

NATIONAL EMERGENCY



RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services

A.I.E.S.

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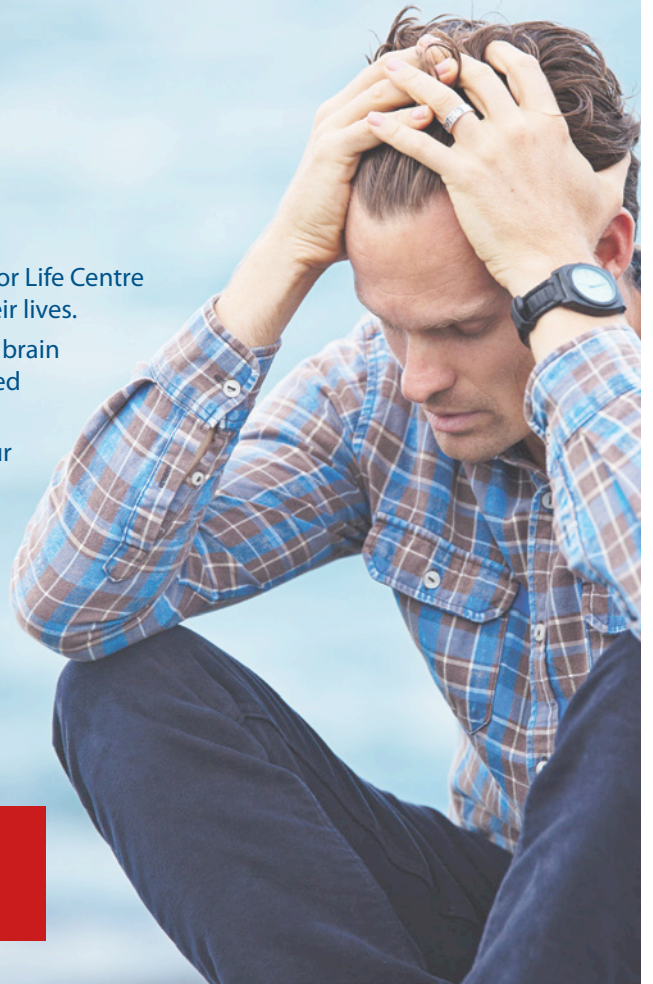
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NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE



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Winter 2018 • National Emergency Response

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FRONT COVER

Anthony Radl from Footscray SES
climbed the 88 stairs of the Eureka
Tower in full kit.



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NEW MEMBERS

The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services is pleased to announce the following emergency services people joined the AIES between August and December 2018.

NAME	ORGANISATION	DIVISION
Leah Bach	Rural Fire Service	ACT
Paul Horton	Country Fire Authority	VIC
Sara O'Connor	Fire Emergency Service	QLD
Sam Speirs	Country Fire Authority	VIC

Legend:

RFS – Rural Fire Service

SES – State Emergency Service

StJA –St John Ambulance



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or log in at au.linkedin.com and search for 'Australian Institute of Emergency Services' under 'Companies'.



www.facebook.com/aies.online

AIES VIC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

Details for the Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Division of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services are as follows:

Date: Friday 1 February 2019

Time: 6.30pm

Venue: Bentleigh RSL Club, 538 Centre Road, Bentleigh, Victoria

RSVP: Monday 7 January 2019
via Bill Little on **0419 871 009** or
Secretary.VIC@aies.net.au

The AGM will be followed by a dinner at a cost of \$38 per person.

Payment required: Monday 7 January 2019

Westpac Bank: BSB: 035-094
Account No: 243221.

Reference: <Surname> and AGM



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Steve Jenkins, FAIES

National President

The year is rapidly drawing to a close, and 2018 has been busy for the emergency management sector in Australia with events occurring in almost every state and territory.

Major events for the year include:

- Tropical cyclones *Joyce* and *Kelvin* (WA)
- Tropical cyclone *Marcus* (NT)
- Tropical cyclone *Nora* (QLD)
- Monsoon trough/tropical low and associated flooding (WA, QLD and NT)
- Bushfires (NSW) including the Royal National Park that affected the Sydney metropolitan area
- Storms (central VIC)
- Extreme weather and flooding (TAS)

At the time of writing, Queensland authorities, with assistance from interstate agencies, were fighting bushfires at numerous locations throughout Queensland.

Fortunately these events have resulted in very few fatalities or serious injuries, however there has been significant property damage and other losses such as stock etc.

A contributing factor in this low casualty rate is the high level of preparation and mitigation activity that occurs in most areas. It has long been recognised that every dollar spent on prevention and mitigation, saves considerably more in terms of responses and recovery, as much as eight to 10 times according to some research.

Sadly the same cannot be said for events occurring internationally, particularly in the United States.

The US, like Australia, is a developed first-world country. However, the number of disaster events occurring this year alone resulting in loss of life appears extraordinarily high.

For example, in California, bushfires throughout November claimed at least 88 lives, and a further eight in July at the hands of Hurricane Michael, which impacted the Florida Panhandle area in October and resulted in six deaths. In September, Hurricane Florence crossed the US East Coast and claimed a total

of 42 lives. In March, nine people died when bomb cyclones comprising hurricane-force winds caused severe coastal flooding between Massachusetts and Washington DC.

Formal investigations have been conducted by the Australian or state governments through royal commissions or other inquiries following significant events such as the 2009 bushfires in Victoria and the 2011 floods in Queensland.

