

NATIONAL EMERGENCY



RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services

A.I.E.S.

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www.aies.net.au

WEBSITE CONTENT

The website has sections for each State as well as National Areas. If you have ideas for State Division content, please contact your State Secretary, for National content, email web@aies.net.au. Please be aware that all content must go past the National Secretary prior to web publication to ensure it meets required guidelines.

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NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services

Summer 2019-20 • National Emergency Response

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

Date: Saturday 18 April 2020

Time: 6pm

Venue: Best Western Hobart,
156 Bathurst Street, Hobart.

More details to follow, keep an eye on
www.aies.net.au or contact your Division.

FRONT COVER

NSW Rural Fire Service drop water from a helicopter onto Ruined Castle Bushfire in the Blue Mountains.
Photo by Jason Benz Bennee

Please send photos of the 2019/20 bushfire season to editor@aies.net.au to appear in the next edition of NER where we will pay tribute to our emergency services heroes.



NEW MEMBERS

The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services is pleased to announce the following emergency services people joined the AIES between June and November 2019.

NAME	ORGANISATION	DIVISION
Paul Barrett	Calvary Wakefield Hospital	South Australia
Kim Halse	Nillumbik Shire Council	Victoria
Wayne Hayward	Rural Fire Service	New South Wales
Jason Johnson	Rural Fire Service	New South Wales
Bek Milne	State Emergency Service	ACT

Congratulations to the following AIES members who were elevated to Fellow Member status in 2019:

NAME	ORGANISATION	DIVISION
Reginald Marshall	SES	Queensland
Jenny Crump	SES	Queensland
William Hoyles	SES	NSW



www.facebook.com/aies.online



<https://au.linkedin.com/company/australian-institute-of-emergency-services> or log in at au.linkedin.com and search for 'Australian Institute of Emergency Services' under 'Companies'.



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 by 7 February 2020. There is an annual award for the best article submitted by an AIES member.

Living with PTSD? We Can Help

Moving Beyond Trauma is a 5-day residential program at the Quest for Life Centre in Bundanoon, NSW designed to assist people with PTSD reclaim their lives.

The program draws on an understanding of trauma, its effect on the brain and teaches practical skills and tools which bring relief to the troubled body, mind and spirit.

Based on the latest research on health, healing and neuroscience, our nationally acclaimed programs are delivered by a highly qualified professional team in a safe and confidential environment.

2020 Programs 13-17 January 10-14 February
 16-20 March 4-8 May

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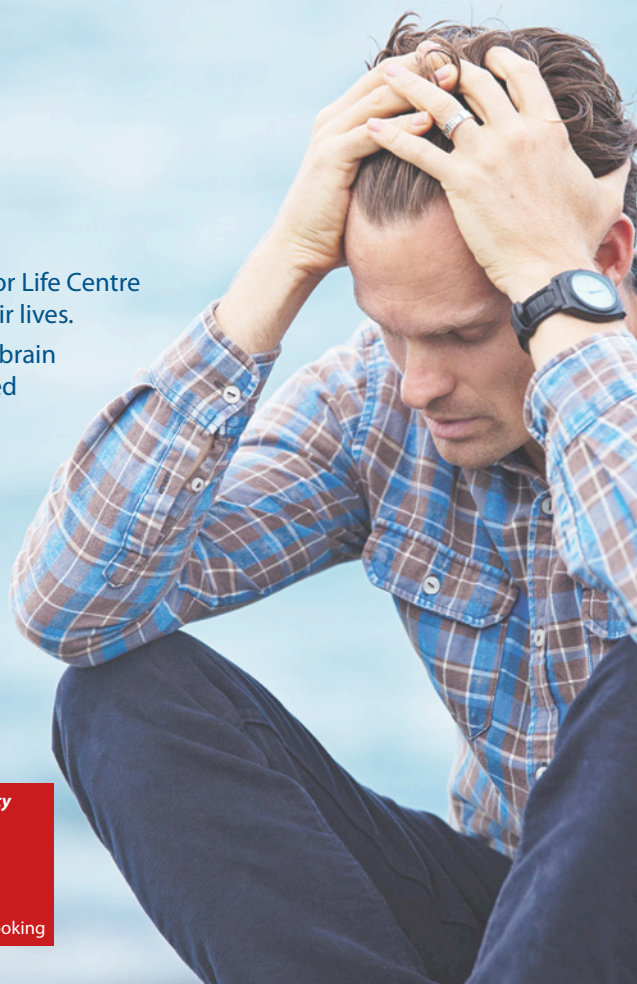
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\$200 off

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'*National Emergency Response*' when booking



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Steve Jenkins, FAIES

National President

Congratulations to NSW Division member Sven Nilsson who is now a Fellow of the Institute. Sven is currently Disaster Manager for the Sydney Local Health District. His duties include NSW Health Liaison Officer in various centres including the Police Operations Centre, State Crisis Centre, State Emergency Operations Centre and Rural Fire Service Emergency Operations Centre. He has been the Nurse/Health Commander with disaster response teams during significant events which include the City to Surf, Sydney Olympics, bushfire emergencies and at Sydney Airport when victims of the Bali Bombings in 2002 were being repatriated to Sydney. Sven has been a member of the Institute since 2013 and his past and present involvement in emergency and disaster management well qualifies his elevation to Fellow status.

I am pleased to advise that three members of the Institute are attending the two remaining Volunteer Leadership Programs (VLPs) being conducted in 2019 – one member is attending the Adelaide VLP and two are attending the VLP being conducted in Tamworth, NSW. A number of VLPs will be conducted in the first half of 2020; a notification will be sent to members when the dates and location are released. Information about the VLPs can be found at www.aidr.org.au/programs/volunteer-leadership-program/

Members visiting the Institute's website, www.aies.net.au, may notice that some new and revised documents are being uploaded including the Institute's code of conduct, statement of duties and responsibilities of divisional management committees and office bearers, and a copy of the Strategic Reform Agenda 2017-20.

Articles are being sought for the *National Emergency Response Journal* in 2020. These can range from a photo with an accompanying paragraph to articles that span many pages.

