local IMT during the July and October flooding events during 2022 and multiple large storm events.

Pauline has also participated as a bushfire fighter with her local RFS brigade since 2016, most memorably for the 2019/2020 bushfires in the Blue Mountains region.

She is also a current student at Charles Sturt University, studying the Master of Emergency Management and has been a member of AIES since March 2022.

Outside of her job and volunteering, Pauline is an avid Bagpipe enthusiast and is part of the Parramatta Caledonian Pipe Band and the NSW Police Pipe Band. She also dotes on her three dogs and her wife and step-son.

Pauline participated in the AIES delegation that attended the 2023 Massey University Emergency Management Institute Program.

#### **QUEENSLAND**



#### **CARL PETERSON CESM MAIES**

Carl Peterson is an experienced emergency manager following 25 years' working in Queensland at the local, district and State level. After 15 years in corporate and operational roles within Queensland State emergency service organisations (Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Counter Disaster and Rescue Services and Emergency Management Queensland), Carl spent nearly 12 years managing the disaster management, fire management and public safety

programs for Moreton Bay Regional Council. In 2023 Carl commenced work for the Department of Energy and Public Works in the Resilient Homes Fund (RHF) as Director of the RHF Program Management Office. Carl has completed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in emergency management through Charles Sturt University. In 2022 Carl was appointed a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) through the International Association of Emergency Managers and in 2023 Carl was appointed a Certified Emergency Services Manager (CESM) through the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services.

#### **SOUTH AUSTRALIA / WESTERN AUSTRALIA DIVISION**



#### **SHANE BOLTON CESM FAIES**

Shane is an experienced emergency management professional of more than 25 years. His experience spans disaster management and leadership, crisis management, business continuity, risk management, protective security and as an operational resilience practitioner and as well as a range of sectors including, not for profit/NGOs, local, state, and federal governments.

Shane holds international certification with the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) having



completed his Certificate of the Business Continuity Institute (CBCI) with merit. Shane was recently recognised as a Certified Emergency Services Manager (CESM) by the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services (AIES), where he was also elevated from member to Fellow.

Shane is currently an Assistant Director with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Health Emergency Management Branch – recently taking on the greenfield role of leading the Preparedness Team, focussing on Capability Development and Assurance, whilst also primary responsible for exercising and training for national health emergency management arrangements. He previously led the Lessons Management and Review team, and he both developed and implemented the first Lessons Management Framework for the Department in addition to leading various after-action reviews in to significant human disease events.

Shane has co-authored two international peer reviewed publications and spoken at international and national and state conferences in the areas of emergency management, resilience, and risk. Shane is currently near completion of a Graduate Certificate in Disaster and Emergency Management through Queensland University of Technology.

Shane was the SA Health project lead in 2015 for the Human Disease risk assessment using the National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines (NERAG), specifically looking at Pandemic Influenza. Shane was fortunate to be deployed to Timor-Leste in July 2022 as part of an Australian Government regional capability and capacity building program.

Shane is a dedicated volunteer, with more than 35 years of volunteering across a range of community organisations. Shane is currently a non-Executive Director on the board of St John Ambulance – South Australia and Shane is a Commander of the Order of St John.

Most importantly, Shane is married to the wonderful wife, Lisa, and has two girls (8 & 10), an 18-month-old Australian Shepherd and just recently welcomed an 8 week old Australian Shepherd to the household.

## VICTORIA



### MARK OWENS CESM MAIES

Mark joined the Country Fire Authority (CFA) as a Commander in 2007, after spending time as a volunteer from 2003. Before joining CFA staff, Mark was a Regional Officer with the Victoria State Emergency Service from 2001 to 2007, and a volunteer from 1997 to 2001. Since being with the CFA, Mark has been stationed at District 20 HQ (Kerang) District 23 (Wangaratta) and District 24 HQ (Wodonga), also acting as the Assistant Chief Fire Officer in those Districts during his career. Mark has also acted as the Specialist Response Officer at CFA Headquarters. Since fire service reform in July 2020, Mark has been employed by Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) but seconded back to the CFA.

Mark is currently Commander Alpine (Mark has held this inaugural position since its inception in May 2020). The Commander Alpine position leads the Alpine Service Delivery Team to deliver the CFA's Alpine Service Delivery Strategic Plan and to support the three CFA Alpine Fire Brigades.

Mark's specialist roles include Vehicle Collision Investigation (Statewide), Incident Cause Analysis Method (ICAM) Lead Investigator and EMV State Mapping Committee (CFA operations representative statewide).

Mark is a member of the following organisations: Australian Institute of Emergency Services (20 years) and was awarded the Long Service

Award in 2019, Australian Road Rescue Organisation, Australasian & South Pacific Association of Collision Investigators, International Association of Emergency Managers, and Institute of Strategic Risk Management.

Mark has been awarded: Victoria State Emergency Service Long Service Medal (10 years), Country Fire Authority Long Service Medal (15 years), National Emergency Medal (Victorian Bushfires 2009) & (Bushfires 19-20) and New South Wales Government Medallion for Service to Emergency and Recovery Response in 2007.

Mark holds a master's degree in Emergency Management from Charles Sturt University, Advanced Diploma of Emergency Management, Diploma of Frontline Management, Diploma of Government and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. The highlight of Mark's career so far was the opportunity to meet, brief and tour with His Royal Highness Prince William on the CFA's involvement in the major floods of North West Victoria in 2010.

In 2022, Mark and colleague Dr Kamarah Pooley from Fire Rescue NSW won the inaugural Disaster Challenge held by Natural Hazards Research Australia. The 2022 problem was 'how can disaster preparation engage with the unengaged, the moving or the hard to reach?' And the challenge was 'to engage a transient sector of the community with disaster preparation information', our innovative pitch is to use wi-fi captive portals to share disaster preparedness information with tourists and tourism workers. This innovation has now been included in 2023-2024 funded projects of evaluating and monitoring for impact: developing a framework for risk prevention programs. •

For more information about the Certified Emergency Services Manager (CESM) acknowledgement, including how to accumulate points and the adjudication panel, visit the member portal page on the AIES website or contact your Division President (**contacts are on page 48**).



