

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY

## RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services



VOLUME 38 NO. 1 AUTUMN 2025

PRINT POST PUBLICATION NO. PP100018976



# WA BATTLES 3,000 FIRES IN 5 MONTHS





# EASTERN GURUMA

engaging ethnicity, delivering diversity

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Eastern Guruma has been in operation for 20 years and is a 100% owned Indigenous company providing services in rehabilitation, landscaping, facilities management, traffic management, road works, drilling and more. Eastern Guruma is owned by members of the language group Muntulgura Guruma, the lands of which surround Tom Price in the Pilbara Region of WA the team has delivered services to Australia's largest mining companies, Rio Tinto, BHP and Fortescue Metals Group.

### Future Expansion into the Building Industry

Eastern Guruma is exploring the expansion into the building services industry. Leveraging its strong and reliable reputation; the aim is to extend our expertise into residential & construction maintenance including the refurbishment of houses and related projects in the Pilbara and Kimberly regions. Recognised as the 'one stop shop' for all maintenance and building services, Eastern Guruma will provide electrical, HVAC, plumbing, instrumentation and building services as it expands its platform into construction.

### Celebrating 20 Years of Success

Eastern Guruma recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Held at Frasers, Kings Park - it was the perfect venue for such a milestone occasion. Staff and VIP guests honoured the co-owners' and directors', Tania Stevens and Samantha Connors and all their accomplishments. All were incredibly proud of the journey and achievements over the past two decades. The milestone marked two decades of growth and achievements since its inception in 2004. The celebration highlighted significant milestones, including the rapid expansion from 2009 through to 2023 which saw Eastern Guruma receive prestigious awards such as the Business News 2023 RISE Business Award and the Rio Tinto 2023 Local Engagement Award. The 20-year celebration was a chance for all to celebrate and a testament to Eastern Guruma's vision, dedication and hard work.



### Fleet Acquisitions

The company has recently invested in significant capital expenditures to its fleet, including the purchase of a CAPEX D9 100T float Liebherr Dozer, Excavator, Digger, and over 40 light vehicles. The acquisition of the Cat D9 Dozer comes with customizable blade options, efficient boosters, integrated components, advanced technology and cost-effective performance this empowers the team to deliver results that exceed client expectations. With this powerful tool at their disposal, the team is ready to achieve new heights in the industry. The dedication and expertise of the Eastern Guruma team have played a pivotal role in facilitating the purchase of new equipment on Site for our team.



### Kangi Camp Landscaping & Maintenance Contract Renewal

Additionally, Eastern Guruma's landscaping and maintenance contract with Fortescue Solomon's Kangi Camp has been renewed for another five years. The contract ensures continued collaboration and service excellence whilst working towards a carbon neutral supply of plant & equipment by transitioning from diesel to electric. Eastern Guruma's ongoing growth and success is a testament to its commitment to community development, industry excellence, and the empowerment of Indigenous people.



### New Business Premises

Eastern Guruma has been fortunate enough to acquire its own business premises in Perth. Located on the corner of Bulwer Street and Fitzgerald Street, Perth settlement was in July. The new premises has undergone a recent extensive refurbishment upgrade and includes open plan seating, 15 offices, five meeting rooms and one boardroom.

### Commitment to Indigenous Employment

Eastern Guruma is proud to announce we have more than 30% of our 300 staff employed as First Nations People working full time in the mining industry. This is an outstanding result of focus and dedication from our HR and Indigenous Employment, Engagement and Development teams. Great efforts from the road shows, screening of candidates and assisting those who need a hand to get through the process. The milestone reflects the company's dedication to providing employment opportunities for First Nations People.



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*National Emergency Response* is published by  
Countrywide Austral  
1, 460 Bourke Street, Melbourne  
GPO Box 2466, Melbourne 3001  
Ph: (03) 9937 0200  
Email: [contact@cwaaustral.com.au](mailto:contact@cwaaustral.com.au)  
ACN: 30 086 202 093

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#### 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 [secretary@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary@aies.net.au). Please be aware that all content must be cleared by the National President prior to web publication to ensure it meets required guidelines.

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services

Autumn 2025 • National Emergency Response

## CONTENTS

### REGULAR COLUMNS

2	New Members
4	President's Report
58	Merchandise
59	Membership Information
60	AIES Contacts

### FEATURES

8	Consideration Needed for Native Animals and Wildlife Carers in Emergencies
11	CESM Updates
13	VIC Division Updates
15	Meet Our New Corporate Member
17	AIES Member Awarded Study Scholarship
18	NSW/ACT/INT Division Updates
20	Tropical Cyclone Alfred
23	AIES Professional Development Fund
24	Joint Centre for Disaster Research
26	New Zealand SES Tour Facilitated by AIES
28	Upcoming Events
32	Celebrating 40 Years of Publication
33	CWA & AIES: Our 20-year Partnership
34	Wanting to 'Return to Normal' After a Disaster is Understandable, but Often Problematic
37	Cyclone Zelia: Preparedness and Action Saves WA Communities
39	Empowering Volunteer Firefighters Through Development Training
41	Celebrating 30 Years of Service
44	Postcard from Mumbai, India
47	Emergency Leaders Speak out on Nuclear Reactors
49	Early Bushfire Detection AI Tech Launches
51	A Busy Peak Season on the Beach: Safety Challenges and Community Efforts
54	Australia's Disaster Response Should Build Resilience
57	QPS Celebrates Queensland's Strength and Diversity this Harmony Week

### FRONT COVER

**Description:** In WA, firefighters battled more than 3,000 bushfires between 1 October 2024 and 28 February 2025.

According to the AFAC Autumn Seasonal Bushfire Outlook, conditions in WA are not expected to ease over the coming months (March-June). High temperatures, low rainfall and last year's record dry spell mean large areas of the Great Southern, South West and Mid West Gascoyne remain at risk – with extra fuel to burn making fires even harder to control.

**Photo by:** Sean Blocksidge



# NEW MEMBERS

The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services is pleased to announce the following emergency services people joined the AIES between December 2024 - February 2025.