Management, or more correctly the lack of it in various forms, is often cited as a contributing factor, along with communications.

Similar inquiries will no doubt follow some of the recent events in the US. President Trump has already weighed in with comments claiming that mismanagement of forests has contributed to the severity of the most recent California fires. Fires are not unusual in California – we hear of them often. However, the significant number of lives lost and amount of property destroyed on this occasion may prompt change that results in a greater level of preparedness and mitigation. We hope!

Personnel from Australian firefighting agencies are often deployed to assist with firefighting internationally, including in the US and Canada.

Similarly, firefighters from Australian states are frequently deployed interstate to assist with events, such as is occurring in Queensland at present.

This high level of cooperation should be acknowledged. The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Katrina Carroll indicated on Tuesday 27 November that the next 48 hours would be 'horrendous' with 80 fires burning across the state. A combination of climate, heat and fire were aligning to create extreme conditions never seen before in Queensland. On this day, 100 firefighters from NSW Rural Fire Service were deployed to Queensland with a further 225 to follow from other states with the majority of these personnel being volunteers.



"It has long been recognised that every dollar spent on prevention and mitigation, saves considerably more in terms of responses and recovery ..."

This exemplifies the extraordinary cooperation that occurs in Australia. We hope they all return home safely, and that there is no loss of life as there has been in the US, and previously in Australia.

Ironically, as Australia is a land of extremes, as I write this report, New South Wales, Sydney in particular, is today experiencing wild weather and heavy rain.

Rain is something that some parts of Australia do not receive all that frequently. Drought is common in Australia, and we have been experiencing severe drought in recent times. Please spare a thought for the farmers and other community members in those drought-affected areas.

With Christmas and New Year rapidly approaching, I would like to wish all members of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services and their families, along with all members of the emergency services and emergency management community, the very best for the festive season.

I hope you have a happy, safe and relaxing time.

Thank you for your service throughout 2018. ●

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THE REFUGE PROJECT:

Innovation in Partnering with Artists and Community

Refuge is a 5-year project run by the North Melbourne Arts House which explores the role of artists and cultural institutions in times of climate catastrophe. Each year until 2020, the project will bring together emergency management, artists and local and regional communities to prepare Arts House as a relief centre for 24 hours, in an imagined climate disaster.

Submitted by Faye **Bendrups**

*Footscray SES
Reproduced courtesy of the Phoenix Journal
Photos by Bryony Jackson*

Refuge is about social and community resilience and valuing an artistic approach to complex issues. Refuge propels a growing cohort of artists into leading edge innovators of creative preparedness. This project is key to Arts House's commitment to explore responses to climate justice, engage deeply with local communities and present innovative and experimental art.

Arts and culture's contribution to the disaster recovery process is globally recognised however, Refuge's premise is different. Through an interdisciplinary approach artists, service providers and the community work together to rehearse climate related emergencies – exploring the impact of creativity in specifically building preparedness, led by experimental contemporary artists.

In 2018, Refuge examined a pandemic event and what happens when the risk of contagion means no public gathering.

In 2017, Refuge envisaged the increasing possibility of five consecutive days over 40°C.

In 2016, Refuge imagined a local flood and transformed the North Melbourne Town Hall into a relief centre for 24-hours.

How can we build resilience, connect and respond in inclusive, ethical and



humane ways? In times like these, what's our most precious resource? The kindness of strangers? Each other? A plan? What skills do we have? Come and help us make a Refuge, collaborating alongside artists and emergency services.

The University of Melbourne Research Unit in Public Cultures is evaluating the Refuge project over 5 years. The 2017 report states:

"The different spheres of knowledge brought together in *Refuge* – creative, scientific, governmental and logistical – are rarely given such pronounced liberty to interact with each other. ..It has become increasingly clear that this is one of the greatest values of the program: it serves as an exceptional site for the exchanges of ideas...Conceptual boundaries and preconceptions

about convention and traditional processes have been proportionally challenged and extended and, as a result, new ideas concerning community resilience, participation and preparedness are being tried and tested".

See also: www.artshouse.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ARTS-HOUSE-REFUGE_HEATWAVE_GUIDE_2017_FINAL.pdf

PROJECT PARTNERS

In 2017 and 2018 Refuge is supported with funding provided by the Australian Government in partnership with the States and Territories under the National Partnership Agreement for National Disaster Resilience and the Victorian Government through the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme (NDRGS); by the Australian Government

through the Australian Council, its arts and funding advisory body and by the University of Melbourne. In 2017 Refuge is also supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.

REFUGE SUPPORTING PARTNERS

- Emergency Management Victoria
- Resilient Melbourne
- Red Cross Australia
- SES Footscray Division
- St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre
- Creative Recovery Network

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS AND FRIENDS

Include Jen Rae, Latai Taumoepeau, Vicki Couzens, Emily Johnson, Lorna Hannan, Asha Bee Abraham, Dave Jones, Hannah Donnelley, Lee Shang Lun, Greg Pritchard, Jillian Pearce, Kate Sulan and Dawn Weleski. ●



PROTECT OUR AMBULANCE WORKERS

Nothing angers our members more than an attack on one of their own.

By **Danny Hill**

National Council of Ambulance Unions President

That was demonstrated recently in Victoria when our entire membership mobilised within hours to express their outrage at an injustice that showed massive problems in our legal system.