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Day 5



Day 10



Day 16

**T**ogether, they raised over \$30,000 for the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF).

Following this remarkable endeavour, in 2023, Tony Pearce, Chair of the Emergency Services Foundation, undertook a solo ultra-distance walk titled Tony's Trek - One Step at a Time 2023.

Covering a staggering 1,506 kilometers across areas affected by the 2019-20 Victorian Bushfires, Tony's Trek raised an impressive \$219,000.

These funds are allocated towards crucial mental health and well-being programs benefiting our 139,000 volunteer and paid emergency workers, including ESF's Residential Well-being Centre pilot program.

This year, Tony teamed up once again with the Side-by-Side team to embark on another meaningful journey — Tony's Trek Side-by-Side 2024, conquering the majestic Mt Everest Base Camp in the stunning Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal.

Tony's objectives for this expedition were threefold:

1. Raise awareness within our sector and the broader community about the profound mental health impacts of emergency work.
2. Shine a light on the invaluable work of the Emergency Services Foundation, dedicated to enhancing mental health outcomes for our emergency workers.

3. Raise essential funds to support ESF's ongoing programs, such as the Residential Well-being Centre Pilot Programs.

Symbolically, Tony's Trek Side-by-Side 2024 embodies our ethos of working together—Emergency Services, Side-by-Side—when it matters most, united for the greater good.

As NER was in the final stages of publishing, donations received had reached around \$32,000. •

To see Tony's 19-day journey that commenced on 8 March, click into the calendar at [www.esf.com.au/tonystreksidebyside/](http://www.esf.com.au/tonystreksidebyside/)



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# APPEAL FOR EXTRA CAUTION AROUND BATTERY USE AFTER APPARENT FIRST LITHIUM-ION FIRE DEATHS IN NSW - TERALBA

Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) is urging the public to be extra cautious after what appear to be the state's first recorded deaths in a Lithium-Ion battery-related fire.

Source: **NSW Fire & Rescue**

*This article was published on  
fire.nsw.gov.au*

**A**bout 4.10am on Thursday 29 February, four people were inside a townhouse at Teralba at Lake Macquarie when a fire broke out.

FRNSW investigators believe a battery was compromised and immediately went into 'Thermal Runaway', a process where a Lithium-Ion cell overheats and gives off toxic gases before exploding in flames.

Two of the occupants escaped the intense flames but two others inside the townhouse were killed, their bodies recovered from the unstable ruins on Friday and Saturday.

NSW Police are working to formally identify the victims and prepare a report for the NSW Coroner, who will formally decide the cause of the deaths.

The tragedies mark what FRNSW regards as the first deaths in NSW due to a Lithium-Ion battery-related fire.

According to the latest FRNSW statistics, there have been 45 Lithium-Ion battery-related fires in NSW so far this year, or five incidents a week.

There were 269 such fires in this state last year at the same weekly rate.

FRNSW is reinforcing its public warnings about the dangers of such batteries when comprised, damaged or allowed to overheat.

"This appears to be what we have been fearing for a while now, a person or persons dying due to a Lithium-Ion battery-related fire in this state," FRNSW Commissioner, Jeremy Fewtrell, said.



"We continue to warn the community about the potential for these batteries to explode in flames," Commissioner Fewtrell said.

"Use extra caution when using Lithium-Ion batteries...when they go into 'thermal runaway', the danger is immediate.

"These fires are extremely intense and volatile, even our firefighters find putting them out challenging because they burn so hot.

"It's vital the public follows our safety advice around these batteries."

- Never sleep or leave home with your Lithium-battery-powered devices charging
- Don't leave them constantly on charge
- If Lithium batteries are damaged or compromised, dispose of them properly
- Don't throw them out in the rubbish, they can start garbage truck or rubbish tip fires when compacted
- Contact your local, approved recycling centre for disposal advice

- Don't leave devices charging on beds, sofas or around highly flammable materials
- Try to charge devices outside if possible
- Always buy reputable Lithium-battery brands and never 'mix and match' components
- Beware of cheap, substandard Lithium battery-powered devices
- Avoid dropping, crushing or piercing battery cells
- Store batteries and devices in a cool, dry area, away from combustible materials
- Install active smoke alarms in your home/garage
- Ensure you have a home evacuation plan in the event of fire
- Don't store or charge Lithium-Ion-powered devices near exit points in your home •

For further information, visit the FRNSW website: [fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=9392](https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=9392)

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2024

Emergency services organisations around the country celebrated the women who serve and protect Australian communities by telling their unique stories.

This year's theme, inspire inclusion, was designed to celebrate diversity and empowerment on International Women's Day (8 March) 2024 and beyond.

This global celebration of the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women serves as a

powerful reminder of the progress made towards gender equality and highlights the work that still needs to be done.

This year's campaign theme calls for action to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create environments where all women are valued and respected.



International Women's Day

## QUEENSLAND POLICE

Source: **QPS Media**

### CONSTABLE GEORGIA KELLY REFLECTS ON HER CAREER IN POLICING AHEAD OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day is an annual reminder of the strength and resilience, as well as an opportunity to celebrate the many achievements, of women across the globe.

For the Queensland Police Service (QPS), it is a timely opportunity to reflect on the invaluable contributions of the many women in the organisation, who serve their community daily.

Constable Georgia Kelly of Logan Central Division is passionate about her role as a police officer, having long dreamed of exploring a career in policing after being inspired by family.

"Throughout high school I was always attracted to Policing," said Constable Kelly.

"I was exposed to careers in law enforcement through family members and close friends and I knew I wanted a job whereby each day was different, and I liked that QPS offered internal transfers to try specialist units."

Entering a traditionally male-dominated profession, she faced challenges but



Constable Georgia Kelly.

was kept anchored by the support and mentorship of fellow female officers.

"During my time at the academy, females only represented around 20% of the intake. Now that I am sworn in, I have been exposed to so many women sitting in positions of power and these women have taken their time to mentor me and set me on a path of success for a rewarding career in QPS."

International Women's Day holds a special place Constable Kelly's heart, recognising it as a day of empowerment and recognition for women across all spheres of life.