NAME	ORGANISATION	NAME	ORGANISATION
<b>ACT/INT/NSW Divisions</b>		<b>QLD/NT Divisions</b>	
David Connell	Latrobe City Council (VIC)	Phillip Adie	QLD SES
Angus Barnes	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Anthony Cooper	QLD SES
Ben Girard	NSW RFS	Kylie Curley	Yarrabee Coal Company
Joanne Le	NSW SES	James Guthrie	QLD SLS
Kylie Ledger	Singleton Council	Alex Hughes	QLD SES
Jon Mitchell	Massey University Joint	Jason Leech	QFD
	Centre for Disaster Research (NZ)	Peter McAloney	Chaplain Watch
Ash Morrow	NSW RFS	James Northfield	QLD Department of Education
Robbie Street	Water NSW	Aaron Sheehan	QFD / RFS
Neil Williamson	NSW Police Force	Andrew Watkins	QLD Ambulance Service
<b>SA/WA</b>		<b>VIC</b>	
Justin Colwell	Mines Rescue Australia	Jon Hillis	CFA
Michael Hale	Rio Tinto Iron Ore	Wayne Makin	AVCG
John McGeachie	SA StJA	Leigh Neale	Loddon Shire Council
Matthew Pearson	SA CFS	Goldie Pergl	VIC SES
Ruth Tovo	SA SES	Micah Spedding	VIC SES
		David Sumbler	Police
		James Talbett	CFA

## Legend

<b>AVCG</b>	Australian Volunteer Coast Guard	<b>RFS</b>	Rural Fire Service
<b>CFA</b>	Country Fire Authority	<b>SES</b>	State Emergency Service
<b>CFS</b>	Country Fire Service	<b>SLS</b>	Surf Life Saving
<b>QFD</b>	Queensland Fire Department	<b>StJA</b>	St John Ambulance



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

Articles, photographs and short stories are sought for the *National Emergency Response Journal*. Please submit items for the next edition to [editor@aies.net.au](mailto:editor@aies.net.au) by **19 May 2025**. There is an annual award for the best article submitted by an AIES member.



# AIES AGM & ANNUAL DINNER

**W**e will be offering members who are unable to attend the AGM in person an opportunity to attend via Zoom. A link to the meeting will be emailed to those members who RSVP by Friday, 4 April 2025.

The official Notice of and Agenda for this is available on page 3 of this publication. If you are unable to attend in person or via Zoom, you can email a proxy form to [secretary@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary@aies.net.au) by 5pm on Friday 4 April 2025.

A dinner will follow the AGM at 6.45pm and we ask if you are attending the dinner to advise the Treasurer by Friday 21 March

2025 of any dietary requirements and the number of guests.

Our guest speaker for the evening will be Royal Flying Doctors SA/NT CEO **Mr Tony Vaughan ASM**.

The dinner also includes the AIES annual national awards presentations, which is a time to celebrate with the recipients and their colleagues.

AIES Fellows and Members who wish to join virtually for the awards announcements and presentation and to hear our guest speaker are also asked to register with the AIES Secretary, so another Zoom link for the dinner meeting can be emailed to those

fellows and members who RSVPed on or before Friday, 4 April 2025.

If you have any questions, please contact AIES Secretary Marilena Salvo at [secretary@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary@aies.net.au) or Treasurer Jenny Crump at [treasurer@aies.net.au](mailto:treasurer@aies.net.au)

## DATE

Saturday 5 April

## VENUE

Mawson Lakes Hotel, 10 Main St, Mawson Lakes, South Australia

## START TIME

6pm (ACST)





The Australasian Institute  
of Emergency Services  
**ACN 050 033 764**

PO Box 2469  
Chermside Centre  
Qld 4032

## NOTICE OF AND AGENDA FOR THE 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All Members of the AIES

All Members of The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services (AIES) are cordially invited to attend the 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held at Mawson Lakes Hotel, 10 Main St, Mawson Lakes, South Australia on **Saturday 5 April 2025 at 6.00pm (ACDT), noting Adelaide time is 30 mins behind ADST = 6.30pm, Sydney time, 5.30 pm Brisbane time and 3.30 pm, Perth time** and the AIES Annual Dinner which will immediately follow the AGM will be at the same location.

The 2025 AIES AGM will also be conducted as a hybrid event, thus allowing virtual attendance by those not available in Adelaide. Further advice in relation to registration and login details for virtual attendance will be disseminated in due course.

The Order of Business (Agenda) is as follows:

- Welcome
- Apologies
- Confirmation of the financial status of Members Present, Proxy Holders / Submitters
- Confirmation of Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting
- President's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Rotation of Directors
- Notice of Motions:
  1. To receive and adopt the Company's Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024
  2. To appoint the Auditors for the Company to hold office until the conclusion of the next AGM
- 2026 AIES AGM

AGM attendance either in person or virtually and any apologies should be forwarded to the National Secretary via email at: **secretary@aies.net.au**.

Kindly note that proxies for the AGM must be forwarded to the National Secretary via email at: **secretary@aies.net.au** to be received **no later than 5.00pm (ADST) Friday, 4 April 2025**.

In accordance with the Constitution and Rules, Proxies received after this date and time cannot be accepted.

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

***CF Miller***

Christine F Miller FAIES  
National President

# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

**Christine (Chris) Miller** FAIES FISRM AMBCI

*National President*

## NATIONAL BOARD UPDATES

At the 13 February 2025 AIES Board meeting, we welcomed Kate Goldsmith CESM MAIES (Victoria) and Bodie Rodman MAIES (Tasmania), who accepted the casual vacancies following resignations of Grant Coulman-Smith OAM FAIES (Victoria) and Greg Webster MAIES (Tasmania).

Grant and Greg have made years of contribution to the Institute, their divisions and nationally serving as Board Directors. Grant also chaired the Audit Committee. Both will be missed. We wish them all the best in their retirement.

The AIES AGM and Annual Dinner will be hosted by SA/WA Division on 5 April. More details are available on page 2 and 3 of this journal.

Expressions of interest are sought from the Institute's fellows and members for these roles:

- AIES Board Audit and Risk Committee needs a minimum of three members with an understanding of business risks, governance and auditing; and
- A working group is being established to plan for the AIES 50th Anniversary Commemoration in 2027. We are looking for a wide range of skills and expertise particularly event management, marketing and communication. More information will be shared about this milestone achievement in the coming months.

## STATE DIVISION UPDATES

Congratulations to those volunteering to take on or continue their leadership roles in the Tasmanian and Victorian Divisions.

### TASMANIA

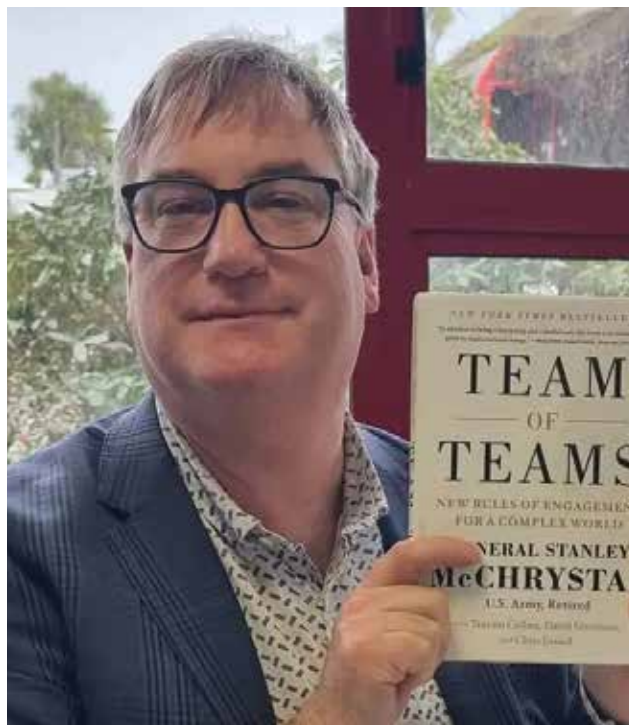
President Vanessa Henry  
Vice President and National Director Bodie Rodman  
Treasurer Les Batchelor  
Committee members  
Kim Brundle-Lawrence and Jorden Gunton

Gregory Webster will continue to assist the Division in a non-committee position under Rule 10.7.2 of the Institute's Constitution.