Three editions of the journal are published each year in February, June and October. Submissions should be sent to the Editor via email, editor@aies.net.au by the end of January, May and September. Members submitting articles automatically become eligible for the Institute's annual Golden Pen Award. The Board decides the winner of this Award during the annual face-to-face meeting and the winner announced at the Annual General Meeting held in conjunction therewith. The recipient of this award originally received a gold fountain pen; however, with changing communications modes, the Board has agreed to convert this to an iPad or other communications device of similar value.

Save the date. The 2020 Australian & New Zealand Disaster & Emergency Management Conference will be held at the RACV Royal Pines on the Gold Coast on 1 and 2 June 2020. Details are available online at <https://anzdmc.com.au/>

Hardly a year goes by now without some part of Australia, and the Australasian region more broadly, experiencing one or more significant or disaster events. When such events occur in Australia, and the appropriate declarations made by the State and Federal governments, the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements are activated. Financial assistance may then be available for people and businesses in the affected areas.

The database on the Australian Government's Disaster Assist website lists the events for which Government assistance may be available for people and businesses in the affected areas for both current and previous disasters and significant events. In summary, to late October in the 2019 calendar year, there have been 32 events listed across five states involving five event types. This includes a single entry for the numerous bushfires that have



occurred recently across northern NSW, some of which are still being battled. Local government areas impacted by these fires and included in the single entry in the database include: Armidale, Bellingen, Clarence Valley, Glen Innes Severn, Inverell, Richmond Valley, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha. It is hoped that the weather predictions for the coming summer do not result in too many more events being added this year.

As a volunteer fire-fighter with the NSW Rural Fire Service, I recently completed a number of multiple-day deployments to Grafton and Casino, as well as numerous single-day deployments to Kempsey, and shifts locally to assist with the Bees Nest Fire. This included operations in the Rappville area near Casino where, sadly, two people lost their lives and many residences, business premises and other assets were destroyed. I have met many people during these deployments, and observed first-hand the dedication of the volunteers in many agencies who turn out whenever required to assist during these events. In particular, I met two members of the Woodburn Rural Fire Brigade (near Casino), a mother and daughter team, who were in Rappville with a small Category 9 fire appliance assisting with asset protection when the fire-front tore through. An article highlighting their involvement in the NSW Rural Fire Service, and, in particular, their response during the Rappville fire event, will be prepared for the next edition of the NER journal.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas and New Year. ●



Are you a member of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services?

Would you like to become a member?

The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services offers members of emergency service and affiliate organisations the opportunity to be a member of a professional body dedicated to the progression and recognition of the Emergency Service role in the community. The Institute acts as an independent forum where members can be heard and their opinions shared with other emergency service members. We provide a voice for the Emergency Services, by speaking out on issues that affect our members and the community in general.

THE INSTITUTE'S OBJECTIVES

- To raise the status and advance the interests of the profession of emergency management and counter disaster services administration.
- To represent generally the views and interests of the profession and to promote a high standard of integrity and efficiency in the skills of emergency and counter disaster administration.
- 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.
- To establish a national organization to foster international cooperation in counter disaster services administration.

If you would like to join the AIES Check out our website:
www.aies.net.au



For life-threatening emergencies
Call 000 (triple zero)

For flood and storm response
Call 132 500

Our members come from:

- Fire, Police & Ambulance
- State Emergency Services
- Coast Guard & Volunteer Marine Rescue
- Private Emergency Services
- And any organisation that helps out people in need!

BROADER AIMS OF THE INSTITUTE

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



TASMANIAN DIVISION AWARDS NIGHT 2019

By Ron Jones, LFAIES

Tasmanian President

In March 2019, the Tasmanian Division held its Annual AGM and PJ Parssey Awards night at the Claremont RSL.

This was much later than most years because of the bushfires that devastated our state in early 2019.

After the AGM, CEO of Volunteering Tasmania Lisa Schimanski spoke to the guests about volunteering in Tasmania, and highlighted that if a dollar value was put on volunteers' hours it would be worth over \$5,000,000 a year.

The night centred around the Tasmanian RSL Emergency Service Awards.

Tasmanian RSL CEO Noeleen Lincoln gave a talk about the awards and introduced Acting State President Geoff

Leitch who presented the three regional winners – Kerry Bone, Darren Hopkins and Harold Priest.

Darren Hopkins was awarded the winner of the Tasmanian RSL Emergency Service Award.

I was honoured to be presented a Special Award by Noeleen on behalf of the Tasmanian RSL, which included a Certificate and a \$1000 cheque for the AIES Tasmanian Division to use to support our members. A big thank you to the Tasmanian RSL.

Presentations for the PJ Parssey Memorial Awards were made to the 2018 winning nominees – Arron Brooke (SES), Stan Brett (Tasmania Fire Service), Vicki Knowles (Ambulance Tasmania), Wayne Dowling (SES & Ambulance Tasmania) and Michael Long (Tasmania Fire Service).

Betty Parssey, wife of the late Peter Parssey, announced Wayne Dowling as this year's winner of the PJ Parssey Memorial Award.



Honorary Membership, Graeme McGee (pictured left) with Ron Jones.

As part of winning the PJ Parssey Memorial Award, our supporting sponsor for the past eight years, RACT presented Wayne with a \$500 accommodation voucher.

Thanks to RACT for your continued support.

Congratulations to all our nominees, and thank you to our hosts, the Claremont RSL and the Claremont RSL Women's Auxiliary for a fantastic meal.

Thanks also to our AIES Members and Committee. ●

Read more about the history of the Tasmanian awards and learn more about the nominees and winners on pages 6 and 7.



AWARDING OUR EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL

By Ron Jones, LFAIES

Tasmanian President

For many years now, the Tasmanian Division of the AIES has been highlighting the fantastic work of our emergency service personnel through the PJ Parssey Memorial Award established in 1990 to honour the work of the late AIES Board Member Peter Parssey.

We now also support the Tasmanian Broadcasters, Volunteer Emergency Service Awards (VESA) and the Tasmanian RSL Emergency Service Worker of the Year Award.

TASMANIAN BROADCASTERS – VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICE AWARDS

The Tasmanian Broadcasters, which is part of the Grant Broadcasters Family Radio Station, started honouring the work of the Emergency Service Volunteers via their West Coast Radio Station 7XS, which has been promoting this award now for 25 years. At the time of starting this award the West Coast had the local police and one paramedic base; all other emergency services and support was from volunteers.