"International Women's Day is an extremely important day for me. It is a day whereby women feel empowered as we celebrate the strength and resilience of women around the world," she said.

"It is amazing that women have this day to be recognised for their social, economic, cultural and political achievements."

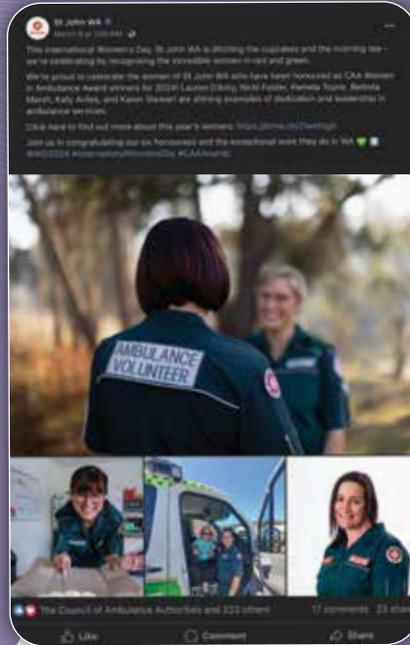
Learn more about Constable Georgia Kelly's policing journey here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XL5dckkoGps>



# SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

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To find out more about International Women's Day visit [www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com)

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# COORDINATING AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS AND NATIONAL CRISES

Australia has a relatively new but well-proven adjunct to its crisis and disaster management tools.

By Joe Buffone and Rob Cameron

*This article was published on [aspistrategist.org.au](http://aspistrategist.org.au)*

While previous frameworks focused on intra-governmental planning and response, the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) embraces the capabilities of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

This comprehensive national crisis coordination process is underpinned by complex systems and network theory and provides a governance framework to facilitate integrated and coherent planning, clarify problems, reveal escalation triggers, identify and agree on actions and responsibilities, and establish oversight and communication arrangements. It works well, and its continued use—and evolution—points the way to even more comprehensively coordinated resilience building, crisis planning, response and recovery. Extrapolation of the NCM will prove critical if national mobilisation is required to deal with crises other than natural disasters and pandemics.

The NCM was first employed in the early stages of Covid-19 to manage the pandemic's non-health consequences, but it originated in the preceding two years from a series of discussions based on natural hazard scenarios with catastrophic, nationally distributed impacts. These were conducted by Emergency Management Australia, which was then a division of the Department of Home Affairs. Participants included federal government departments, state and territory emergency management agencies, major corporations (including logistics, energy, food and grocery companies), non-government organisations, and disaster recovery agencies.

The exercises demonstrated that the existing processes and governance structures were inherently limited and couldn't be scaled to the degree required to deal with the sectoral

interdependence of contemporary Australia. Participants identified that an adaptive national mechanism to coordinate responses was critical to prepare for, respond to and recover from anthropogenic and natural crises.

The NCM played a central role in the national coordination of non-medical aspects of the pandemic, including identifying issues, deconfliction, resolution, allocation of responsibility and providing whole-of-response advice—and options—to government. More than 100 meetings were held to ensure shared understanding and rapid stabilisation of problems as they emerged. This allowed a supply-chain taskforce to work with road transport companies and their peak bodies, shipping and freight companies, food and grocery suppliers, agricultural peak bodies and cooperatives, state and territory government agencies, and local governments.

Early in the pandemic, the major supermarkets advised that rules limiting contact threatened the grocery supply chain, with a high likelihood of empty shelves if the settings weren't adjusted. The NCM supported all involved to quickly provide expert advice to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee. The committee developed interim guidance that was endorsed by National Cabinet, and changes in state and territory policy were implemented in time to ensure availability of food and groceries.

In January 2022, more than 300 kilometres of rail line and major highways were severely damaged by flooding, effectively cutting north-south and east-west road and rail transport corridors. The NCM was convened with federal, state and territory authorities and the transport and logistics sector to identify consequences and potential solutions. Food and grocery supplies to Western Australia and supply of water purification chemicals to the eastern states were identified as critical issues. Solutions included establishing a land bridge between Adelaide and Kalgoorlie, establishing a sea freight corridor, and using liners in shipping containers to allow for safe loading and transport of chemicals.

In December 2021 came a nationwide shortage of AdBlue, a necessary additive for diesel-fuelled vehicles, including trucks and emergency services appliances. Supported by supply-chain and modelling expertise from McKinsey & Co, the NCM brought together domestic AdBlue manufacturers, fuel suppliers, logistics and freight companies, trucking associations, food and grocery providers, regulators and the federal government. The NCM obtained Australian Competition and Consumer Commission exemption to allow industry-led solutions to stabilise the situation and enable other government areas to work on policy to diversify supply. Industry ensured AdBlue was available along transport routes for critical supplies and no disruption to emergency services was recorded.

The NCM has been further refined and is now sponsored by Emergency Management Australia's successor entity, the standalone National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). Since March 2020, NEMA has used the NCM more than 540 times on

crises and problems including flooding, supply-chain disruptions, food supply interruptions, road destruction and reconstruction, provision of temporary accommodation at the community level, major cyberattacks, and the impact of the roll-out of Apple's SOS function on emergency telecommunications for the public.

NEMA's strategic aim for the NCM is to ensure that government action is synchronised, coordinated and responsive; key functions within communities are maintained; the ability of impacted communities, the economy and affected individuals to remain resilient is strengthened; recovery across communities and the economy is assisted; and the overall severity and harm of crises is reduced.

The NCM uses a critical domain, or sector-based, approach. A domain describes a cooperative community of related parties rather than a simple hierarchical command-and-control structure. It typically includes organisations with like responsibilities and capabilities—and dependencies—that can help make sense of complex issues before, during and after a crisis.

Formal hierarchical structures are necessary to govern the response to emergencies regardless of cause. But in large-scale, complex crises, cooperation and collaboration become just as important as coordination. Domain-based coordination reflects and strengthens the less formal but very present relationships between government agencies, companies and civil society. The domain concept allows groups to cooperate according to formal and informal ties with explicit and implicit commitments and authorities.