### VICTORIA

President Doug Caulfield OAM RFD FAIES  
Vice President and National Director  
Kate Goldsmith  
Secretary Bill Little

SA/WA Division held its general meeting on 5 March as this edition was being prepared. NSW/ACT/INT Division will hold its general meeting on 7 April. Changes in these Divisions will be communicated on our website and in the next edition of this journal.



*The late Professor David Johnston, Massey University, Wellington.*

## AIES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND GRANTS

At the 12 December 2024 Board meeting, applications for up to \$500 from the AIES' Professional Development Fund (PDF) were assessed.

Please give some thought to development activities that could further develop your career in emergency services and that may need funding to turn into a reality. More details about applying for the PDF can be found at [aies.net.au/membership/information](https://aies.net.au/membership/information)

Congratulations to the inaugural recipients, Tiffani King CESM MAIES and Brody Wickham CESM MAIES (NSW/ACT/INT Division).

The Institute provided partial funding support for Tiffani and Brodie to attend the week-long Emergency Management program at Massey University in Wellington on 3-7 March 2025.

Tiffani and Brody joined a study group for the Institute led by President NSW/ACT/INT Division and National Director David Parsons ESM CESM FAIES.

David presented the annual public lecture on 5 March 2025. For those who have attended previous training weeks in Aotearoa, it won't seem the same without the late distinguished Professor David Johnston, Director/Professor of Disaster Management, Director of the Joint Centre for Disaster Research at Massey University. Vale, David; you will be professionally and personally missed by many for your long career and many contributions in New Zealand and globally to emergency management.



Chief Executive Officer, Natural Hazards Research Australia (NHRA), Andrew Gissing welcome attendees to the NHRA Stakeholder Forum, 5 February 2025.

### ANNUAL AWARD APPLICATIONS

The Institute's Annual Award applications close at 5pm AEST on Monday 31 March 2025. Please give some thought to nominating yourselves or colleagues for what is often overdue recognition for their contribution to emergency services.

The AIES National Award Scheme recognises outstanding and significant contributions that individuals make as a member of an emergency service or affiliated organisation and consists of the following:

- AIES National Medal for Excellence
- AIES Award for Excellence
- AIES Commendation
- AIES Certificate of Achievement

The AIES National Medal for Excellence and associated awards are made for individual contributions in the fields of:

- Leadership
- Management
- Operations
- Training
- Support
- Innovation

The Tasmanian and Victorian Divisions also have annual awards. Visit [aies.net.au/awards](https://aies.net.au/awards) for more information.

### CESM

Congratulations to our new Certified Emergency Services Managers (CESMs). If you want to join their ranks, the AIES member portal accepts CESM submissions via [aies.net.au/certified-emergency-services-manager](https://aies.net.au/certified-emergency-services-manager). There is also a YouTube video to assist you make your CESM applications <https://aies.net.au/membership-register/login>.

### EVENTS WE ATTENDED

On 5 February 2025, I attended a Natural Hazards Research Australia (NHRA) stakeholder showcase with National Directors Costa Zakis and David Parsons at NSW Parliament House. The keynote speaker was NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Rob Rogers. Other speakers showcased research with NHRA including Optometrist and PhD candidate Suki Jaiswal

who presented 'Smoke and the eye surface'; Principal Research Fellow, Engineering School, RMIT University Dr Erica Kuligowski presenting 'Community experiences of the 2022 and 2023 floods in Victoria, South Australia and SW NSW'; and Lead Researcher NHRA Lisa Gelt, presenting 'Utilisation of Transformative Scenarios in a Climate Challenged World'.

On 23 February 2025, I attended a day-long consultation to re-establish a Community Resilience Group (CRG) for the Bay and Basin (B&B, Jervis Bay and St Georges Basin), where I currently reside. The B&B population accounts for around 20% of the Shoalhaven City Council. Before and during COVID, a number of community workshops with the Shoalhaven Community Resilience Network Group, along with Griffith University, developed the Community Led Adaptation and Resilience Strategy for Shoalhaven (December 2022). Best practice emergency management requires community leadership and consultation in planning, preparedness and readiness as well as recovery.

On 27 February 2025, I joined a NHRA webinar, 'Lessons from the LA fires and implications for Australia' hosted by NHRA CEO Andrew Gissing and featuring speakers:

- Kelly Martin (Lasair Fire Consulting and US volunteer firefighter)
- Rob Webb (AFAC)
- Prof David Bowman (University of Tasmania and NHRA)

### OTHER NEWS

#### Interviews for emergency management

**post graduate research** – It is pleasing to see the growth of research in emergency services. I was recently interviewed by Claire Hunt from the University of Portsmouth for her Professional PhD research on Mitigating Uncertainty: Is there a better way to manage a crisis? Assessing the Efficacy of Crisis Management Frameworks, an Organisational Insight: I also participated in another interview to support RMIT University and NHRA research on urban resilience. It is welcome to note the old ways where the only option was learning on the job is increasingly being supported by graduate and postgraduate study generating more evidence-based research.



Left to right - NSW/ACT/International Division President and National Director, David Parsons; Independent National Director, Costa Zakis; Chief Executive Officer, Natural Hazards Research Australia, Andrew Gissing; and AIES National President, Christine Miller.

**Advocacy successes** – As part of the Institute's advocacy work, I wrote to the Australian Government Emergency Management Minister, Shadow Minister and other Senators and MPs involved in the decision for National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to maintain Australian Institute Disaster Resilience (AIDR) funding for the next three years. Some details are yet to be finalised, but we are happy to report that AIDR's work is now funded to continue.

Another advocacy success for the Institute relates to the excellent work of David Parsons and David Rose CESM MAIES for the ATO (Australian Tax Office) to recognise emergency service as a profession. One of our colleagues and their tax agent noted a new job code 149933 Emergency Management Officer (EMO) that they could use when they filed their annual tax returns. Another bonus for Australian based EMOs and something we did

not expect with this categorisation to become part of Occupation Standard Classification for Australia.

### IN CLOSING

Stay safe, well, and careful in what has increasingly become a year-long disaster season with all the challenges that entails.

Those challenges have been many in recent months for Australian emergency services with floods and significant damage to the Bruce Highway in North Queensland, especially around Ingham; Severe Tropical Cyclone Zelia impacting NW WA around the Pilbara; Severe Tropical Cyclone Alfred impacting south-east and central Queensland and northern to the central coast of NSW; fires in western and NE Victoria; and more fires in NW and the West Coast of Tasmania. Offshore emergencies have been too many to list.

Best wishes, Chris ●

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# CONSIDERATION NEEDED FOR NATIVE ANIMALS AND WILDLIFE CARERS IN EMERGENCIES

In evacuations where you have warnings and time to act, in most cases it's relatively easy to have your pet's 'go-bag' ready, pack everything and everyone into designated transport, and go.