A system that protects violent offenders but doesn't protect emergency workers.

In 2016, two women attacked and violently assaulted two paramedics in Reservoir after a day-long binge on bourbon, champagne and cannabis.

Paramedic Paul Judd suffered serious fractures to his foot, on which he has had surgery three times to repair and has been off work since.

He still has many months of rehabilitation to go. Let alone the psychological damage.

His paramedic partner Chenaye Bentley has also tried to cope with the trauma of this event, and has since relocated to rural Victoria.

The two women were sentenced to jail by a magistrate for eight months and four months respectively. But the pair immediately appealed against their sentences, and in May 2018 County Court Judge Barbara Cotterell upheld the appeal and quashed the prison terms.

Judge Cotterell took into account special circumstances and did not apply a custodial sentence to the women.

They received community corrections orders of 150 hours over three years and 50 hours over two years respectively.

This means one offender will do community service for one hour per

week for three years and the other will do 30 minutes of community service per week for two years.

The night of that decision it was clear that we needed to take strong action against this decision.

The AEAU executive was overwhelmed with calls and messages from angry paramedics demanding to know what their union would be doing about this.

I recall the phone conversation between former National Council of Ambulance Unions President Steve McGhie and myself as we brainstormed ideas about how we were going to respond.

"Let's get paramedics to turn up in uniform tomorrow to every politicians' office in Victoria to demand action," I said.

“The AEAU executive was overwhelmed with calls and messages from angry paramedics demanding to know what their union would be doing about this.”

Steve said, “I’ll go you one better. Let’s put the writing up on the trucks”.

Within a matter of hours the members were sending us their pictures of chalked-up ambulances with the message “It is not OK to assault paramedics” blazing across the windows.

Overnight social media was flooded. One picture received over 2 million hits in 24 hours.

We have never had that sort of response. There was little else in the media for days.

That night we had calls from Ambulance Minister Jill Hennessy who gave us an assurance that urgent work would be done and a day later the AEAU and The Police Association Victoria had an emergency meeting with Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews where we demanded change to legislation that allowed these women to walk free.

We were pleased when Premier Andrews committed to making the following changes to Section 10AA of the Victorian *Sentencing Act 1991*.

1. Attacks resulting in injuries against emergency workers, including police, paramedics, firefighters and health workers delivering or supporting emergency care, like nurses and doctors, will now be treated as category 1 offences and will require courts to impose a custodial sentence, not a community-based order such as a Community Correction Order (CCO), (there will be a prohibition on CCOs for assaults on emergency workers).
2. The special reasons exception which applies to all statutory minimum prison sentences will be substantially narrowed so that impairment due to alcohol or drugs can no longer be used as an excuse, psychosocial immaturity will be removed as a



“IF YOU DRINK AND DRIVE YOU LOSE YOUR LICENSE, IF YOU ASSAULT A PARAMEDIC YOU ARE GOING TO JAIL.”

special reason, and the court must give significantly less weight to the life circumstances of the offender.

3. The rights of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) will be strengthened so the DPP can appeal where the narrowed special reasons exception is found to exist.

A reference group was also formed, which included the unions, to work through other issues such as public campaigns around respect for emergency workers, bystander behaviour and verbal abuse.

These changes have since been passed by Parliament. It will never repair the damage done to Paul and Chenaye

but if the same circumstances occur again, offenders will get jail time.

This outcome would not have been possible without the strong collective action from the membership and the joint message from Ambulance Victoria and the Union. It was good to see Ambulance Victoria CEO Tony Walker standing in front of a chalked-up ambulance saying ‘enough is enough’.

For our membership, this was a bitter and upsetting matter that hit a raw nerve for us all. But it was also a demonstration of the formidable collective power that our members can wield when they see an injustice and know that action is needed to fix it. ●

BE COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE

The inside story of the AFP dive team at Tham Luang Cave

This article was first published in Platypus, Policing and community news from the Australian Federal Police, and has been reprinted with permission.

Electrocution and minimal air supply were just some of the entrapment hazards faced by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) dive team at Tham Luang Cave.

The six extraordinary divers spent almost two weeks diving in the dark and murky waters of the cave system, with 46 kilos of dive gear and air tanks strapped to their backs.

"Our days always started with a one kilometre hike in the cave along steep canyons of rocky 50-metre inclines and declines, to arrive at the entry of chamber one, which was completely flooded," Senior Constable Matthew Fitzgerald said.

"We were responsible for managing chambers 2-4 to secure the evacuation route, but this required diving in coffee-coloured water.

We were better off closing our eyes and feeling our way through because we couldn't see a thing underwater."

Fortunately, a rope had been set up by the Thai Navy Seal divers, which became a lifeline for all the divers to guide them through the water that connected nine chambers.

"The rope guided us through the chambers walking up and down slippery rock canyons, before diving back into water and tunnelling through narrow areas including along a nine metre zigzag decent in chamber three," Senior Constable Matthew Fitzgerald said.

"If we lost the rope underwater we then had to focus on finding that rope, otherwise our life was in danger."

The initial priority was to keep the soccer boys alive, while the divers examined the various escape options with the pending monsoon always in the back of their minds.

Food supplies were passed from chamber to chamber in a daisy chain succession to reach chamber 9 where the boys were found.



"Once he was handed over to us, we were down at his face mask just listening for that breath ..."