For the past 12 years, the award has also been supported by sister stations 7AD/SeaFM and 7BU/SeaFM. LAFM/Chilli FM and 7HOFM have been supporters for the past nine years. All have individual awards also.

The radio stations run a six to eight week campaign promoting the work of emergency service volunteers with winners announced around International Volunteer Day held on 5 December each year.

Winning nominees are presented with an award early in the following year, and forwarded to the AIES Tasmanian Committee for consideration for the PJ Parssey Memorial Award.

2018 NOMINATIONS

7XS – VICKI KNOWLES, AMBULANCE TASMANIA, STRAHAN



(L-R) State Manager Tasmanian Broadcasters Tim Holder, Vicki Knowles and Ron Jones.

Vicki started volunteering with Ambulance Tasmania in 2001 at Wayatinah and provided 24/7 coverage for about 12 years with no immediate backup. Vicki achieved the highest level of qualifications available to a volunteer ambulance officer in Tasmania. Vicki and her husband retired to Strahan in 2012 and joined the local ambulance station on the roster around 70 per cent of the time with 24/7 coverage.

7BU/SEAFM – STAN BRETT, TASMANIAN FIRE SERVICE, HELLYER BRIGADE



(L-R) Ron Jones, Stan Brett and Radio Station Manager Eve Woodhouse.

Stan joined the fire service in March 1969 at Preolenna Brigade before transferring to Hellyer Brigade in 1989 where he has been stationed since. Stan became Brigade Chief in 1990 until he stepped down in February 2018. Stan received his 50-year Long Service badge in 2019. Stan has attended many major fire campaigns throughout the region as well motor vehicle accidents and structural fires.

7AD/SEAFM – AARON BROOKE, STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE, MERSEY UNIT



Aaron Brooke (centre) with representatives from SES, Tasmania Police and Lisa Schmanski (second from left) from Volunteering Tasmania.

Aaron has been volunteering with SES for over 18 years. Aaron has accomplished so much and was appointed team leader and assists with training new members. He is also involved in Search and Rescue campaigns on the mainland.

7HOFM – WAYNE DOWLING, STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE, AMBULANCE TASMANIA AND ST JOHN AMBULANCE, HUONVILLE



(L-R) Ron Jones, Wayne Dowling and 7HOFM radio host Michael Newell.

Wayne has served more than 25 years with the SES, 20 years with Ambulance Tasmania and St John Ambulance, and was recently promoted to Unit Manager of the Huonville SES Unit.

Wayne has vast experience in all facets of rescue including road crash rescue, storm and flood damage as well as past experiences with remote bush and wilderness search and rescue.

LAFM/CHILLIFM – MICHAEL LONG, TASMANIAN FIRE SERVICE, WHITE HILLS BRIGADE



Michael Long (centre) with family and Ron Jones (far right).

Michael has served for the last 35 years, much of the time as Brigade Chief, Group Officer, Ben Lomond Group and Training Instructor.

Michael's personal goal is to ensure firefighters are trained to the highest calibre and has developed training packages to achieve these goals. His vast experience and level of training regularly sees him working in the regional HQ during high fire danger periods or as sector commander on the fire ground.

RSL TASMANIA – EMERGENCY SERVICE WORKER OF THE YEAR 2018

About 10 years ago the Tasmanian Division started a campaign to promote Tasmanian Emergency Service Personnel, both career and volunteers, to become an Affiliated Member and support their local RSL Sub Branch. The idea was to help build membership and support their RSL Sub Branches to stop them from closing.

The Tasmanian Division Committee holds meetings at the RSL and the AGM and Awards Night.

Several years ago, the Tasmanian RSL approached the Tasmanian Division to help run a Tasmanian RSL Emergency Service Worker of the Year Award to say thanks for our support and the support of the Tasmanian Emergency Services. This award is open to both career and volunteer personnel.

The award is run in Tasmania's three regions with each regional winner put forward for a State Award.

2018 REGIONAL WINNERS NORTH WEST REGION – HAROLD PRIEST, STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE, CENTRAL COAST



Harold Priest (centre).

Harold joined the SES in 1997 and has been an active member working his way up from crew member to Deputy Unit Manager to Unit Manager in 2014. His specific skills include storm and flood response, height safety, general rescue and road crash rescue. Harold coordinates emergency responses in the Central Coast and supports other emergency services in the north-west region.

NORTH EAST REGION – DARREN



Darren Hopkins (at the microphone).

HOPKINS, TASMANIAN POLICE

Darren joined the Tasmanian Police in 1986 and commenced duty in Hobart.

Emergency management is one of Darren's most prominent and well-regarded skills. Darren has been the OIC of both Western and Northern Search and Rescue Squads for many years involving significant land and sea incidents during that time. Darren is one of the most recognised and well-respected search and rescue experts in the state. In 2009 he was awarded the Churchill Fellowship to study contemporary search and rescue studies overseas.

SOUTHERN REGION – KERRYN BONE, AMBULANCE TASMANIA



Kerryn Bone (at the podium).

Kerryn became a Volunteer Ambulance Officer in 1998 at the age of 19 years. She has provided 20 years' service to the Derwent Valley and New Norfolk communities. Kerryn has maintained a pattern of excellence both on the road and during group training along with her diligence to promote a positive workplace culture that is paramount in an industry. Kerryn has been group trainer for the past eight years, while simultaneously achieving her Bachelor of Nursing Degree. In 2015, Kerryn was honoured by receiving the Derwent Valley Citizen of the Year in the Australia Day Awards.

THE TASMANIAN RSL WINNER FOR 2018 – DARREN HOPKINS, TASMANIA POLICE



Darren Hopkins.

Darren was presented his award along with the Regional Winners at the Tasmanian AIES Division Awards Night held at the Claremont RSL Sub Branch.