By **Robert Leach**, IFAW Animal Rescue Officer

**E**vacuating with your pet dog? Find its favourite treat, or in some cases even just taking out the lead and saying "walkies" and your dog is zooming into the car.

Cats can sometimes be a little trickier. Unless they're entirely food motivated, they may take a little more time and preparation.

But it's easy to forget the other animals - wildlife.

In times of disasters, from the major 2019/20 Black Summer fires to more recent events like the Grampians (VIC) fires and Port Hedland's (WA) Cyclone Zelia, we know that it's not just the domestic animals that need to be evacuated. Large animals - lifestyle or farmed - require a much greater investment of time and resources if relocation needs are considered.

However, this opinion piece aims to reflect on the often forgotten and overlooked category of animals that require just as much, if not more, preparation and consideration for emergencies: native animals. Specifically, the wildlife that are injured, orphaned, or displaced, and under human care for rehabilitation, either in sanctuaries or with individual home-based rehabilitators.

The needs of the wildlife rehabilitators in emergencies are often overlooked. I feel it's because the animals in care hold a lower value and

priority to emergency management decision-makers, in comparison to the larger wildlife assets like a wildlife park or zoo that hold economic value.

In some cases, there may also appear to be a higher value placed on free-roaming wildlife than their counterparts in rehabilitation, due to the increased risk of widespread public/media scrutiny.

I often wonder if it's due to an outdated notion that because an animal is wild, the human-animal bond cannot extend to wildlife rehabilitators and the animals in their care. Regardless, while we continue to not have an integrated framework that considers the needs of wildlife rehabilitators in emergencies, wildlife in care do not have coordinated resources, support, and plans for evacuations, and we will inevitably see individuals refuse to evacuate. This eventuates into a human safety issue, which surely, we should have more decision makers talking about.

I believe there are two elements to this.

First relates to larger wildlife such as kangaroos that are in open outdoor enclosures, possibly undergoing a rewilding pre-release process and becoming less accustomed to human interactions. Unlike larger domestic animals such as horses and alpacas, these animals do not tolerate handling

or mustering, and any attempts at either is just dangerous to the animal and to the human. You can't just muster your large wildlife onto some floats and drive away, or herd them to higher ground. These animals require a large amount of planning and support for evacuations.

For example, during Cyclone Zelia, a kangaroo rehabilitation sanctuary brought all their joeys into their own home for shelter when they received the cyclone warning, but there was no support or plans in place for the larger adult roos. Sadly, the owner accepted the fate and said "I'll probably lose most of them. All I can do is wait it out and see what happens". Thankfully, the cyclone changed its path, and all was well - this time.

From anecdotal experience - and I feel confident generalising this - carers would be more willing to evacuate if there were proper veterinary and logistical support offered during these times from agencies, not just an 'open the gates for these animals' mentality. Yes, this all takes time and resources, but when the alternative is possibly human fatality, are decision-makers OK to weigh up those costs?

The second element is the smaller wildlife in care that have very different needs in evacuations. Animals like small mammals, small birds and reptiles often have much smaller





# ifaw



enclosures can often be more easily captured by hand, packed up into a transport carrier and integrated into an evacuation plan in a very similar manner as a pet cat.

However, there are almost no community evacuation frameworks that incorporate temporary animal sheltering which includes rehabilitating wildlife species. Dogs and cats are often afforded these privileges in co-habitated or co-located 'pet friendly evacuation centres', and these also sometimes have detailed subplans for disease control e.g. unvaccinated animals housed in an isolated area. These sometimes also include areas for lifestyle or farmed animals, such as evacuation centres established at a Showground.

In emergencies, wildlife rehabilitators are expected to network with other carers to find alternative housing arrangements, but as disasters become more frequent and intense, potentially

impacting larger numbers of home-based rehabilitators simultaneously, this cannot be easily scaled up without logistical support from agencies, especially without any dedicated facilities for wildlife.

It circles back to the same predicament that human lives may be at risk if there isn't enough support for the animals they're caring for.

In addition to our free online resource: Emergency Evacuation Planning Kit for wildlife rehabilitators, IFAW is currently investigating a solution for wildlife-specific sheltering in emergencies at a localised level to pilot feasibility, local government and agency buy-in, and hopefully provide a scalable template.

These problems are not insurmountable. We just need more consideration for wildlife needs in emergencies from a holistic view, not just tunnel vision on certain elements of a vast ranging sector. ●

## ABOUT IFAW (INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE)

IFAW is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, oceans and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. The problems we're up against are urgent and complicated. To solve them, we match fresh thinking with bold action. We partner with local communities, governments, non-governmental organisations and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish. See how at [ifaw.org](https://ifaw.org)

For more about how animals play an important role in people's lives, please see the *Australian Institute for Disaster Recovery's* new *Planning for Animals Handbook*.

This handbook is guided by research evidence that shows that the integration of animals into emergency management planning and arrangements is critical to human health and safety, as well as to the economy, biodiversity and ecosystem health. Visit

[knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-animals-in-disaster/](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-animals-in-disaster/)



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# CESM UPDATES

By NSW/ACT/International Division President **David Parson** FAIES



Larry King CESM MAIES.

## NEW MEMBER

Congratulations to Larry King MAIES who recently joined the ranks of Certified Emergency Services Manager (CESM). Larry brings over 15 years of national and international experience in mining industry safety, risk management and emergency preparedness. He also has 30 years' experience in vocational education in his role as Principal Advisor Safety with the NSW Rural Fire Service where he proudly supports a 70,000-strong membership of staff and volunteers. In addition to his AIES membership status, Larry is also a member of the Australian Institute of Health and Safety, and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Training Development.



Marie-Annick Kyle CESM MAIES.



Paul Seager CESM MAIES.



Tiffani King CESM MAIES



Dr Mark Layson CESM MAIES.

## CESM TRAINING

Our CESMs have completed training with AIES partner Recovery Aotearoa New Zealand (RRANZ).

In November 2024, Paul Seager CESM and Marie-Annick Kyle CESM completed a Decision Making Under Pressure Masterclass with Response and.

In December 2024, Paul Seager

CESM MAIES and Marie-Annick Kyle CESM, Dr Mark Layson CESM, Tiffani King CESM and David Rose CESM completed the Leading Multi Agency Response and Recovery Team Masterclass

We thank our colleagues in New Zealand for these great opportunities to learn with you.



David Rose CESM MAIES.

## NEW EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICER ROLE

Following a submission made to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, led by David Rose CESM MAIES, the AIES has succeeded in gaining recognition for the role of 'Emergency Manager', which is now included in the Occupational Standard Classification for Australia for this first time as 149933 - EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICER.

The definition of this role is someone who, 'Coordinates, plans and manages the development and implementation of strategies, policies

and programs to respond to and recover from disasters or emergency situations, such as floods, cyclones and biosecurity incidents.