"We helped carry through snack bars, army style ration packs, bottled water, cooked rice and chicken, which was tightly wrapped in plastic to keep the water out," Leading Senior Constable Kelly Boers said.

To manage the water levels across some of the chambers the AFP dive team worked closely with the Thai Navy Seals.

"The Thai Navy Seals were responsible for modifying the cave, and as a result it allowed the water to drain faster and provided easier access through some tighter spaces," Detective Leading Senior Constable Ben Cox said.

"This also allowed our team to move and install hundreds of air tanks, industrial pumps and piping into the cave - further reducing the water levels in chamber 3."

"The pumps ran on high voltage power with multiple live electrical wires running through the wet cave," Senior Constable Justin Bateman said.

"It provided power to the pumps and also some lighting but also meant we could control the flow of gushing water, which was almost impossible to swim against."

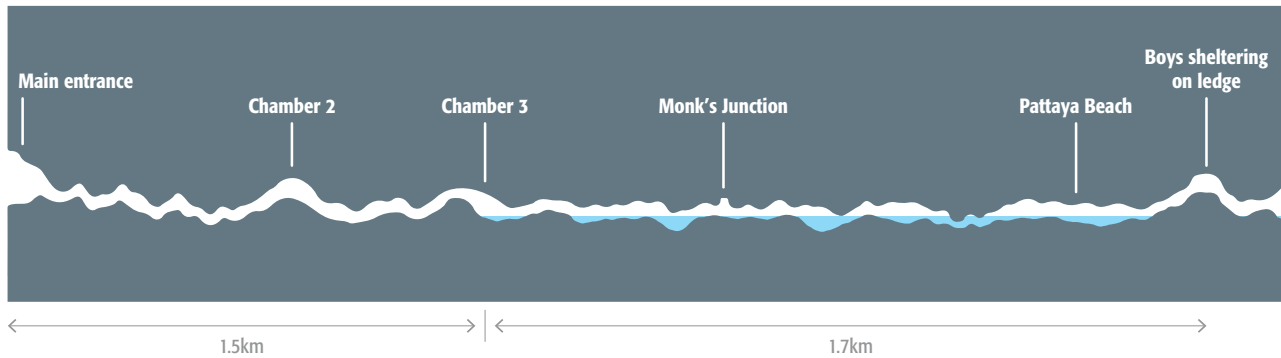
Being electrocuted by electrical wires wasn't the only risk the AFP divers faced. The rising carbon dioxide levels posed a constant threat.

Detective Leading Senior Constable Ben Cox felt the effects of the high carbon dioxide levels, making it three times harder for the body to function.

"We could feel the effects of the carbon dioxide, which affects the mind as well as the body," he said. "It causes confusion, and sometimes affected my ability to swim, so regular breaks were vital."

"We had sensors to see the O₂ (oxygen) levels in different chambers. We knew it was low but we just had to support each other and be aware of fatigue," Sergeant Robert James said.

"We also had many injuries including a dislocated wrist, broken fingers, infected



hands and feet, cuts and abrasions, and infected ears.

"But at the end of the day, we're police officers. Children's lives were at grave risk and we were prepared to help in any way we could."

THE WORLD WAS WATCHING

The rescue caught the world's attention, after images of the boys found alive and well in the dark cave were televised, nine days after they went missing.

More than 500 journalists and media outlets crowded the outskirts of the cave in the Chiang Rai province eagerly waiting, and watching the collaborative effort of the Thai Navy Seals and international rescue partners.

The rescue effort became time critical with the monsoon rains threatening to flood the cave each day, destroying any chance for the soccer boys to survive.

Senior Constable Justin Bateman described the relationship with the Thai Navy Seals as 'absolutely brilliant', calling them 'phenomenal warriors'.

"The Thai Navy Seals never left the cave. They would sleep in the cave along different chambers and then continue on working. It demonstrated the type of commitment and strong work ethic they had to the mission," he said.

"Nothing was too much work for them. They were very inspirational. We saw the way they worked and communicated with each other, which made us work even harder. It also motivated the other international parties."

MISSION POSSIBLE

"The call came through that the first boy was on his way. We all held our breath until he surfaced within our chamber," Senior Constable Matthew Fitzgerald said.

The water pumps had reduced the water levels in chamber 3, which meant the divers were able to move the boys above water.

"Once he was handed over to us, we were down at his face mask just listening for that breath," Senior Constable Matthew Fitzgerald said. "He was breathing—there was instant relief"

"The single biggest risk for the soccer team was drowning," Detective Leading Senior Constable Christopher Markcrow said. "The boys wore face masks, however these were designed for adults not young boys."

During the dive component it was crucial for the rescue divers to prevent any rocks or stalactites from dislodging the boys' face masks.

"We kept the rescue moving, passing the first boy to the next group in the following chamber where Thai medics, rangers and ambulances were waiting," Senior Constable Matthew Fitzgerald said.

Another vital aspect of the divers' work was to develop and install parts of a 'flying fox' pulley system, used in chamber two which moved the boys through the evacuation route.

"It was pretty surreal. There wasn't time to take a breath, when the next boy arrived," Sergeant Robert James said.

"We went into work mode, and once the first four boys were through we thought 'we've got this—100 percent we can pull this off'."

Over the next 48 hours the rest of the boys slowly made their way through the cave. The soccer boys had chosen the succession of who would be evacuated first, based on who lived the furthest away. Little did they know the whole world was tracking their remarkable rescue.