Each domain has a nominated lead. Drawing on the substantial convening power of the federal government, leads are usually senior officials, but increasingly senior industry or non-government representatives fill the roles. Each domain is connected to the NCM coordination hub, which is there to de-conflict and synchronise effort. It is not a command-and-control structure.

Essentially a system of systems, the NCM offers a governance structure and supported process to help participants identify and define problems and to stabilise a situation through common understanding and cooperation.

The NCM is not a committee. Participants are invited because of their equity in defining problems and their role or expertise as required by the situation. The model is supported by NEMA's crisis appreciation and strategic planning methodology and its broader crisis operations capabilities, including the significantly enhanced national situation room and crisis coordination teams.

The private sector has been a key partner in the NCM's development and its participation has been central to the NCM's success. An industry reference group has been established to facilitate direct communication to government of industry priorities and decisions within each domain.

A key challenge in emergency management is decision-making under time pressure and with unconfirmed and possibly conflicting information. That includes managing people and organisations with different protocols, priorities, cultures and locations. This collaboration is critical to building public trust and confidence in elected leaders during and after crises and disasters. The NCM can provide the overarching framework for coordinating the national response to any crisis and can feed directly into National Cabinet, the National Security Committee of Cabinet or the full Cabinet.

If the nation is required to mobilise in response to armed conflict or a massive disruption to, for instance, the internet, the NCM would support and inform the government response, support the maintenance of essential services, coordinate information and messaging, and provide guidance and support to industry on priorities for business continuity. A crucial role will be to identify emerging vulnerabilities. •

Joe Buffone is the deputy coordinator of general emergency management and response at the National Emergency Management Agency and the conceptual architect of the National Coordination Mechanism. Rob Cameron is a senior fellow at ASPI and a former director general of Emergency Management Australia. Image: Saeed Khan/AFP via Getty Images.





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# CHECKING IN ON OUR ORANGE FAMILY

**Ashleigh, a volunteer crew member, and training officer with the State Emergency Services (SES), has shared her story to normalise R U OK? conversations among emergency services workers and volunteers nationwide.**

Ashleigh (she/they) first put on her SES uniform at 18 years old, immediately feeling part of the orange family. Eleven years on, she's responded to some of our country's major floods and fires, and at times felt the brunt of natural disasters on their mental wellbeing.

"When you respond to a natural disaster you're running on adrenaline, the devastation is in front of you, emotions are high within the community, but you're razor focused on getting people the help they need. When you return home, and take the uniform off, it can be quite lonely and isolating trying to process and understand what just happened."



(L-R) Unit Controller Luke and Ashleigh.



"After a deployment in 2022, I hit a wall and began to fear putting my uniform back on. I was so anxious about getting paged to another job. I was struggling to cope but was too scared to admit it to anyone, so I faced it alone for months."

Ashleigh says she internalised how she was feeling because she believed that to do her job, she had to remain strong. "I was worried I had failed as an emergency services volunteer because I'd reached a point where I couldn't do it on my own. I couldn't keep everything in and deal with it."

A colleague of Ashleigh's noticed she seemed different and took the time to check in.

"One day my controller approached me to ask if I was OK. He said 'I don't know you as well as other people in your life probably do, but I have noticed you've been different. You don't have the same enthusiasm as usual, so I wanted to check in and see how you are doing.'"

"Him starting that conversation gave me the permission I wasn't giving myself to open-up. Feeling heard and understood took the weight off my shoulders and made me realise I wasn't failing as an emergency services volunteer, I just needed a bit of support, and that's perfectly OK."



Ashleigh and her crew

Ashleigh wants everyone to understand the power of having an R U OK? conversation.

"Without that conversation I wouldn't be in my uniform anymore, I wouldn't be where I am today. I now know I don't have to go it alone and I can bounce back stronger."

"If you notice someone isn't themselves, trust your gut and check in. Most importantly, make sure you have enough time to really hear their concerns if they say they aren't OK. It changed my life, and it could change theirs."



**Ashleigh's story can be found at [ruok.org.au](https://ruok.org.au) along with the free 'Are They Triple OK?' resources for police and emergency services workers and volunteers, as well as their family and friends. These include a conversation guide, a podcast and other personal stories.**



If you're worried about someone, encourage them to contact their Employee Assistance Program (EAP), agency support service or connect with their GP.

For 24/7 for crisis support call Lifeline on 13 11 14. Text support is also available: 0477 13 11 14.

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Roslyn and Luke from Rochester learn about home fire safety.

## A VALID REASON TO TALK TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE A DISABILITY

People with a disability have a much higher risk of injury in a house fire. Did you know that more than 60 per cent of people who die in house fires have a disability?

Source: **CFA Victoria**

*This article was published on [news.cfa.vic.gov.au](https://news.cfa.vic.gov.au)*

**A** national residential fire fatality report published in 2019 was a wake-up call to both CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) about who is at higher risk in a house fire.

As a result, the fire services are working together to engage people with a disability and the organisations that support them. On 5 and 6 February 2024, CFA and FRV attended the VALiD conference and expo in Geelong, with a shared stand.

VALiD is the Victorian peak advocacy organisation for adults with intellectual disability. Each year it hosts the 'Having a Say' conference and expo. This is the second year in a row that CFA and FRV have attended to engage people about home fire safety.

It provides a way to share CFA and FRV's 'Prevent Detect Escape' home fire safety training and resources with disability providers and individuals.

"Disability providers are grateful to hear we have free online training about bushfire and home fire safety," CFA's Tim Marchinton said. "They always have questions about smoke alarms and what to do if a person cannot escape from a house by themselves. They really are lifesaving conversations at these types of events."

CFA and FRV collect the contact details of disability provider organisations to enable us to stay connected and share the latest fire safety resources.

The most reassuring part of the VALiD conference and expo is talking to people who have an intellectual disability. These individual conversations allow us to hear what matters to the individual and then tailor our advice to their circumstances.

"Roslyn and Luke from Rochester stopped by the stand to learn about how to prevent fires starting inside and were interested in the 'Prevent Detect Escape' online training course. We spoke about different types of smoke alarms and the importance of interconnected smoke alarms," Tim said.