A special thanks to David Rose CESM MAIES for his guidance. In the next revision, we will engage Dr Russell Dippy CESM FAIES to refine the descriptors.

For more information visit [www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0](http://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0)



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# VIC DIVISION UPDATES

By VIC President **Doug Caulfield**, OAM RFD FAIES



Photo: (L to R) Re-elected Secretary, Bill Little, FAIES, newly elected Vice President Kate Goldsmith, CESM MAIES, outgoing President Grant Coultman-Smith, OAM VA BJ(Retd) JP FAIES and incoming President Doug Caulfield, OAM RFD FAIES.

## WELCOME OUR NEW VICTORIAN DIVISION COMMITTEE

At the Annual Meeting of members of the Victorian Division held Friday 7 February, our current President Grant Coultman-Smith announced he was stepping down from the position of both President and Director

After 24 years' service to the Victorian Division Committee and a lengthy tour of duty as both President and National Director, Grant was farewelled by the members who were present at the meeting and was thanked for his work over past years and for the guidance of the committee in the task of membership expansion and increased member benefits.

On the night of the meeting, the Division committee received support from the membership to execute a succession plan that was pieced together last year and the following appointments were endorsed by those present:

### President

Doug Caulfield, OAM RFD FAIES

### Vice President

Kate Goldsmith, CESM MAIES

### Secretary

Bill Little, FAIES

## LONG SERVICE AWARDS

A total of 250 years of AIES service by members was recognised at the Victorian Division Annual meeting held in Melbourne on Friday 7 February, which was attended by members both in person and online.

Other recipients were, Jarrod Bell (5 year pin); Paul Dunmall (10 year certificate and pin); Leah Hepworth (10 year certificate and pin); Richard Lodder (15 year pin); Darren McLeod (20 year certificate and pin); Allan Kemp (30 year certificate and pin); and Ann Pritchard, Brett Neve and Clifford Pritchard all received 45 year pins.



(L-R) Incoming Victoria Division President Doug Caulfield and outgoing President Grant Coultman-Smith who was presented with a 25 year service pin at the general meeting.

### ALAN ALDER AWARD

The Annual Alan Alder Award for 2025 was presented to Andrew McDonell, ASM MSTJ FACN FACPP. It was no doubt that Andrew's dedication and exceptional accomplishments have had a profound influence on paramedicine, emergency response and community health both in Australia and internationally.

His tireless work with Victoria University and Government, lobbying to establish the first clinical bachelor degree in Australia is exemplary.

His innovative ideas and efforts have advanced Paramedicine in Australia and internationally and has made a lasting positive impact on the lives of numerous individuals which continues today. Apart from the framed certificate that was presented by the Victorian Division President, the award also consists of admission to the Emergency Services Foundation annual conference in Melbourne, attendance at the networking dinner and overnight accommodation at the conference venue.



(L-R) Andrew McDonell and Victoria Division President Doug Caulfield.

Andrew has been honoured for his work with multiple awards. He holds numerous registrations, professional memberships and qualifications.

Members are asked to consider if they know of someone who has served the emergency services sector with distinction,

and would like to nominate them for a future Alan Alder Award, check the award criteria on the AIES website and notify [secretary.vic@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.vic@aies.net.au)

The Victorian Division of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services presents the Alan Alder Award annually. ●

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# MEET OUR NEW CORPORATE MEMBER

**B**rio Consulting's vision is to provide access to high quality training that 'lights up' learners while building competence and confidence so they are ready for the role they face.

The team of passionate and experienced facilitators and developers specialise in the public safety and health sectors. This includes working as both volunteers and paid staff in a range of geographical areas across Australia. They know what it is like to train and work in this space and it helps the team create training that is relevant.

Based in Victoria, Brio also develops online, hybrid and face-to-face training for public safety focused organisations across Australia and internationally. This includes both bespoke designs and those that meet requirements for nationally accredited training. The Brio team develop exercises in alignment with the AIDR best practices and support organisations in the sector

with compliance services for their RTO, QMS and Part 7a Emergency Planning (Vic) audits.

As part of the ongoing work in the public safety sector, Brio has developed the EMready range of short, non-accredited online learning modules that support individuals and organisations to access just in time training for incident management roles and have made a range of short Video Bytes covering a range of emergency management and incident management topics freely available for use.

The Brio team are lifelong learners who love connecting with people working in the public safety space. They develop podcast episodes where they can chat with different trainers in the sector, and these are available at the Brio website and other platforms. The team have a genuine interest in sharing interesting things that they find via the Brio socials, so please feel free to connect and check them out! ●



AIES Victorian Division Vice President Doug Caulfield OAM RFD FAIES presents Brio Consulting owner, Kathryn Burke, with a corporate membership plaque.



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*Oxford Dictionary: Brio (noun)  
Zest, vivacity, enthusiasm, dynamism,  
spirit, energy...*

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# AIES MEMBER AWARDED STUDY SCHOLARSHIP

AIES member (Tasmania), Isaac Taylor, has received a New Colombo Plan (NCP) scholarship to study in Fiji.

*Isaac Taylor MAIES. Photo courtesy of Charles Sturt University.*

**A** Charles Sturt University Emergency Management student, Isaac is the first emergency management student to be selected for the NCP.

Isaac commenced program preparations in December 2024, which continued in February 2025 in Canberra where he attended pre-departure briefings and an award ceremony to celebrate his achievement.

The scholarship includes language training, an internship and one session of study at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji.

Mr Taylor said the scholarship will allow him to learn from people who are putting theory into practice.

"As an online student of emergency management, this scholarship is a great opportunity for me to have practical hands-on experience in both an academic sense and work experience," he said.

"I'm also really looking forward to being a part of the student community on campus with people from all over the Pacific and the opportunity to study in a graduate community of emergency managers from the region."

The study component focuses on disaster recovery planning, which will be supported by the language studies conducted with small Pacific communities impacted by climate change.

"I hope to do an internship with a relevant emergency management agency in Fiji, which will give me the opportunity to learn on the ground from people in emergency management and build friendships that I will look to nurture into the future," Isaac said. ●



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# NSW/ACT/INT DIVISION UPDATES

By NSW/ACT/International Division President **David Parson** FAIES

We are pleased to recognise a number of AIES NSW/ACT/INT members with milestone years of achievement. Having an accurate record of years of membership is important. Please visit the 'My Details' section on the AIES website to check your details are correct.