The successful mission saw the AFP dive team awarded Order of Australia and Bravery medals. The team

described meeting the Prime Minister as 'pretty awesome' but also a humbling experience.

"Meeting the Prime Minister, Governor General, head of the armed forces, and having our own command at the medal ceremony was a very humbling experience," Leading Senior Constable Kelly Boers said.

"I don't think we had a true understanding of the scope and scale of the incident as it was being relayed through the media. Realising the support from home was so huge it was enough to bring a tear to your eye. It made me feel truly proud to be an Australian."

"Detective Superintendent Thomas Hester and the AFP executive were incredibly supportive while we were in Thailand, and it made it a lot easier to focus on the mission of rescuing the boys," Sergeant Robert James said.

The AFP dive team was the last to exit the cave on the final day of the rescue mission, ensuring everyone had safely made their way back out.

"Trust, mateship, and being comfortable being uncomfortable, will give any team strength to keep pushing on," Senior Constable Matthew Fitzgerald said.

"Training and experience is imperative as a police diver. However, the one thing that we all have in common is the feeling of trust and reliance amongst fellow officers," Detective Leading Senior Constable Christopher Markcrow said.

"Some policing jobs are a combination of both excitement and near death experiences. But over time you learn not to fear or panic, but to treat it as a puzzle and work your way out."

"After we all exited the last chamber, everyone started clapping and cheering, and celebrating the success of what we thought would be mission impossible," Sergeant Robert James said.

"It was a great moment and something that we will never forget." ●

FACTORS IMPEDING RESILIENCE RESEARCH WITH AUSTRALIAN FIRST RESPONDERS: WHAT IS KEEPING US FROM THE CUTTING EDGE?

This paper was presented by Dr Petra Skeffington at the Australian and New Zealand Disaster & Emergency Management Conference held in Broadbeach (QLD) on 22-23 May 2017.

By Dr Petra **Skeffington**

Senior Lecturer/Clinical Psychologist School of Health Professions Murdoch University

Australian's are proud to be on the cutting edge in both research and industry. Many of our first responders (e.g. police, firefighters and paramedics) work on programs of continuous improvement and development but can have a problem of 'reinventing the wheel', both around Australia and internationally. Our first responder agencies excel at 'doing', time and effort are consumed in applications of innovation and trying new things, with little time left over for documenting these efforts to share them. Conversely, academics can be consumed with sharing knowledge and generating documentation, with arguably less 'doing'. Relationships between industry and academics should be, and evidence shows a positive impact of academic research on agency innovation and productivity (Muscio and Vallanti, 2014). Somehow, we face various barriers that keep our first responder organisations back from the cutting edge or trying ideas that have already been attempted and our academics stuck in the ivory towers of university campuses.

As an academic, I first encountered this issue when writing my PhD. For example, in 2012, the Parliament of Western Australia (via the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee) released a white paper, titled 'The Toll of Trauma on Western Australian Emergency Staff and Volunteers' (Community Development

and Justice Standing Committee, 2012). This white paper clearly summarised research and expert contributions indicating the cumulative impact of trauma, highlighting the importance of caring for the mental health of our first responders, the potential of liability for work-related trauma issues and the need to pursue primary prevention and resilience building programs. As a researcher, who at that time was trying to build collaborations with first responder agencies in Western Australia (WA) for the trial of a PTSD prevention program designed specifically to protect against the cumulative toll of work-related trauma, I was highly encouraged by the release of this white paper. The paper opened with a statement of concern about the effectiveness of the processes used by emergency and first responder agencies to protect staff and volunteers who may be exposed to trauma. At that time no WA first responder agencies followed the guidelines recommended by national experts, such as the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, now Phoenix Australia (ACPMH, 2007). Experts indicated that 10-30 per cent of staff were in danger of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as the result of work-related trauma (Jacobs, 2012).

It was following the release of this paper that first responder agencies withdrew support for the trial of a

program designed to prevent post-trauma mental health issues, that was to be provided free of charge. To their credit, other agencies responded with gusto and proactively moved this program of research forward. I reflected on the motivation for some to actively reject research that, to me in my naivety, seemed would only be to their benefit.

AGENCY FACTORS

The obvious first answer, from an agency point of view, is that our first responder agencies *are* innovating, but these processes are not transparent and available to outsiders. A brief glance at the program for conferences such as the Australian & New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference (ANZDMC) is evidence of this. We already apply thought, effort and innovation across a range of areas, such as resilience, technology, volunteers, risk management, the recovery process and psycho-social implications of disaster management.

First responder organisations have limited time and resources to direct toward innovation, and so choices must be made. It would be ludicrous to direct all efforts toward mental health and end up with under-skilled personnel! There is a constant struggle to find the time in recruit training to fit in all of the essential skills, as well as the recommended Mental Health First Aid training or resilience programs. If an agency does decide to add to their basic





“There is a constant struggle to find the time in recruit training to fit in all of the essential skills, as well as the recommended Mental Health First Aid training or resilience programs.”

training, then who designs it? Who runs it? We don't have people floating around with free time to develop and deliver new content.

Additionally, organisations want to direct time and effort toward innovations that are likely to work. Being part of a new trial is a risk. You risk your time and resources, and the time of your personnel, in a gamble on something that might not work in the way it was intended. A third party may confidently sell a 'resilience' program, where an academic or researcher may be reserved about claiming potential benefits before seeing the data.