CFA also has specialised resources that may be suitable for people with an intellectual disability, such as Easy English. This is available on the CFA website.

CFA and FRV plan to continue to engage people with a disability and improve fire safety for this high-risk group. If you have an idea about engaging people with a disability and want to get in touch, please email Angela and Kelly at [communityprograms@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:communityprograms@cfa.vic.gov.au).



VICSES volunteers muster at Buninyong, Tuesday 6 February, Photo VICSES.

# BALLARAT MISSING PERSON SEARCH

VICSES volunteers have been assisting Victoria Police, in the search for missing Ballarat East woman, Samantha Murphy, who disappeared after leaving for a morning jog on Sunday 4 February.

Source: **VICESVA**

*This article was published in Phoenix March 2024*

The case has drawn the concern from communities across Victoria and further afield, and left family and friends distraught. Around 200 VICSES volunteers from 23 Units participated over 6 days. VICSES issued the following communication: "VICSES will prepare further crews to assist and join in the search as requested. We all hope for a positive outcome in the search for Samantha, and we thank our dedicated SES volunteers for their time."

Volunteers came from VICSES South Barwon, Bannockburn, Ballarat, Woodend, Gisborne, Melton, and Bacchus Marsh Units. The terrain at the search location was arduous, with bushland and sparse shrubbery sloping down into canopied parts that open out on to large paddocks. The volunteers were supported by a Forward Operating Vehicle and a VICSES staff member based at the Buninyong Police Station. Volunteers from the CFA also participated as did volunteers from Search and Rescue Dogs Australia,

as well as hundreds of members of the local community.

Research reveals that for every missing person reported, on average at least 12 other people are affected whether it is emotionally, physically, psychologically or financially. For families, not knowing what has happened to someone they love is devastating.

The AFP Missing Persons Unit states that "the impact on families and friends, and the missing people themselves, can be both profound and multi-faceted. Commonly reported impacts on family and friends of missing persons include health consequences, time off from work, and financial costs associated with the search"

VICPOL resumed the search with expanded personnel on 23-24 February. The local community also organised more volunteers, asking for people with bush walking or horse riding skills, prospectors with metal detectors, bushies and others. On Saturday 24 February, 200 assembled in Ballarat to join the search.

The VICPOL Media Unit issued the following statement:

Detectives from the Missing Persons Squad will today lead a targeted search of the Mount Clear area as part of their investigation into the suspicious disappearance of Ballarat East woman Samantha Murphy. This extensive search will involve a significant number of detectives from across Crime Command and other specialist commands, as well as local police. They will focus on an area highlighted by intelligence derived from phone data.

Extensive searches have been conducted throughout the Canadian Forest area since Samantha's disappearance on the 4th of February, however no trace of her has been located at this time. These searches have involved a range of specialist units from across Victoria Police and many local community members have also volunteered their time to assist the search.

The 51-year-old was last seen leaving her property on Eureka Street to go for a run,





Samantha Murphy.

about 7am Sunday, 4 February. Samantha was known to regularly run through the Canadian Forest area. Police are treating her disappearance as suspicious due to the length of time she has been missing and given no trace of her has been found.

The Missing Persons Squad has primacy of the investigation and that team has been further expanded with experienced detectives from a number of units across Crime Command and other specialist areas. The team will also continue to work closely with local police. Investigators are currently in the process of reviewing about 12,000 hours of CCTV footage and following up over 500 separate pieces of information. Police are again releasing two images of Samantha in the hope someone recognises her and can provide any information about her movements since Sunday, 4 February. One of the images was captured on her home CCTV system before she left for her run on the Sunday morning.

Police are continuing to ask everyone in the Ballarat East and Mount Helen areas,

particularly around the Canadian Forest, to check their CCTV for any possible sightings over the past three weeks. Detectives are also urging anyone travelling through the area, particularly between 7am and 7pm on Sunday 4 February, who may have dash-cam footage to also check this for possible sightings.

A number of items have been located during the search for Samantha, however these have since been assessed and at this time are not believed to be related to her disappearance.

There is also no evidence to suggest Samantha's disappearance is linked to any other incidents in the area at this time.

Detective Acting Superintendent Mark Hatt, Crime Command said:

"Since Samantha's disappearance on the 4th of February, a significant search and investigation has been undertaken in an effort to find her. We are keeping an open mind, but believe the most likely scenario is that her disappearance involves one or more parties.

"Given the extensive and detailed search that has already been undertaken, and the fact no sign of Samantha or her personal belongings has been located, we have ruled out any type of medical incident.

"There is also nothing to indicate that Samantha left the area of her own accord. I know that a lot of people, particularly those who live in the local Ballarat community, are extremely concerned about the fact we haven't yet located Samantha or who may be responsible for her disappearance.

"I want to reassure those members of the public that Victoria Police is doing everything we can to find out

what has happened and provide some answers to Samantha's family and the broader community. We have also had immense public support for both the search and investigation, and I want to thank those people who have given up their time or provided information to police.

"I encourage anyone who does have information that could be relevant to this investigation – whether that's a person or vehicle seen in the area on that day, something unusual such as a damaged vehicle or property – to please come forward and speak to police or provide the information via Crime Stoppers.

"Finally, it's important that people continue to avoid unnecessary and unhelpful speculation because we don't want that to detract from the genuine investigation or potentially prevent anyone coming forward with information because they have a misconception about what has happened to Samantha. Police remain open to any and all possibilities, so if you know something or have seen something, then we want to hear from you." •

#### Editor's Note:

After five weeks since her disappearance, Police announced on Thursday 7 March that they had charged 22-year-old man, Patrick Stephenson, with the murder of Samantha Murphy. At the time of going to print, Ms Murphy's body has still not been located.



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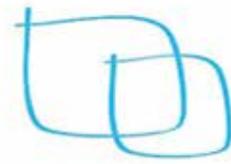
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# THOUSANDS OF VISITORS FLOCK TO AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL PARKS EACH YEAR - AND MANY TAKE SILLY RISKS. HOW DO WE KEEP PEOPLE SAFE?