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NSW AIES DIVISION NEWS

By Robert **Maul**, LFAIES

*National AIES Vice President/
NSW Division President*

Since its reformation in 2017, a lot of developments have occurred with our NSW AIES Emergency Management Committee. The Committee now comprises Robert (Bob) Maul, LFAIES, as Division President who came out of retirement following his tenure as National General Secretary/Registrar from 1996-2015; Brett Henderson, AIES, a senior retired police officer with an extensive background in emergency management and counter-disaster operations, as the Vice President; James (Jim) Pullin FAIES, retired senior past emergency management operative with the NSW SES, Atomic Energy Commission and Maritime Service Board (Ports Sydney), as the new National Company Secretary; and David Parsons, FAIES, a well-known identity in the emergency management sector in both Australia and overseas, as the Division Secretary. Others who have joined our NSW Division team include Moira Ryan, MAIES, a former long-time SES Controller for the Hurstville Local Government area, and Luke Freeman, MAIES, a member of the Blue Mountains

SES Unit. Another member of the Committee is Steve Jenkins, FAIES, the National AIES President who is an Ex Officio member in accordance with the AIES Constitution. A profile/background of some of the above appointees is included in this article.

Since its re-establishment by the National Board of Directors in 2017, the committee members have worked assiduously in not only contacting past members to re-join but encouraging kin operatives from a variety of emergency management sector agencies to apply for membership of the Institute. These initiatives have resulted in a 33 per cent increase in membership. Action is also now under way to provide our members with more support and appropriate emergency management activities which have been lacking in the early part of this decade. These initiatives include inter alia, webinars using the Zoom internet application, renewed personal contact with our membership in NSW, arranging for members to attend EM conferences and courses held in NSW and interstate, as well as a regular circular

memorandum to keep our members apprised of developments taking place at National and Division levels of the chain of command. The National Board is now also at full strength and the Directors are meeting once a month (apart from the Annual Meeting and AGM) by electronic means to provide our membership throughout Australia and New Zealand with more support and programmes which will assist in the retention and recruitment of members. No doubt, these activities will be communicated in due course by each Division Committee to its members.

Our Committee meets every four months in the centre of the City of Sydney and three Division AGMs have been held since 2016. As the President of the Division I am delighted to advise that each member is contributing significantly to discussions held including the submissions of proposals both for division and national consumption. What is even more exemplary is the fact that four of the committee members travel to the meetings in the city from locations in the Blue Mountains, a significant distance from Sydney. Apart from myself, the other members on the Committee are current members of the Blue Mountains and Sutherland Shire SES Units which entails distance travelling and entails an impost on their time. This fact is greatly appreciated by me.

At this time Committee members are working on several projects which include the expansion of the Webinar/ Zoom facility to encompass in due course other Divisions, Coffee Clubs, input by overseas emergency management operatives, conduct of social meetings with appropriate guest lecturers, and on behalf of the National Board developing professional prototype AIES caps, T-shirts, application forms and posters with relevant AIES logos and branding. Currently we have Huon Pine Coasters inscribed with the AIES logo for purchase



Division President Robert Maul, LFAIES (pictured left).



New National Company Secretary David Parsons, FAIES.



Luke Freeman, MAIES, a member of the Blue Mountains SES Unit.

Action is also now under way to provide our members with more support and appropriate emergency management activities which have been lacking in the early part of this decade.

by members at a cost of \$6 each. These have been professionally made and are available from me on my email address which is contained in the NER magazine or mobile: 0400 521 304.

Just as Rome was not built in a day or two after the great fire in Rome during the reign of Caesar Nero Ahenobarbus, both at Division and National level the committees are progressing projects at a measured and incremental manner so as to ensure that whatever is done



AIES Huon Pine Coasters.

or implemented is done well and done professionally.

Often, I get asked by members what is the Institute doing for me. My answer to this question is always, what expertise are you able to provide to the Institute as a member, or what contribution can you make to enhance the status and professional quality of the Institute? No Committee or an individual member thereof is, as so rightly said by the poet John Donne, "An island unto

themselves". No individual is omnipotent and any contribution that a member can give to either the National Board of Directors or Division Committee Members is welcome. This includes articles for your journal NER journal with an emergency management perspective. Remember all the Directors and Committee Members are volunteers just as each individual member is, and all members of the AIES are a part of a team. ●

LIVING WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Simon Gillard

IMPORTANT 2 MINUTE READ - SAVE YOUR LIFE

In one of my darkest times suffering from chronic PTSD and depression I contacted #Lifeline Wesley Mission when suicidal and not in a cognitive rational state of mind.

I was a tearful, emotional, snot running mess. I called while in the process of leaving this world to end the pain for my family and friends. A last ditch effort to speak to someone before going. I was a blubbering mess on the phone and words were hard to say.

The lady I spoke to was amazing.

Patient, caring, empathetic and a great listener. She gave me hope and allowed me to establish, via talking, that life was worth living.

This beautiful woman saved my life!

This was a number of years ago now, but I know they (Lifeline) are always there to listen without judgement and provide support and hope.

That is the power of this message to all!

Things do pass, you are loved and your life is precious. We can sometimes lose the cognitive ability through mental illness to see this.

Learn about yourself, recognise your signs, have self-awareness when things are starting to slip downhill. Then be that strong person to reach out and talk as early as possible.

Talk is therapy, talk provides clarity, talk releases pain, talk is resilience and talk provides hope – trust me!

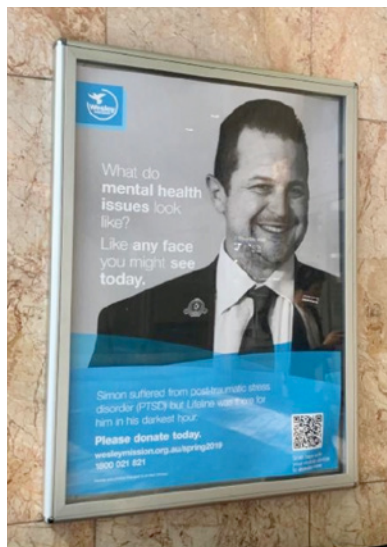
Talk can save your life and, in my view, reaching out shows how tough you truly are.

Remember that, always. You have nothing to lose but all to gain via talking.

I'm honoured to be able to share my lived experience and wisdom, and support Lifeline who supported me.

Mental health does not discriminate and can affect anyone.