ACADEMIC FACTORS

First responder agencies know how to collaborate and work across their industry, but academics often do not. Working with academics involves a new set of rules and guidelines, which are not always clearly communicated (Bruneel et al., 2010). Academics may come from a setting in which they are often branded as 'the expert', and need to adjust this mindset when working in a real world setting in which they have no prior experience. Academics can apply advanced knowledge to problems, but we should integrate our expertise with hands-on experience of agency representatives.

A traditional academic interpretation of value and research outputs is that the academic will get some papers with their name on it and possibly a promotion. This does not translate into value or benefit to a partner agency or the community! Academics looking for opportunities to collaborate may be experts in some areas but are novices in many other ways, and so flexibility, communication and good rapport is needed.

WHY IS COLLABORATION IMPORTANT?

Universities function as producers and transmitters of knowledge. We have, sitting in our universities across Australia and around the world, a wealth of topic experts who are up-to-date on the cutting edge in their field. Where our first responder agencies have no time to read, design, interpret and develop, academics can fill the gap. Successful collaborations between industry and academia show demonstrated increases in productivity and innovation (Muscio and Vallanti, 2014). Research collaborations should be more than something that looks good on an academic CV; they should create economic, social and environment value for the research partners.

Academics often need to work on a timeline. In some cases this creates pressure. However, it also prevents projects from being pushed back, and then pushed back again, due to lack of time and resources within an agency. It provides an external motivator for moving toward a set goal.

The government has also identified the benefits of industry collaboration for research, with a big drive for collaborative projects and the first ARC Linkage grants (up to \$300K per year, for 3 to 5 years) announced in January 2017. This government initiative is a big incentive for us to identify and move past barriers to collaboration, to ease the financial burden of large projects for exciting industry innovation. ●



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The way forward: A case example

The key to forming successful research collaboration is communication. The value of the research and benefits to the organisation must be clear. Most often, problems arise due to differences in organisational culture, unclear or inappropriate incentives and poor project management. The first thing to look for in a potential collaborator is a good match for goals, valued outcomes and clear role definition. Trust between partners can diminish all other barriers to success (Muscio and Vallanti, 2014).

When I initially attempted forming collaborations for my PhD research, I fell into some traps.

1. I assumed that what was most important to me would also be most important to collaborators.
2. I assumed that it was best to avoid 'death by meetings', and that phone calls or even emails would be sufficient for communication and the development of trusting relationships.
3. I thought the project had inherent value, which would be apparent to the organisations I approached.

Apparently, my plan needed some adjustment. After a year-long false start with my flawed approach, I reworked the research proposal, into a brief research 'prospectus', only a couple of pages long. This document outlined the basics of the project, what I needed my collaborator to provide and what I would provide in return. It described roles and responsibilities, time frames, and the value of the project. I speculated that busy first responders do not have a chance to read a lengthy document, dense with citations and technical jargon. They just needed to know what I was doing, when I wanted to do it, how it would get done and what they would get out of it.

I made it clear that I expected to do the bulk of the work, that all of my time in consultation, development and delivery of my intervention was to be free-of-charge, and that the organisation would continue to have access to materials we developed after the project had finished. There were

offers to train agency staff to deliver my intervention, also at no cost to the organisation. This agreement was later developed into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), outlining tasks, roles, timelines, commitments and benefits.

My currency, as an academic, was to have a place to trial my program in the 'real world', to collect data and to be able to share my results with both academic and first responder communities. The currency for the agency, as I understand it, was free labour in the development of a customised program, ongoing access to the program and (potentially) improved coping and wellbeing for personnel.

This approach was well received, and led to phone calls, coffee and face-to-face meetings with the manager of the Wellness Branch at the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), allowing me to build trust and relationships. The Wellness Branch was critical to moving this project forward. They saw value in the program, contributed a proactive attitude and ensure the right authorisations and approvals were acquired. I was blind to organisational factors and did not know the key people to include or seek approval from. Without support from the Wellness Branch, I could never have navigated these challenges.

During our discussions, I did not pretend to know about the agency and the practical elements of working as a first responder. I left gaps in my program for customisation through collaboration and asked for feedback or relevant examples. I explained that I knew a lot about Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), mental health and resilience, but I had never worked in fire and emergency and needed help to fill the gaps in my knowledge.

I presented DFES with a 'program shell'. It had all the nuts and bolts that were psychologically important to the program but needed to be shaped to fit the available time, the audience

and the organisation. We tailored examples to illustrate experiences that recruits would face, and language use was adjusted to match with standard terminology and phrasing. The draft program went back and forth to academic experts, clinical experts and on-the-ground experts, to ensure it all gelled.

We trialled the program within the DFES recruit school and sought feedback. Members of the Wellness Branch, District Officers and instructors from the recruit school sat in on the training sessions, providing comments about what may be working well and what could be improved. Data was collected to back up these observations and comments. More information about the program we developed (Mental Agility and Psychological Strength [MAPS] program), including preliminary evaluation data, is freely available online (Skeffington et al., 2016).

Importantly, the work didn't end when my PhD ended. I did not disappear into the distance with my degree and some stories about my work with firefighters. I continued to follow up with recruits who had been a part of the program. I handed over all of the custom built materials and trained a member of the Wellness Branch to deliver the program, with my ongoing support. Where workloads meant that in-house staff were not available, I came back and gave the program myself.