## 5 YEARS PIN

- Doug Simpson
- Ben Loiacono
- Jason Johnson
- Jason Giffard
- John Hughes OAM
- Ken Jones
- Peter Jenkins
- Andrew Bennett



*John Hughes Local Commander for Blue Mountains received his 5 year service award.*

## 10 YEARS CERTIFICATE

- Mick Beltran AFSM
- John Murray ESM

## 30 YEARS CERTIFICATE

- Peter Chambers
- John Wilkinson
- James Armstrong
- Richard Claxton



*Peter Chambers has been a member of the AIES now for 30 years. Congratulations Peter.*



## LOCAL HERO'S AWARD MICHAEL BORG JP GFireE MAIES

It was great to see Michael Borg MAIES receive the 2024 Local Hero's Award from the Mayor Griffith City Council Cr Doug Curran. Michael is the Deputy Unit Commander of Griffith SES. Michael said, "Whilst this award recognises my achievements, I cannot achieve this alone without the support of beautiful family, Wendy, Rosie and Caleb, but also without the support of the organisations I am involved in." **Congratulations Michael** ●

# WEAR ORANGE WEDNESDAY

## #ThankYouSES

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# TROPICAL CYCLONE ALFRED

**Timeline of destruction, emergency response, and the road to recovery.**

Tropical Cyclone Alfred, a Category 2 storm, significantly impacted southeastern and central Queensland and north and central coast New South Wales in early March 2025. The cyclone's slow approach and eventual landfall led to widespread destruction, prompting extensive emergency readiness responses and ongoing recovery efforts.

## FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In late February 2025, a tropical low-pressure system developed in the Coral Sea. Favourable atmospheric conditions and warm sea temperatures facilitated its intensification into Tropical Cyclone Alfred by the first week of March. The system exhibited sustained winds reaching up to 110 km/h (68 mph), posing a significant threat to Queensland coastal regions.

## PREPARATIONS AND WARNINGS

On February 28, authorities issued advisories for coastal localities in the Fraser Coast Region, including K'gari (Fraser Island). As Alfred advanced, watches and warnings extended to

southeast Queensland, encompassing the state's capital, Brisbane, and northeastern New South Wales. This marked the first cyclone warning for Brisbane since 1990. In anticipation, sandbagging stations were established across the Gold Coast, Noosa, and the Sunshine Coast to attempt to mitigate potential flooding.

## LANDFALL AND IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Tropical Cyclone Alfred made landfall over southeast Queensland on the evening of March 8, 2025, before weakening into a trough that extended south into Port Macquarie and north to Harvey Bay, Queensland NSW. The system brought damaging wind gusts of up to 110 km/h as it made its way inland, causing widespread

destruction. The cyclone's impact was extensive, affecting five million Australians and threatening two million homes. Over 450,000 residents experienced power outages, and the storm's intensity led to deadly flash flooding and significant structural damage across both states.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Emergency services were promptly mobilised to address the crisis. The Queensland Fire Department's swift water rescue teams conducted numerous rescues, particularly in areas like Eudlo on the Sunshine Coast, which experienced its most significant flash flood in decades. By 10 March, fire and rescue services had responded to over





Photo credit: Gold Coast SES.



SES QLD and Queensland Police Service alongside local councils and disaster management groups distributed more than a million sandbags to help southeast Queenslanders prepare for Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Photo credit: QPS

150 water-related emergency calls, with more than 13,000 assistance requests statewide. The State Emergency Service (SES) led the response efforts in NSW, providing essential information and support to affected communities.

In anticipation of, and during Tropical Cyclone Alfred, emergency services from across Australia mobilised to support Queensland and New South Wales communities. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) collaborated with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and local authorities, deploying over 550 personnel to Queensland and more than 680 to northern New South Wales. The Northern Territory Fire

and Emergency Services dispatched a team of five staff and volunteers to assist in Queensland's recovery efforts. Victoria contributed storm response personnel, including volunteers and members from Fire Rescue Victoria, to aid in clearing debris and conducting temporary repairs in Queensland. Additionally, the New South Wales State Emergency Service (SES) bolstered its ranks in the Northern Rivers and Mid North Coast regions by deploying extra crews to prepare for the cyclone's impact. These coordinated efforts highlight the nation's unified response to natural disasters, ensuring affected communities received timely and effective assistance.

## DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

The economic repercussions of Cyclone Alfred were substantial. Approximately 44,000 insurance claims were filed, with expected losses around \$1.7 billion. Infrastructure suffered extensively, including flooded streets and homes, particularly in Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, and the Gold Coast. Power outages were widespread, with authorities urging residents to treat all fallen power lines as live and dangerous.

## RECOVERY AND CLEAN-UP EFFORTS

In the aftermath, recovery efforts commenced swiftly. Federal and state (NSW and QLD) governments allocated at least \$30 million for immediate recovery initiatives. Local councils, such as the City of Logan, mobilised crews to assess damage and undertake emergency repairs, transitioning into the recovery phase following the extreme weather event. Residents were encouraged to report damages and seek assistance for debris removal and general clean-up. The Queensland Government officially moved from response to recovery, emphasising the importance of community safety and the coordinated efforts of emergency services.



Captured in Eudlo (23km northwest of Caloundra. Photo credit: Business Queensland.



Photo credit: Gold Coast SES.



Photo credit: Gold Coast SES.

### COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Despite the devastation, stories of survival and community solidarity emerged. Residents across the east coast collaborated in clearing homes and supporting one another, showcasing resilience and hope amid the crisis.

### ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The financial impact extended beyond immediate damages. The cyclone's aftermath contributed to an estimated \$1.2 billion deficit in the Federal budget, influencing economic growth and increasing inflation pressures,

particularly concerning building costs and food staples. The Australia Government anticipates disaster recovery costs to rise to at least \$13.5 billion over the next four years, reflecting the long-term economic challenges posed by recovery from such natural disasters.

### LESSONS

The experience of Cyclone Alfred underscored the critical need for preparedness, readiness and other and robust emergency management strategies. Former Australian fire and emergency service chiefs expressed

deep concern about the trend of worsening extreme weather disasters, emphasising the urgency of addressing climate change to mitigate future risks. This event highlighted the importance of community resilience, timely emergency responses, and proactive measures to safeguard lives and property in the face of escalating natural disasters.

Tropical Cyclone Alfred served as a stark reminder of nature's unpredictability and the necessity for comprehensive disaster preparedness, readiness and response mechanisms to protect vulnerable communities. ●



# AIES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

AIES National Board has established the AIES Professional Development Fund.

By NSW/ACT/International Division President **David Parson** ESM FAIES

Each October members will be invited to apply for a contribution of up to \$500 towards emergency management education activities in the following year. Conditions apply. For more information and updates check out our website.

The AIES supports fellows and members with their emergency management education in a number of ways. These ways include:

- Registrations to attend the Australian & New Zealand Disaster Emergency Management Conference.
- Attendance at the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Leadership Development Program.
- Attendance at the annual Emergency Services Foundation Conference.
- Vacancies on Master Classes conducted by Response and Recovery Aotearoa New Zealand.

While some members may receive workplace support to attend training and conferences other members may not receive any support financial.