If you are able to donate to Lifeline, an amazing life-saving organisation, to train more telephonists and purchase more phones and equipment, please do. ●



One of many posters of Simon Gillard displayed around Australia, this one is in Pitt street. #suicideprevention #reachout #talkistherapy #itsnotweaktospeak #resilience #mentalhealth #PTSD #Depression

THE 7 BEST MENTAL HEALTH APPS OF 2019

Find peace of mind from your smartphone or tablet

Source: Very Well Mind, www.verywellmind.com

BEST OVERALL: MOODFIT

"Whether you're experiencing anxiety, depression, or high levels of stress, Moodfit is designed to help you feel better."

BEST FOR LEARNING COPING SKILLS: MOODMISSION

"MoodMission recommends 'missions' based on how the user is feeling and each mission can improve mood and coping skills."

BEST FOR THERAPY: TALKSPACE

"Talkspace connects you with a licensed mental health professional so you can receive therapy from your digital devices."

BEST FOR STRESS RELIEF: SANVELLO

"Sanvello teaches mindfulness skills and provides mood and health tracking tools that can be used to improve mental and physical health."

BEST FOR MEDITATION: HEADSPACE

"Headspace was started by Andy Puddicombe, a Buddhist monk who made it his mission to teach meditation and mindfulness to as many people as possible."

BEST FUN APP: HAPPIFY

"Happify provides science-based activities and games that are meant to reduce stress, build resilience, and overcome negative thoughts."

BEST FOR DEPRESSION: DEPRESSION CBT SELF-HELP GUIDE

"The Depression CBT Self-Help Guide provides education on depression and the best strategies for managing the symptoms."



What it is like having Depression & Anxiety

Not caring about *anything*

**BUT
ALSO**

caring too much about
everything

Feeling so *physically exhausted*
you struggle to have a shower

**BUT
ALSO**

Feeling so *physically restless*
you can't stop moving

Feeling hopeless / having
no urge to be productive

**BUT
ALSO**

Being *scared of failure*

Not wanting to be *lonely*

**BUT
ALSO**

Too *overwhelmed* at the
thought of *socializing*

Feeling *paralyzingly numb*

**BUT
ALSO**

Feeling *scared /
everything at once*

Having BOTH is like HELL!

@RealDepressionProject



This educational tool as to what living with PTSD/anxiety and depression looks like is amazingly accurate and powerful. A constant 'Ying and Yang', 'Push and Pull' – minefield of the mind.

We can however weave our way to recovery!

Recovery takes practice, it takes resilience and, it takes strength one day at a time to thread our way through the PTSD and depression connected minefield.

Neurologically our minds are overwhelmed, running like a race car, concentration can be wavering and stimuli can trigger.

When we do our best through acceptance, self awareness to take a step back acknowledging what is occurring in our minds we can move into recovery practice mode. This can entail a wide variety of personal systems that work for each individual.

I press in my mind a big red button – STOP.

I scan via self-awareness where the issues lie, breathe and then reset.

I zone in on the moment at hand and then live there.

Most importantly, I tell myself: 'Just do your best' – that is all that is required. Usually, I have found my best exceeds my expectation.

The strength here, is the more we face our fears and engage a powerful mindset in any moment, such as, 'Just do it, I've got this'.

We can re-shape our minds to where neurologically we once were. The same applies for self-awareness to take some downtime and re-charge the batteries.

The most important thing is recognising our signs and symptoms, and then take the appropriate action.

This is recovery ... and there is no pressure, or right or wrong. Just commit to baby steps and give it a try. It may help, as it has helped me.

Lastly, communicate!

Talk and express to others, that this is what it is and you're on a road to recovery weaving through a minefield that is or will slowly peter out.

When we accept that it's all okay, and just part of a life process building towards recovery (one day at a time)

those in our tribe will always understand, support and accept us.

But, better still we are accepting ourselves – perfectly, imperfect!

Never give up!

Lifeline Australia: 13 11 14

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277

ABOUT SIMON GILLARD

Simon is an Inspirational Speaker and Lived Experience Mental Health Keynote Presenter | Best Selling Author – Penguin Random House | PHN Advisor | Mental Health Research | Ambassador RUOK? Day & Australian Rotary Health | Speaker for *Beyondblue* & Blackdog Institute | Mental Health First Aid Accredited | Former NSW Police Force Detective Sergeant | To find out more, visit www.simongillard.com.au



POST-DISASTER DECISION MAKING IN ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY PROJECTS

AN INTERVIEW STUDY WITH PRACTITIONERS IN QUEENSLAND

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With the occurrence of natural disasters increasing in recent times the exposure and vulnerability of major infrastructure to such events has increased. The vulnerability of road infrastructure increases with the rise in the number and intensity of hydro-meteorological disasters.

This paper was presented at the Australian & New Zealand Disaster & Emergency Management Conference held on the Gold Coast, 12-13 June 2019

With multiple disasters occurring in the same area the importance of good decision making in repairing and reconstructing damaged assets becomes evident. Floods and storms are the most common type of disasters in Australia (Guha-Sapir, 2016) and the state of Queensland is one of the most vulnerable states to such events (Coates, 1999).

Road structures play an important role in the recovery of disaster hit communities as it provides the means of access, which is vital in a post-disaster context. The rescue, recovery and reconstruction efforts will rely heavily on the accessibility to the disaster-zone and with the lack of serviceable roads and bridges, such efforts could be hindered (Gajanayake *et al.*, 2018). It is thus evident that the reconstruction of road infrastructure after a disaster event is vital, so as to minimise the follow on impacts it may cause to the community and the economy.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how decision making with regard to post-disaster reconstruction of road infrastructure is carried out in a disaster-prone region in Queensland, Australia. The paper presents the factors influencing decision making and the methods and techniques used by practitioners in prioritising reconstruction projects based on information gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ROAD RECONSTRUCTION DECISION MAKING

The effectiveness of post-disaster reconstruction will depend on numerous factors while the availability of resources after an event is a major factor affecting the reconstruction processes (Chang *et al.*, 2012). Other factors that influence the reconstruction activities are the influence of funding agencies on the decision making and prioritisation processes and the coordination between

funding agencies, road authorities, central and local governments (Le Masurier *et al.*, 2006).