By Samuel **Cornell** and Amy **Peden**

*This article was published on [theconversation.com](https://theconversation.com)*

**A** man was airlifted to hospital last weekend after falling ten metres from a waterfall in Queensland's Tamborine National Park, which was closed to due to storms. And last month, a major safety operation was launched to rescue nine bushwalkers in Wollemi National Park near Sydney after one walker fell from a cliff and suffered a head injury.

These are just the latest in a string of recent incidents that underscore the potential dangers of visiting Australia's national parks. Visitor numbers to national parks are increasing. This is partly due to the provision of roads, boardwalks and other infrastructure which have greatly improved accessibility. People can now reach locations that, in many cases, would previously have required more competence, care, and skill to get to.

It means masses of people are being funnelled into potentially dangerous locations for which they may be unprepared. This poses risks to human life and safety, and places a heavy burden on already stretched emergency services called to conduct rescues and retrieve bodies.

An urgent rethink is needed into how we invite and prepare visitors to interact responsibly with these natural environments.

## **VISIT, BUT BE PREPARED**

National parks need people. Visitors to national parks are vital to maintaining community, political and financial support for their existence. And increasing visitor numbers in national parks means more people can experience the physical and mental health benefits of spending time in nature.

Australia's national parks are generally very accessible. In some popular locations, visitors can drive right up to a site and explore it via a highly engineered boardwalk. At lookouts, visitors are often protected by barriers and warning signs.

Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok play a role in promoting national parks as accessible destinations. In Victoria, national parks authorities have suggested unprepared visitors are taking unnecessary risks in a bid to capture social media images, forcing emergency services to undertake dangerous rescues.

Parks authorities themselves use social media to promote access to picturesque places, but increasingly do so with safety in mind.



### SAFETY FIRST? NOT ALWAYS

As visitor numbers to national parks increases, so too do the numbers of safety incidents.

In Western Australia, an average of 77 incidents per year occurred between 2011 and 2017. Most were falls or water-related, such as drowning.

And in Victoria in the five years to 2020, the State Emergency Service reportedly conducted 365 “high-angle rescues” – complex operations in high, steep locations.

Many incidents in national parks happen repeatedly at the same place. The latest incident at Cedar Creek Falls comes after a teenager drowned there in 2021. At the Babinda Boulders in Far North Queensland, 21 drownings have reportedly been recorded. This suggests current mechanisms for enhancing safety or communicating risk at known hazardous locations aren’t working.

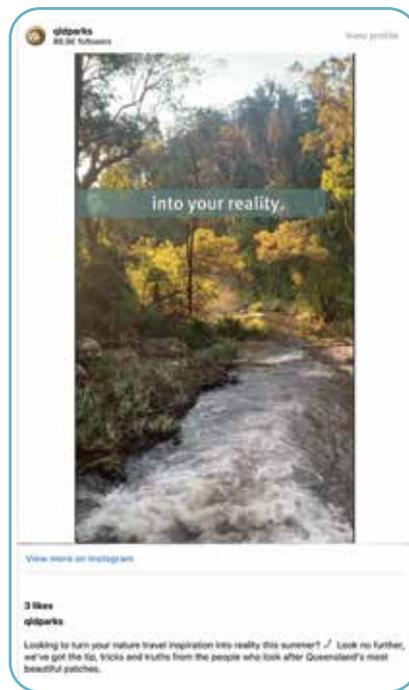
It also stands to reason that the infrastructure we build to attract people to national parks, and to guide them and keep them safe, may be propelling them into risky situations.

### RETHINKING ACCESS TO THE WILD

So how best do we prevent deaths and injuries in national parks, while still encouraging people to venture into the outdoors?

Many people do not believe national parks are inherently dangerous places to visit. But erecting warning signs to alert them to the risks is not necessarily the answer.

One study focused on beaches in Victoria showed less than half of visitors even saw the signs. The answer is not to plaster an area with signs, either: an overabundance of safety messages

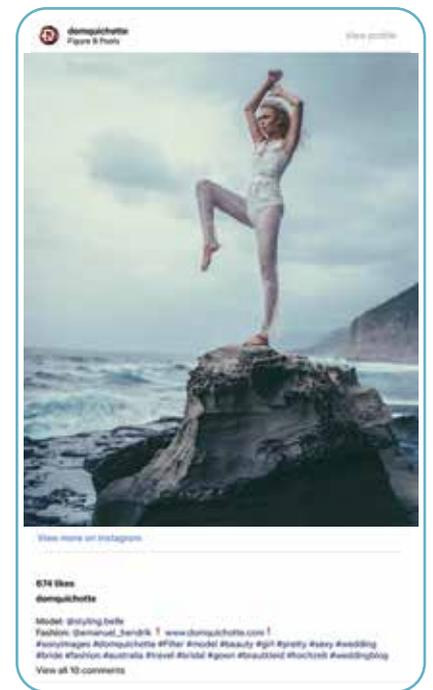


can create “information overload” and means people are likely to ignore them.

However, there is research to suggest signs warning people of legal consequences or fines, rather than risks to their personal safety, may be more effective at ensuring safe behaviour.

Well-designed infrastructure in national parks can enhance the visitor experience, and protect the environment by directing people away from sensitive areas. But parks authorities should consider whether some infrastructure is encouraging people into dangerous situations, and whether certain areas should be closed off to the public entirely.

Authorities could devise online training programs that teach people key outdoors skills, such as basic first aid and what to do if they get lost.



Finally, all this raises important questions around personal responsibility. Research conducted at four national parks in Western Australia showed many people viewed safety as a shared responsibility between visitors and parks management – but when things go wrong, place the blame on parks management. The same research showed parks visitors can be reluctant to accept the shift of responsibility back onto themselves.

Studies are needed to determine if encouraging visitors to take more responsibility for their actions would lead to fewer safety incidents – and if so, how best to get people to adopt this attitude shift.