Applications for support from the Professional Development Fund in accordance with criteria established by National Board.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Members must have been a financial member for a minimum of two years.
  2. Members awarded funding are required to provide an article for NER, conduct a webinar or other activity to share the benefits of their funding with other members.
  3. The funding must be used towards the purchase of emergency management professional development.
  4. Maximum amount per application will be \$500.
  5. Retrospective funding will not be considered.
  6. A written application must be submitted.
  7. A successful applicant cannot apply for another grant in the following three-year period.
- Applications open 1st October each year and close 31st October each year.
- Applicants are assessed by the applicants Division Committee in November and by National Board in December.
- Applicants will be advised of the outcome by email in December.
- Funding decisions are final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Names of successful applicants and their professional development activity will be publicised in NER.
- In assessing applications for support Divisional Committees and National Board will consider the following:
1. The proposed education activity
  2. The proportion of contribution compared to the total activity cost
  3. The proposed method for sharing learning with general membership
  4. The duration of membership
  5. The status of membership
  6. Any previous receipt of funding support from the Professional Development Fund
  7. Distribution of funds across Divisions.
  8. Applications should be forwarded to their Divisions Secretary and include:
    - Name of Applicant
    - Membership Number
    - Telephone Number
    - Email Address
    - Proposed education activity
    - Funding requested and total cost of the activity
    - Proposed method for sharing learnings with membership
- It is time to start planning for this year's funding round. •



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

It is great to be able to announce that our members Brody Wickham CESM MAIES and Tiffani King CESM MAIES were both successful in receiving the first two Professional Development Fund grants. Both applied for \$500 to support them to attend the Massey University Emergency Management Institute Week this year.

Brody and Tiffani will share their learnings with members on their return.



(L-R) Ben Birbeck, Brody Wickham, Steve Brown, David Parsons, Doug Caulfield, Mark Layson and Tiffani King on campus at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

## JOINT CENTRE FOR DISASTER RESEARCH

**Emergency Management Institute Week  
3-7 March 2025, Masterclass Week**

A number of AIES members have recently returned from Wellington, New Zealand, where they attended the Massey University Emergency Management Institute Masterclass Week.

Our representatives at this five-day course included:

**NSW/INT/ACT Division**—Steve Brown MAIES, Dr Mark Layson CESM, Tiffani King CESM, Brody Wickham CESM, David Parsons ESM, FAIES

**VIC Division**—Doug Caulfield OAM RFD FAIES

**SA/WA Division**—Ben Birbeck CESM

These members will share some of their experience in the next edition of NER.

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# NEW ZEALAND SES TOUR FACILITATED BY AIES

*Diana Murffit, Ministry of Health in New Zealand.*

Joanna Limpic MAIES recently hosted a visit to NSW SES State HQ for Diana Murffit from the Ministry of Health, New Zealand.

**D**iana, a health emergency manager, met Joanna when attending the Response and Recovery Aotearoa New Zealand Response and Recovery Leadership Development Program in Wellington.

The tour involved visiting the State Operations Centre (SOC) where Stacy, the Coordinator Duty Operations, was on shift.

Stacy talked through the role of the SOC and how varied it is. The team was managing a rescue at the time - the extrication of a person who had passed

away in the night but who had been housebound for a long time due to being a large-bodied person.

The rescue required part of the house to be cut away for the person to be removed from the home.

We also visited the State Control Centre, which was closed but gave Diana insight on how we set up teams for a level three event.

It is great to see our members hosting and sharing knowledge with our Kiwi friends. •



*Joanna Limpic MAIES.*

## GUNNAR HARDY MAIES RECOGNISED

Gunnar Hardy MAIES has been appointed a Member of the Order of Liverpool (MLO) by Liverpool City Mayor, Cr Ned Mannoun.

**S**erving the residents of Liverpool has been and continues to be one of the greatest honours of my life," Gunnar said.

"This past year-and-a-bit as Unit Commander, and the few years before, haven't always been easy.

"The NSW SES Liverpool Unit and the residents of Liverpool and surrounding areas have weathered (pardon the pun) a myriad of emergencies together, but we always come out the other side stronger than we were before."



Gunnar acknowledged his mentors within the NSW SES, thanking them for their guidance, patience, trust, and input along with the countless hours from devoted volunteers who selflessly

sacrifice to protect and serve the residents of the Liverpool area.

"From powerful thunderstorms, wild winds, and ferocious floods, to towering infernos and harrowing rescues, the members of the Liverpool SES Unit have been on the frontline of them all. The resilience our volunteers show in the face of such extremes makes me so proud to wear the orange uniform," he said.

"Thank you, Liverpool City Council, for this humbling honour, and a special thank you to the residents of Liverpool for your continued trust." •





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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## LESSONS MANAGEMENT FORUM

20-22 May 2025

Wellington, New Zealand (hybrid)

The forum is co-costed by AIDR and AFAC from Wellington, New Zealand.



**T**he 2025 Lesson Management Forum aims to share lessons identified or learned by offering introductory level training, workshops and presentations to educate, encourage and empower those new to lessons management.

Presentations and workshops aim to challenge and advance the thinking and practice of experienced lessons management practitioners.

### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Lessons from the frontlines: real-world case studies in emergency management. Emergency management in Australia covers planning, preparedness, response and recovery.
- From insight to action: embedding lessons management in strategic decision-making.
- Learning from failure: real-world applications of lessons learned in crisis situations.
- Leveraging AI in lessons management.
- Lessons without borders: adapting knowledge across cultures and/or borders.
- What's next? Trends shaping the future of lessons management.

### FIND OUT MORE

[www.aidr.org.au/events/50635?locationId=50636](http://www.aidr.org.au/events/50635?locationId=50636)

## NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA 4TH ANNUAL FORUM

18-20 June 2025

National Wine Centre, Adelaide (in person with online components)



**T**his forum provides a physical meeting place to connect with leading research, reflect on lessons learned and discuss how innovation can support safer, more resilient and sustainable communities going forward.

The Forum is an in-person event with a live stream component available on day one only for those who cannot attend in person.

### RESEARCH THEMES INCLUDE:

- Communities and workforces of the future
- Sustainable, safe and healthy natural landscapes
- Resilient built environment
- Resilient communities
- Situational awareness
- Operational response and innovation
- Evidence-informed policy, strategy and foresight
- Learning from disasters.

### FIND OUT MORE

[www.naturalhazards.com.au/nhrf25?mc\\_cid=928c876bd8&mc\\_eid=7be255dcd](http://www.naturalhazards.com.au/nhrf25?mc_cid=928c876bd8&mc_eid=7be255dcd)

## EMERGENCY SERVICES FOUNDATION CONFERENCE

29-30 July 2025



**I**t's the 25th anniversary of the Emergency Services Conference, hosted by Emergency Services Foundation.

AIES will again exhibit this conference. More details to come in the next edition of *National Emergency Response*.

Save the date and look forward the program to be released soon.

### FIND OUT MORE

<https://esf.com.au/events/emergency-management-conference/>





**AFAC25**

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**FIND OUT MORE**
<https://www.afaconference.com.au/>
**AIES WEBINARS**

**A**IES hosts regular national webinars to help keep our members updated on current trends and learnings in emergency management.

Attending the AIES' webinars offers certified professional development and supports Certified Emergency Services Managers' (CESM) accreditation.

Listen later and catch up on these recent webinars.