Lyons (2009) explains that post-disaster decision making is heavily influenced by economic and political actors, with less influence from grass root level. Therefore, reconstruction activities especially in rural areas tend to be centrally planned and managed with heavy influence from large actors and little focus on tapping into local knowledge (Peng *et al.*, 2013). A disaster may lead to insufficient local capacity required for the rebuilding process and hence there can be potential for larger scale organisations to fill these local gaps (Haigh and Sutton, 2012).

Post-disaster reconstruction activities are generally carried out based on disaster management and recovery plans, which have been specifically designed for this purpose. The lack of a clear disaster management plan has been found to delay the reconstruction





The Riverwalk between the Story Bridge and New Farm is torn apart by 4.2m flood waters. In the early hours of 13 January 2011, part of the 850m walkway broke off, and had to be carefully steered by tugboat between the Gateway Bridge supports to avoid a collision. Photo by Stephenk1977, Flickr, All Creative Commons.

activities due to lack of clarity in who needs to take responsibility (Pathirage *et al.*, 2012) and unclear lines of authority (Lin Moe and Pathranarakul, 2006). However, most regions or countries only develop such plans as a reactionary effort after a major disaster event and is specifically the case with areas which are not prone to major disasters (Palliyaguru and Amaratunga, 2008). In addition to well-prepared disaster management plans and funding strategies a comprehensive method to prioritisation can improve reconstruction processes. Such prioritisation frameworks integrate technical factors of specific infrastructure and societal influences allowing for individual and system level assessment of structures (Liu *et al.*, 2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present study is to gain in-depth knowledge on how practitioners assess impacts and prioritise reconstruction projects in resource constrained post-disaster situations. Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative approach was adopted, involving a thematic analysis of interviews carried out with practitioners in Queensland, Australia. Ethics approval

Table 1: Respondents for the interviews

ORGANISATION	DIVISION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Regional Council in Queensland	Infrastructure Works and Services	1
	Disaster Management	2
	Environment and Pest Management	1
	Economic Development	1
	Community Development and Engagement	2
Queensland Government	Engagement and Technical Services, Operations	1
	Program Delivery and Operations	2

for the research was obtained from the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee (SEHAPP 75-17).

INTERVIEW DESIGN

A semi structured interview technique was identified as most suitable for the purpose of the study. The questions were designed with a clear theme and fairly limited focus, but within the frame the questions were open ended in terms of structure. Particular themes were chosen for more rich description, focussed exploration and deeper understanding (Alvesson, 2010).

Typically, the responsibility of maintaining regional roads falls under the local authority or the regional roads authority, while funding for post-disaster reconstruction is facilitated by the reconstruction agency. A total of ten interviewees (Table 1) from these organisations were identified through previous research work carried out by the authors and were contacted directly by the research team.

The interview questions and a Participant Information Sheet were

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emailed to the respondents a week prior to the interview. The interviews were typically 30-60 minutes in length and were conducted face-to-face at a meeting room at the interviewee's office. The interviews were carried out during 2018 as one-off interviews, although the research team reached out to some interviewees afterwards to clarify issues.

DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews were transcribed by the interviewer himself so that any emotional overtones and nuances captured in the interviews were not lost in the transcripts. The interviewer doing his own transcribing also helps in building familiarity with the data, which is useful for the analysis (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). The interviews were transcribed verbatim, which increased objectivity during the analysis by avoiding the researcher to be guided heavily by pre-existing ideas or jumping to conclusions without carefully having

looked at and interpreting the interview material (Alvesson, 2010).

The transcripts and notes were coded in order to capture the essence of the interviews. The in-vivo coding method, where coding words are selected from a phrase or word from the transcript itself, was used for generating the codes (Miles *et al.*, 2014). This method ensures that concepts do not diverge from what was described by the respondents and also prioritises and honours the participant's voice. An inductive coding approach was used to create the specific codes, where codes are determined progressively during data collection and analysis (Miles *et al.*, 2014) while pre-determined codes were avoided so as to reduce interviewer bias in the coding process. The coding was used to generate pattern codes, which were used to form themes emanating from the interviews.

RESULTS

The results obtained are presented in this section under five major themes, which eases understanding and the flow

of ideas generated through the study. Some sections also include quotes taken from the interview transcripts. These quotes have been presented in order to draw attention to specific important ideas that were mentioned in the interviews.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL FACTORS

A majority of the interviewees mentioned that social impacts were the most critical type of impact ahead of economic and environmental impacts and they considered it important to minimise such impacts. The idea that road infrastructure facilitates the smooth functioning of the community was echoed by most interviewees regardless of their professional background or department they represented.

"A bridge is not just a bridge, but a whole bunch of other implications [are associated with it]."

The objectives and deliverables of most of the departments and organisations interviewed were linked to social factors.



Rising water. View from the southern end (right bank) of the Burnett Traffic Bridge over the Burnett River, Bundaberg, 2012. Photo source: Flickr, All Creative Commons.

This was especially evident with those interviewed from the Council. However, as no official documents were analysed by the authors as part of the study, it is not evident whether such social factors were highlighted purely due to the focus of the interview. It was observed that each department had aligned social factors with their departmental objectives in diverse manners. For example, infrastructure departments mentioned that the purpose of road infrastructure was to ease community impacts, while the environment division mentioned that the protection and enhancement of the natural environment was ultimately for the social wellbeing of the community.

A diverse set of impacts were identified by different interviewees as the most important type of social impact such as human health issues, access to facilities, inconvenience to communities and traffic related impacts. A very common social impact that was highlighted was that of isolation of people or households due to damaged

roads. Isolation of communities was highlighted especially by interviewees working in more rural environments in contrast to those focusing on more urban settings. One interviewee from a regional council mentioned that isolation is one of the most critical factors that needs to be considered but is something that is overlooked by practitioners who work in urban areas.

“The more you think about it, everything affects the human social side of it”.

Although social impacts were stated as the most important category, it was noted that methods to assess social impacts were lacking. The lack of such methods was seen in council and even in State decision making processes. It was agreed by the interviewees that a commonly accepted method to assess social impacts would be beneficial for infrastructure related decision making. It was also pointed out that although the measurement of social impacts

was important, care should be taken to decide on the methods used to assess them and how the outcomes are interpreted by the decision makers.