Recent tragedies in our national parks highlight the crucial need to reevaluate visitor management strategies. National parks are a public good – and we need to make sure they stay that way. •



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**Re-framing Vulnerability:****COMMUNITY RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE IN AUSTRALIA THROUGH AN INTERSECTIONAL GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE LENS****Source: Australian Women in Emergencies Network***This article was published on [www.awenetwork.org.au](http://www.awenetwork.org.au)*

**H**ere is an initial overview of the conversation written by Ashleigh Brady reflecting on the panel. (Writers lens: Ashleigh Brady's pronouns are she/her, and she is a settler-colonial, white, able-bodied, middle-class, cis-gender woman, and an employee in NSW Government as well as a volunteer committee member with the Australasian Women in Emergencies Network).

[Disclaimer: We are only scratching the surface of very complex concepts, acknowledging the depth of existing knowledge, literature and diverse lived experiences that we haven't captured in this conversation.]

In this rapid deep dive of a 1 hour panel, the re-frame of vulnerability is considering how we can better incorporate lived experiences of diverse communities into disaster planning and processes. Eliminating the idea people are inherently vulnerable or susceptible to disaster impacts, recognising all individuals have resilience and coping capacities that are dynamic and can be better harnessed and supported. In this conversation we acknowledge how community has worked to facilitate and lead solutions, and teach and guide each their communities and other stakeholders before, during and after disasters. This builds on a strengths and human rights-based approach with lived experience perspectives to challenge assumptions that categorise and label individual identities and their needs.

The panellists reflected that when we have authentic Inclusion of diverse voices, we better understand diverse individual experiences. We acknowledge that disaster management needs to

centre people and their everyday experiences, to begin to unpack the complex structural factors and systems that are creating social vulnerabilities to disaster risk, which are then exacerbated in a disaster.

The panel all shared the different ways they understand and use the term vulnerable, considering what this means for the people in communities we are working alongside. In some cases it was communicated to reflect disproportionate impacts and risks people face due to a range of factors and experiences including disability. The term was avoided in other community-facing contexts, where panellists shared people did not resonate with the term and do not see themselves as vulnerable, acknowledging these terms can be used to reinforce colonial, paternalistic, deficit framings particularly when used in First Nations Communities.

The lens of intersectionality allowed us to speak to the complexity in diversity, and the risks of homogenising and oversimplifying people through terms like 'vulnerable.' We consider how terms and categories that attempt to put people into boxes can 'other' or exclude individuals experiences and reinforce vulnerabilities. We discussed how labels and categories in practice can limit our understanding of the needs complex intersectional and interconnected experiences of people in communities. We reflected on the other fantastic community-centred sessions at the conference, which do reflect the siloed ways we approach inclusion currently, and the need to connect inclusive approaches better to reflect intersectional lived experiences.

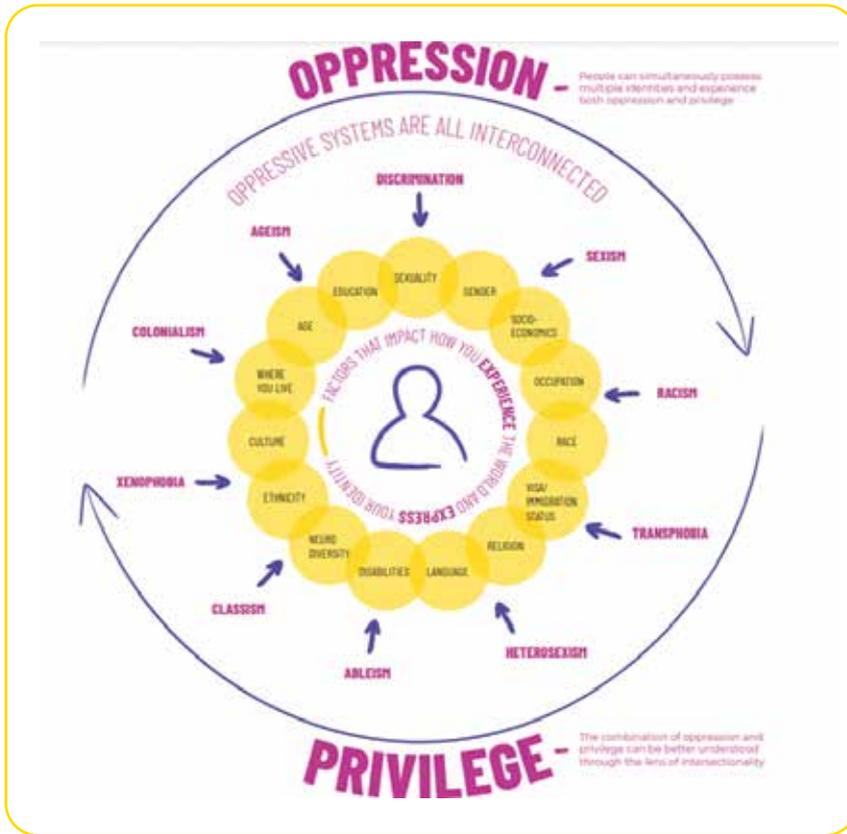


We are seeking to avoid the legacies of oversimplified binary approaches to inclusion, where recent progress from gender inclusion has failed to consider intersectional life experiences, and has shown to improve outcomes for mainly for white, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual, cis-gendered women (see DCA, CARM). This is why we need to move beyond single issue approaches or solutions and meet the community in the reality and complexity of their experience.

Our panel shared stories of community-owned, led and centred recovery and resilience work, through programs including the Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Program, and the Red Cross First Nations Recovery Programs. Our panellists spoke to the importance of recognising people know what they need, and shared stories of communities coming together to support each other before and in disaster. We also reflected on ways to meaningfully engage with our diverse communities, and the importance of practitioners or people supporting/working alongside community need to be conscious of their bias and be aware of how you identify and seek community leaders.

Stories shared about the Red Cross First Nations Recovery team's work reinforced the importance of local trusted relationships and connections built from shared lived experiences, in ensuring First Nations community members feel supported and safe to leave their home and go to an evacuation centre, supported by First Nations Volunteers.





We also spoke of the importance of peer leadership, with peer leadership approaches reflecting understanding of diverse range of experiences of disability in particular, and the different types of engagement that is required responding to different experiences, from different elements of visual tools and sensory/stimulus in delivery methods.