Five years on, we are still not finished! We have had conversations about additional reviews of the program, opportunities for improvement and change. We are planning a five-year follow up with the first recruits, to see if this addition to their basic training has made a difference. This ongoing relationship is driven by the working relationship we have formed, as well as the enthusiasm for innovation within the Wellness Branch (special credit goes to their manager). ●



EASTER

Nick Bell has been a fire officer with the NT FRS for more than 25 years. He has two main passions in life – motor vehicle accident prevention and White Ribbon. Here, Nick uses his creative writing flair to describe the horror that emergency services personnel experience when families are torn apart by road crashes. While the core aspects of this story are based on real events, it draws together 20 years experience of attending to MVAs to provide anonymity to the family involved.

By Nicholas (Nick) **Bell**

*Watch Commander, Northern Territory
Fire Rescue Service – Operations*



WARNING: This story is likely to pull at the heart strings.

For anyone experiencing PTSD please contact: Lifeline – **13 11 14** Beyond Blue - **1300 22 4636**

***'IT'S OK; I'M A GOOD DRIVER.
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!'***

The pain is enormous. My chest is heaving, I'm fighting for breath and I feel weak. I can see twisted, distorted, crumpled metal and smashed glass everywhere. My girlfriend sitting next to me is silent; her head bent forward, blood running fast from her nostrils onto her lap, running out of her head as if a tap has been turned on full. But that's not water. It's thick, rich, crimson blood and I can smell it. It comes from a place deep within her brutally broken body and it tells of damaged organs that cannot be fixed.

I feel sick and I vomit all over myself, old food and stomach fluid leak out of my smashed mouth and onto my chest. I look down at the mess, the vile stench fills my nostrils and my stomach tightens. I vomit again.

My girlfriend's forehead is resting on what's left of the dashboard of my car. I can see she's felt the full force of the violent impact but she's trapped so badly that I think the firewall of my car is crushing her to death, squeezing the life out of her body. Her face is so terribly disfigured from the injuries that I think her beautiful face will be ugly and un-kissable for the rest of her life if she lives. I know it's her but I really don't recognise her. I see parts of her scalp embedded into the smashed windscreen from the massive impact, long strands of her once beautiful hair still attached. She is twitching but I know she is not with me; it's her body fighting for life and losing. What have I done to her? I think I've killed her! Oh God, NO ...

Where is everybody to help us? I can barely move my head to see around me, I think my neck is broken. Oh God, please don't let me be paralysed and never walk again, please, oh please! I can't feel a thing below my waist and deep down I know something is terribly wrong. The steering wheel is pushing hard into my chest, starving me of air. Why won't anyone come and help us! I can't keep this up much longer. Everything is getting dark.

I try to move my arms but they are pinned fast and won't obey my commands. My body has been compressed into a small crushing space, jammed hard between the dash and the seat. My body is useless, nothing is working and I know it never will again. I have done this to myself; I have done this to my girl. I feel disgust and self-loathing like never before.

I strain to see out the window, as a face appears that I do not recognise and she looks at me. Her look of horror, her wide frightened eyes, her hand over her mouth tells me of the nightmare that has just begun. I see her on the phone talking frantically to someone. She turns her back and leaves me moving quickly away from my car.

I look through what is left of the windscreen and I see a power pole. It is deeply wedged into the front of my car pushing everything back onto my girl and me. I am conscious of a presence behind me and it is now that I realise I had two friends in the backseat of my car before all this happened. Oh, God, will this ever end! I strain harder to turn my head to try to see my friends but it refuses to obey me. If I am so badly crushed here, my friends must be torn

apart in the back because there is no room anywhere.

I keep smelling blood. I had no idea it smelled so bad but I can't escape my prison and I am forced to inhale the horrible odour. The regret for what I have done and what I now feel is irrelevant. The moment of impact has swept that away and now I am left with the consequence.

***'MY MATES WILL LOOK AFTER ME
IF THERE'S ANY TROUBLE.'***

I remember drag racing but not much after that. The drugs and beer at the party were great and flowed like water. I can't understand how this has happened because I've done it heaps of times before and got away with it. My mates were in another car next to me, racing too, laughing as we were speeding. Where are they now? Why have they taken off? Why didn't they stop? Why have they left us here to die? Aren't they supposed to be my mates? I feel rage but this is quickly replaced by deep sorrow. I feel sorry for myself and the tears fall from my smashed eyes.

***'I DON'T NEED ANYONE TO TELL
ME WHAT TO DO. WHAT THE HELL
WOULD THEY KNOW?'***

I hear sirens now. They are way off and it scares me. They come for my girl and me and my friends but what can they do when I have damaged us so much? The vomiting starts again.

I see uniforms. I can make out the different colours and badges but they are moving quickly around me and my



head is swirling. I can't make sense of it all. A fire fighter and an ambulance officer's face appear in the window next to me. They are talking to me but I can't understand a word they are saying. I hear an engine start and a huge pair of what looks like scissors starts to cut my mangled car from around me.

The fire fighters working frantically to get me out are sweating in their big jackets, wrestling with the gear they are using. Why aren't they trying to get my girl out first? What's wrong? What's going on? I try to talk and a paramedic puts her ear close to my mouth but nothing comes out. I want to tell her how much I am hurting all over but no sound comes from me. I am cold and I am lonely and no one can hear me. I have done this to myself.