LACK OF FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The interviews highlighted that environmental impacts were the least analysed impact category. The reason for this was seen to be that social and economic impacts were considered to be more critical resulting in a lack of focus on the assessment of environmental impacts. A direct link between the natural environment and the socio-economic impacts were recognised by interviewees from the community and environment divisions, whereas reference to such links was not identified by engineers.

The environment, economic and community divisions within the council saw that the natural environment affects the socio-economic impacts

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Stanthorpe, Queensland, 2008. Photo by Michael Jefferies, Flickr, All Creative Commons.

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of residents while the disaster management division was focussed more on how environmental factors influence vulnerability to natural hazards. There was seen to be an increase in the involvement of environmental practitioners in disaster management work within councils and this could be attributed to the heightened awareness of the links between the natural environment and the socio-economic aspects.

"A lot of the environmental issues are actually at the root of social and economic issues as well."

The most important environmental impacts that could occur during the reconstruction process were identified as soil erosion, effects on water quality and sediment run-off. This was in contrast to other studies where the focus of environmental impacts was resource usage and greenhouse gas emissions during to the reconstruction phase (Padgett and Tapia, 2013; Schweikert *et al.*, 2018). Interestingly resource usage and greenhouse gas emissions were not highlighted by a single interviewee. The reason for this could be that the interviews were focused in a regional

disaster-prone area, where a link between the natural environment and disasters are directly observable and take precedence over global environmental issues.

"Because an infrastructure solution may have a negative environmental [impact]... we need to talk together... [to] try and get a more holistic outcome with decision making."

The interviews exemplified that there were diverse opinions in thought on the best way to approach reconstruction in order to increase resilience. One group viewed the solutions from an engineering stance while others opined that purely technical solutions without socio-ecological considerations may aggravate the consequences due to the interdependence of infrastructure and the natural environment.

POST-DISASTER DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

The interviews exemplified that there was no systematic method used to assess wider impacts of road infrastructure failure and to prioritise the reconstruction of assets. The only systematic processes that were utilised in post-disaster decision making were those used to estimate

the reconstruction costs, which were stipulated by funding agencies. Such funding proposals tend to focus on the financial cost of reconstruction with minimal consideration given to wider socio-economic and environmental impacts.

Although wider impacts had not been assessed methodically, such impacts were not completely abandoned during decision making. Most decisions were made on "gut-feel" and the possible socio-economic impacts were considered based tacit knowledge of practitioners in past experiences and the intimate knowledge of the locality. It was highlighted that in a rural setting local knowledge may play a far more important role in identifying social impacts rather than a set system or method.

The interviewees did not seem to think that the decisions that were made in this manner could be completely flawed, but saw the need for a framework that could validate the current decision making processes. It was also highlighted that such a method could be used for numerous purposes including, as an evidence base for funding proposals, prioritisation of projects and the comparison of alternative reconstruction methods. Such ideas were seen across all organisations with the idea that

a common tool, which can be used across different organisations, would be beneficial in State level disaster management.

"It's just really gut feel.... So we'll do it in our heads but if we were questioned later on, we have no record of how we made that decision."

POLITICAL ASPECT

Some interviewees were of the opinion that political aspects can influence post-disaster decision making and prioritisation. It was mentioned that there may be encouragement given to concentrate on specific areas during the reconstruction processes, purely from a political perspective. In instances where a follow up question was asked, there was hesitation to explain further stating "you know what I mean".

"In the real world sometimes it gets political, noisy wheels get the oil."

However, one interviewee stated that political factors actually may highlight other underlying socio-economic factors that may not have been identified, especially from State authorities. For example a bridge located close to a specific business entity may get political consideration, and it may well be that the business was a large contributor to the local economy, which was not immediately highlighted to state authorities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Another aspect that came up in the interviews is the importance of community engagement during the recovery and reconstruction stages. It was highlighted that the residents were not too pleased with the way that the reconstruction took place and this increased the level of frustration among the community. It was pointed out that clarity and openness of communications would give the residents some peace of mind although it wouldn't necessarily speed up the recovery process.

"People say bloody Council haven't fixed that bridge yet. But they don't understand the NDRRA process and how complex that can be and time consuming."

The introduction of regulations that limit individual recovery actions could also exacerbate such frustration among the community. With limitations to clearing of debris in streams, clearing roads and using farm vehicles for transportation the community had to solely rely on the Council and State authorities to facilitate their recovery process. Some respondents were of the view that legislating such community recovery actions had an unintended consequence of reducing the resilience and adaptability of communities.

Interviewees commented that there were times when disagreements between communities and engineers involved in reconstruction work have ensued. Such disagreements mainly arose when experts who did not possess the necessary local knowledge were brought in and they were resistant to listen to the local farmers. Many interviewees were of the opinion that the residents had the local knowledge of the creeks and the geography and that such knowledge needed to be tapped into during the recovery process.

"But the farmers weren't saying this is how you build a bridge. They were saying, this is where we need a bridge and this is the order that we need them."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These interviews have shown that there are two schools of thought among practitioners on the most appropriate methods of disaster reconstruction: one being technical engineering solutions and the other by giving more consideration to socio-ecological issues. These two schools of thought can be categorized as engineering solutions and ecological solutions respectively (Raab, 2017).

The results indicate that post-disaster decision making in the region studied is conducted utilising practitioners' tacit knowledge on the locality and past experiences. Such methods can be advantageous especially in more regional areas where standardized state level disaster recovery plans may not be appropriate. Further it was understood that the adoption of state level regulations intended to protect people can have unintended consequences that decrease resilience and recovery of communities in more rural regions. State level

authorities can look at methods where recovery guidelines could be modified by local authorities to better suit the specific regions, which may increase the resilience of the communities.

Another finding is that more effort needs to be taken to engage with the community so as to bridge the gap between the people and the authorities. Interestingly it was found that community engagement was carried out during housing reconstruction in the same region (Okada *et al.*, 2014) but not during the reconstruction of infrastructure. One reason for this may be that housing reconstruction is considered a societal issue while road reconstruction may be more an engineering problem. Distrust felt by the people towards authorities has been identified in post-disaster reconstruction efforts (Shaw and Goda, 2004) while community acceptability of projects is perceived to be very important by decision makers in the public sector (Vu *et al.*, 2018) indicating the importance of effective community engagement practices during reconstruction.