The broader benefits for everyone through inclusive planning was recognised through the curb-cut effect example. The curb cut effect exemplifies the accessible benefits for all, after designing to seemingly specific needs, in this case wheelchair access of cross walks. This accessibility feature provides benefits for the broader community including parents with prams, elderly people, cyclists and many more beyond wheelchair users.

This conversation calls on us to continue to improve our understanding of individual experiences and unique needs in local communities. We need to prioritise and centre these complex individual realities and experiences in everything we do, to resource and enable community to be the leaders and agents of change in disaster planning, strengthening equitable resilience to increasing climate and disaster risks leaving no-one behind.

#### TERM EXPLAINERS:

In this conversation the concepts are framed as below:

Vulnerability can be a challenging concept to understand because it tends to mean different things to different people and because it is often described using a variety of terms including 'predisposition', 'fragility', 'weakness', 'deficiency' or 'lack of capacity'. We recognise there are many factors that drive vulnerability, in this context we are speaking of social vulnerability in disasters, which affects disproportionate risks and impacts to people in disasters. We need to recognise that disadvantage and marginalisation can place people at greater risk due to their race, gender, ability and other factors of difference, but we need to call out the deeper systems enforcing this disadvantage like racism and discrimination and structural violence.

An Intersectional lens recognises intersecting experiences of disadvantage (and privileges) that individuals experience or identify with (such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) intersect and interact, shaping their unique experiences

and position to be more or less vulnerable to disaster risk.

It emphasises the understanding that individuals cannot be fully understood by considering only one aspect of their identity, but rather, their experiences are shaped by the interconnectedness of various forms of privilege and marginalisation. By understanding the complexities of these intersecting identities, we can better address the root causes and drivers of risk, like systemic inequities that contribute to vulnerabilities in the face of disasters.

Intersectionality allows us to move beyond binary and homogenised understandings of people that tend to be labelled as 'vulnerable', such as women, people with disability, LGBTQIA+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and more. By adopting a gender-transformative approach, we aim to challenge traditional binary (male/female) gender roles, promote gender equity, and empower women, gender-non-binary and gender-diverse individuals as leaders and agents of change in disaster-affected communities. •



# TO AVOID ANOTHER BLACK SATURDAY, LET'S FOCUS THE NEXT 15 YEARS ON TAKING CLIMATE ACTION

A reflection on black Saturday by former fire and emergency leaders; Craig Lapsley, former Victorian Emergency Management Commissioner, Russell Rees, former Chief Fire Officer of Country Fire Authority Victoria, and Ewan Waller, former Chief Fire Officer of Forest Fire Management Victoria.

Source: **Climate Council**

*This article was published on  
[www.climatecouncil.org.au](http://www.climatecouncil.org.au)*

**F**ifteen years on from Victoria's worst bushfire disaster, the wounds still run deep. They run deep for friends and loved ones of the 173 people who died that day, for the more than 2,200 families made homeless and for the traumatised communities and firefighters who faced what, until then, was an unprecedented disaster. Together with our agencies, we learnt painful lessons about how fires need to be managed in this changed environment.

Back in 2009, we knew that climate change, caused by the burning of coal, oil and gas, was driving more intense extreme weather events. We had been warned of this since the mid-1990s. But during Australia's political climate

wars, as community leaders our concerns about this were given only cursory acknowledgement.

The Canberra firestorm of January 2003 was a foretaste. We saw the first large-scale fire tornado and the fastest rate of spread of a bushfire ever recorded worldwide.

A sense of dread started to take shape for those of us serving in Victoria, which is acknowledged as one of the most fire prone places on earth. What if we were to get similarly off-the-scale weather conditions here

Sadly, on 7 February 2009, we found out.

In the hot, dry lead-up to Black Saturday, fires were bigger and harder to fight. On Feb 7 we faced the worst

fire conditions we could've imagined. Our crews were up against blistering temperatures, as well as storm-force winds that caused them to seek shelter wherever they could and stopped water-bombers from flying. Our traditional fire fighting systems and our communications simply could not keep up.

Once rare (but now common) fire-generated storms blasted communities like Kinglake with more energy than dozens of Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs. The fire danger index, with a theoretical maximum of 100, recorded figures greater than 200.

Things clearly needed to change. The resulting Royal Commission and other investigations created

fundamental changes to national fire service doctrine. Leaders around the country embraced evacuations and emergency warnings, so that people would know when to get out and stay out, or when it was too late to leave.

More active landscape management including enhanced prevention through a broad area forest fuel management program was recommended. We all hoped these lessons had been learnt and things would be better with improved systems but as extreme weather events continue to become more frequent and more intense, we are playing a deadly game of catch-up.

Fast forward 10 years to Black Summer and some of those fundamental policy shifts probably saved hundreds of lives. Yet many died and more than 3,000 families were made homeless.

Nobody can say we weren't warned. Decades ago, scientists explained how the relentless burning of fossil fuels was warming the planet. They told us it was making our weather more extreme,

that it was worsening fire conditions, and that it was driving wild swings from hot and dry to storms and floods and back again.

But because of political ideology, the financial might of the fossil fuel industry, and determined campaigns of misinformation, the experts were sidelined. Governments sat on their hands for nearly a decade. The necessary moves to slash climate pollution by shifting towards cleaner and safer energy sources like solar and wind are finally taking hold, but still at an insufficient pace to protect families, communities and nature.

If Australia and the world at large leave polluting fossil fuels in the ground, we will substantially limit the severity of these disasters over the longer term. Australia, with its abundant solar and wind resources, has a major role to play. We have a shot at limiting fires like those of Black Saturday, sparing communities' grief and giving the next generation hope – but we are running out of time.

Today, many tears will flow across the nation. Together with many others who tried in vain to battle the brutal blazes that overtook our state, we will recall things that we wish we could forget, and those painful lessons learnt on that day.

We will also remember the loved ones lost, the firefighters who faced scorched landscapes, and the millions of animals killed.

We will be thinking about the future we want for our children and grandchildren – and hoping we don't squander another second on climate inaction. •

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- To facilitate full interchange of concepts and techniques amongst members.
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# Wishing all readers Happy Year of the Dragon and Lantern Festival