The car shudders and jerks. The door next to me comes off and the fire fighters toss it aside. I see one squat on the ground and look down at my trapped legs. He looks worried and talks quietly and quickly with another. I am terrified by the look on everyone's faces. The fire fighter's get back to work and as the pain shoots through my body, I scream but no one notices. Not a sound has come from me, just more frothy blood at my lips. I can't stand the pain now but my rescuers are oblivious to this as they cut away at my car. My screaming goes on and on as the pain builds but I make no noise. The paramedic is working on me but struggles to find a spot on my arm to plunge a needle in.

I try to look to my side. The police are there and they are helping the fire fighters. I am seeing these people in a different way. They are my saviours but

will also witness my death. I can see the stress and strain etched on their faces. A look of horror controlled for me as a victim but I see clearly now the price they are paying. I want to reach for them and say sorry but my body is giving up and won't respond.

I start to negotiate with God. I beg for my life. I ask him for a second chance to make this right. A second chance to live and love again. Another moment in time to say no, when all I did was say yes. As the pain rips through me I know that God is not listening and is calling me.

'IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ME.'

I now know I am dying. My car is now my coffin. The Grim Reaper has pointed me out for execution and I cannot do a thing about it. I have given him all the tools he needs to kill me – drugs, alcohol, speed and my own stupidity. I have thrown away every good thing in my life to end up like this – a bloody, smashed, vomit covered mess trapped in my car with my dying girlfriend, waiting my turn to die. A few minutes ago I was a big, strong man, but now I am human wreckage, brutally torn apart and beyond repair and I am frightened. I am shaking with fear and I want my mum and dad but they are not here and I will never see them again. Ever. I did this to myself and the searing pain that wracks my body presses home this fact.

THE COST

Never again will I feel the embrace of a beautiful woman, make love and know what it's like to be a father or kiss a child goodnight. I know I will never

again go fishing, play footy, run with my friends or swim in the ocean. I will never again laugh with my family, taste a BBQ sausage, see another family meal, argue with my brother, debate politics with my father, watch my little sister win another trophy for netball. I will never again feel the tropical sun on my face, the Dry Season breeze in my hair, the monsoon rain on my shoulders. I will not live to see a sunset or a sunrise, a full moon or an eclipse.

I have taken all of this away from myself and I have snatched it away from my girl and my two friends in the backseat too. In killing me, I have killed my family because they will never recover from this. I will not be around to explain to them why or help and hold them as they weep for years to come. My life that is so precious has been tossed away and I have done this. I am responsible and as I sit here bleeding out, I am paying the ultimate price. The price I have paid is enormous with no payoff, no reason, and nothing in return – just pointless and meaningless death before my time.

I am a Territorian just like you. ●

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To provide a professional body for the study of the roles and functions of Emergency Services and Emergency Management Organisations throughout Australasia, and the promotion and advancement of professional standards in these and associated services.

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- To raise the status and advance the interests of the profession of emergency management and counter-disaster services administration.
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- To provide opportunities for association among members and students to promote and protect their mutual interest.
- To facilitate full interchange of concepts and techniques amongst members.
- To bring to the notice of the public such matters that are deemed to be important for safety and protection of the community and to promote research and development of emergency services generally.
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RAIN'S RACE TO 300

More than half of the emergency services personnel that took part in this year's annual Eureka Stair Climb in full kit were paramedics, driven by the determination of Ambulance Victoria ALS Paramedic Rain Histen to raise the profile of the event to improve mental health.

Over the past 12 months, Rain has been rallying support from her paramedic colleagues to join her as she prepared to take on the southern hemisphere's tallest building for the eighth consecutive year.

Rain is aiming to attract 300 paramedics from across Australia and New Zealand to the climb the 88 stairs of Melbourne's tallest tower.

This year, 140 of the 221 emergency services participants represented Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland ambulance services, including Ambulance Victoria CEO Tony Walker.

"I have a goal to get 300 paramedics to this event, which raises money for the Fred Hollows Foundation," Rain said.

"Tony (Walker) did his first climb in 2017 and this year took 15 minutes off his time, which is an amazing effort, plus he has lost 30kg through hard work and training over the past two years."

While raising money for charity is a huge and important component of this event, Rain says it is also about emergency services personnel supporting each other.

"I am passionate about this event but I am also very passionate about comradery amongst paramedics to maintain and improve our mental as well as our physical health.

"Our team did a great job this year and I am so proud of everyone who came along on the day and gave it their best.

"I hope more paramedics get on board for next year as we move towards attracting an even larger contingent of paramedics."

While everyone had a great time and finished well, like any race to the top it comes with winners. This year the winners' list was dominated by Victorian firefighters and volunteer firefighters.

CFA team, Project Icarus, was the fastest team on the day while event stalwart Scott McGraw from MFB won the male full kit category and the fastest female was Sandy Hearn also from MFB. ●

Paramedics can keep in touch with Rain Histen and join her quest for 300 paramedic climbers in 2019.

Instagram: @teamparamedic

E: rain.histen@ambulance.vic.gov.au

Because ... fitness and wellbeing matter!



Staff from National Emergency Response Journal publishing team Countrywide Austral (CWA) joined the emergency services participants in the Eureka Climb. (L-R) CWA Director Craig Berger, Faye Bendrups and members of the Footscray SES Unit, Jason Jeffery, Georgia Kovats, Byron Webb and Reece Turner.



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