State level authorities could also look at how the soft sciences could be incorporated into the decision making process improving on the current processes which are predominantly engineering focussed. Such methods could help the organisations retain the tacit knowledge of the practitioners, which will ease decision making in the future, while increase community acceptability of reconstruction projects (Thanurjan and Indunil P. Seneviratne, 2009).

The present study set out to understand the decision making processes in road reconstruction activities in a disaster-prone area in regional Queensland. A number of challenges were identified including the lack of a common decision making platform that could be used across different agencies, the lack of focus on the socio-ecological impacts during decision making and the importance of community engagement during the reconstruction process. ●

For a full list of acknowledgements and references please visit anzdmc.com.au/2019/



RAPPVILLE FIRES

Donna **Lamont**

SES NSW Deputy Unit Commander, Casino

This article first appeared in *The Volunteer Magazine* and is reprinted courtesy of the NSWSESVA.

The 8th of October will long be remembered as the day Mother Nature unleashed her fury on the small rural community of Rappville and the farming communities that surround it on the far north coast of NSW. That day started out like any other and no one could have predicted what was to come.



In the preceding days and weeks there had been a number of active fires throughout the region, the largest of them on Long Gully Road at Drake. The majority of those fires were predominantly under control, until that Tuesday morning, when a new fire ignited near Busbys Flat, and being fuelled by strong winds, high temperatures and very dry conditions, the fire soon became out of control and was heading straight for the small village of Rappville.

What our friends and comrades at RFS and FRNSW were faced with that day was something beyond words. Many have said they've never seen anything like it in all their years fighting fires – it had

a mind of its own and nothing was going to slow it down or stop it. It was a firestorm fuelled with dry conditions with months of continuing drought.

Very quickly the NSW Rural Fire Service had declared a bushfire emergency under Section 44 of the Act (Section 44) and many other emergency services and government/non-government agencies were activated.

While SES is the primary combat agency for Storm, Floods and Tsunamis, as many would know, we also provide support and assistance to the other emergency services and the bushfires were no different, as our members rallied to provide that to the NSW Rural Fire Service.

By 4pm Casino SES Unit were tasked to their first support role in helping to set up an evacuation centre in Casino. Many people were displaced by loss and damage to house and property. Roads were closed and power and communication lines were down. Other agencies including FACS, Red Cross, DPI, Local Lands Services and Disaster Welfare were on hand at the evacuation centre to assist those affected with their immediate needs such as a roof over their heads, including their pets, and emotional support.

It was heart wrenching to witness first-hand, families walk through the doors with just the clothes on their back, not knowing what to do or where to go. They had lost their home ... they had lost livestock



Convoy with multi-agencies to assist NSW Police.



... they had just witnessed something you could only imagine you'd ever see in movies. Many people came in to ask about their family or friends that they weren't able to get in contact with.

What followed over the next couple of weeks, and is still continuing, has been a massive operational and logistical exercise, undertaken by many agencies including RFS, FRNSW, FACS, Parks, Police, Essential Energy, Forestry and SES.

The work that the hundreds of firefighters from all over the country have been doing is incredible. They deserve every bit of thanks and praise that can be bestowed upon them.

NSW SES has provided staff and volunteers to not only help out in

the community, but also in the IMT (Incident Management Team) and EOC (Emergency Operations Centre). It has been a great exercise in multi-agency emergency management.

On a more local volunteer level, Casino Unit has been very active and busy in supporting the Rural Fire Service during this period. We have had just over 100 jobs tasked to our Unit and our two SES vehicles alone have travelled over 5,500 kilometres since we were first activated on this event. Our small unit of 15 has had nearly every member play a part in some way over the last couple of weeks. We have also had great support from other local SES Units including Tabulam, Kyogle, Lismore, Coraki and Ballina. Some of the tasks

SES has been assigned include but are not limited to :

- assisting NSW Police with lighting at an incident
- doorknocking affected communities informing them of where to go to ask for further help, and informing them of health risks from contaminated tank water and asbestos concerns.
- sending teams out to Rappville to deliver food, water and supplies, most of which were donated by the wider community.
- delivering lunch and dinner meals to various staging areas for those out on the ground, sometimes being a 200-300 kilometres plus round trip.
- assisting with airport pick ups and drop offs of various personnel, pilots,



Prime Minister Scott Morrison at the FCC Casino Unit Commander with the Deputy Zone Commander and other SES personnel.



Lismore volunteers assisting.



Multi agencies in multi roles.



Lismore volunteers assisting.

IMT members and firefighters who have flown in from interstate to offer their help.

- Assisting with the transportation of various small fire vehicles to the field or to the fire control centre (FCC)
- Picking up supplies and equipment and taking them where they are needed such as sleeping bags and hand sanitisers to Base Camps.
- Admin tasks at the Fire Control Centre for the RFS

With NSW SES being able to help and contribute in these ways, it has freed up the time and expertise of those in the Rural Fire Service to focus on their main combat role of fighting fires. Our members at Casino Unit have forged strong relationships with Casino RFS over the course of this event.

We are already talking of doing some training nights together in the future.

The Long Gully/Busby Flat/Rappville fires burnt over 74,000 hectares over eight weeks. Sadly it claimed two lives and 44 houses and the Rappville Community Hall. It tried to take out the backbone of Rappville, the pub, three times but locals and the firefighters were able to save it with minimal damage. Many livestock were lost and fences, machinery and sheds were destroyed. Many jobs are affected as the fire also claimed one of the village's biggest employers, TARMAC timber mill. But what it also did was bring out the best of small communities. Everyone looked out for everyone. Strangers became friends. Donations of food, clothing and furniture inundated the makeshift recovery centre

and continues to be donated. Many clubs and organisations have hosted fundraising days to provide assistance to those affected. It will take some time for normality to return to many in Rappville, with most vowing to rebuild, but be assured Rappville will rise and grow and be as strong as ever. It takes more than the fury of a horrendous firestorm to keep a great community down.

From all the members at Casino SES Unit, we say thank you to our other supporting SES Units. We say thank you to our comrades at Casino RFS and in the Fire Control Centre. We say thank you to all other agencies, services and organisations that have played an integral part. And we say thank you to the community! ●



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