**GROWING RESILIENCE MATURITY WITH VERTICAL FALLS CAST STUDY**

**Featuring** Daniel Byles, WA Royal Flying Doctor Service.

**Visit:** <https://lnkd.in/gfTgz2Pz>

**FROM SIRENS TO SCIENCE: A PRACTITIONER'S JOURNEY THROUGH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

**Featuring** Glen Cuttance, Principal Adviser Risk, Emergency and Incident Management, Environment Protection Authority SA.

**Visit:** <https://lnkd.in/g5NfBR3e>

**MANAGING RESPONSES TO MAJOR DISASTERS**

**Featuring** Zoe Marriott, State Manager of Disaster Relief Australia (SA) and colleagues.

**Visit:** [https://lnkd.in/g\\_MJT39T](https://lnkd.in/g_MJT39T)

**DISASTER RESILIENCE: GLOBALLY, NATIONALLY AND SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S ECO SYSTEM**

**Featuring** Miriam Lumb, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) Director, Emergency Management, Resilience & Risk Reduction

**Visit:** <https://lnkd.in/g5NfBR3e>

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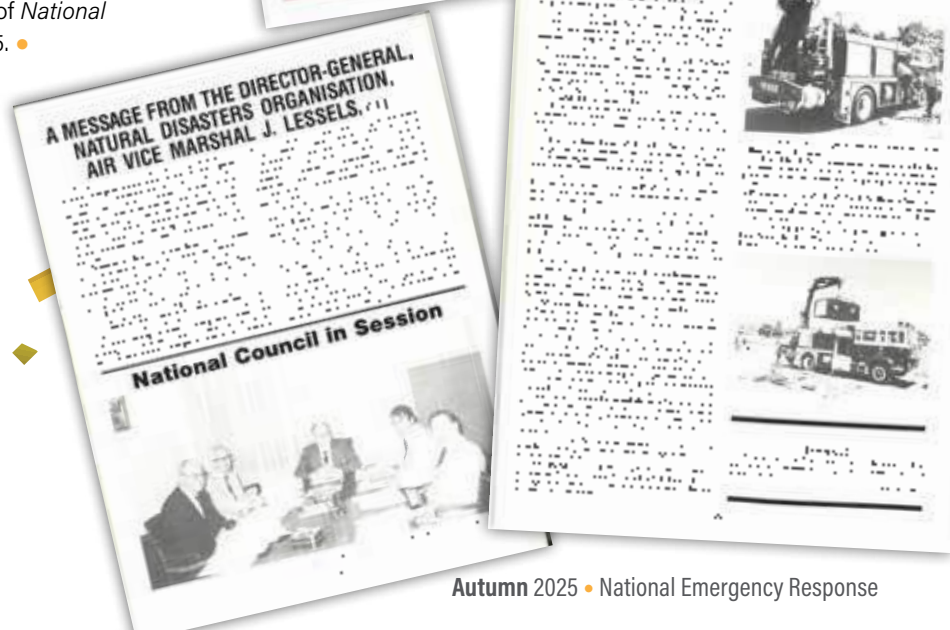
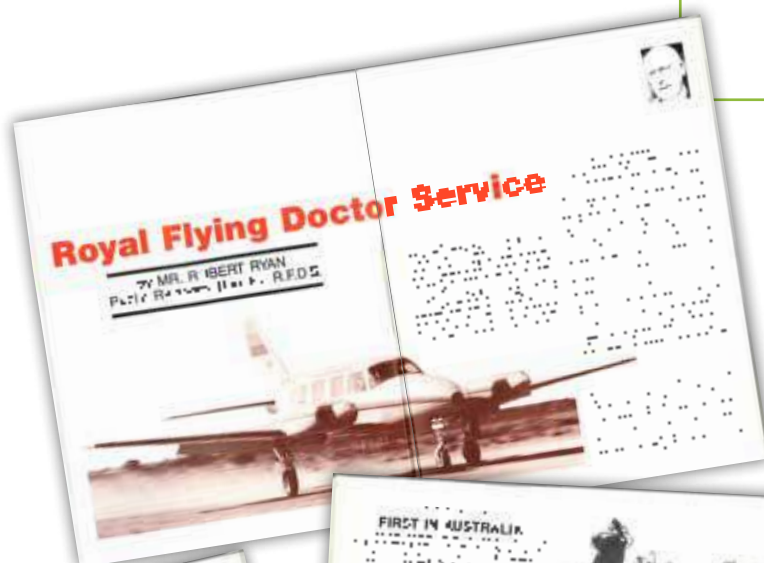
YEARS OF PUBLICATION

For four decades, the *National Emergency Response Journal* (NER) has been a vital voice for the emergency management community across Australasia.

As the official publication of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services (AIES), the NER journal has provided a platform to share knowledge, innovation, and best practices in emergency management. Since its inception in 1984—when AIES was known then as the Australian Institute of Emergency Services—the journal has evolved alongside the sector, reflecting the changing landscape of emergency management and disaster resilience. This year we celebrate 40 years of *National Emergency Response*. Its pages have documented significant events, advances in technology, and the human stories behind emergency services professionals and volunteers from across Australia, New Zealand and beyond. As we mark this remarkable anniversary, we honour the journal's legacy and look forward to continuing to inform, inspire, and connect those who serve and protect our communities.

Here's a look back at the first edition of *National Emergency Response*, published in 1985. •

1985





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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

VOLUME 18 NO. 3 AUTUMN 2005

PRINT POST PUBLICATION NO. 99537566 00007



EMERGENCY  
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RISKY BUSINESS OR NOT?

IN THIS ISSUE:

- \* AS/NZ 4360 RISK MANAGEMENT
- \* EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & THE COMMUNITY AT RISK
- \* INSTITUTIONS & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
- \* EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TRAINING

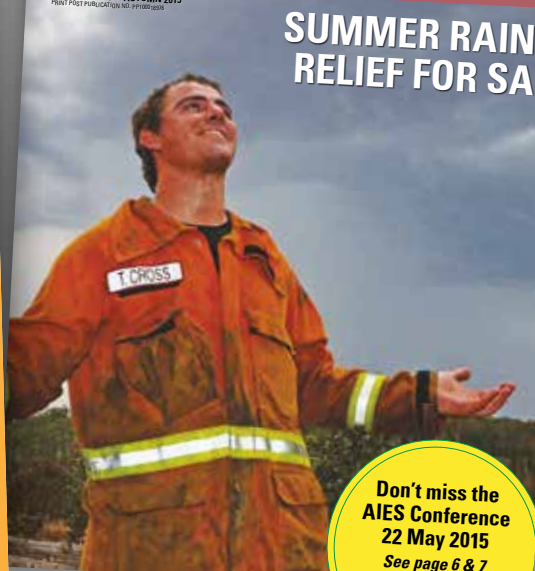
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VOLUME 28 NO. 2 AUTUMN 2015

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AIES Conference  
22 May 2015  
See page 6 & 7

2015

# CWA & AIES: OUR 20-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

By **Tony Cornish**, Director Countrywide Austral

In 2005, Countrywide Austral (CWA), was approached by the Australian Institute of Emergency Services (now Australasian Institute of Emergency Services) to publish its journal.

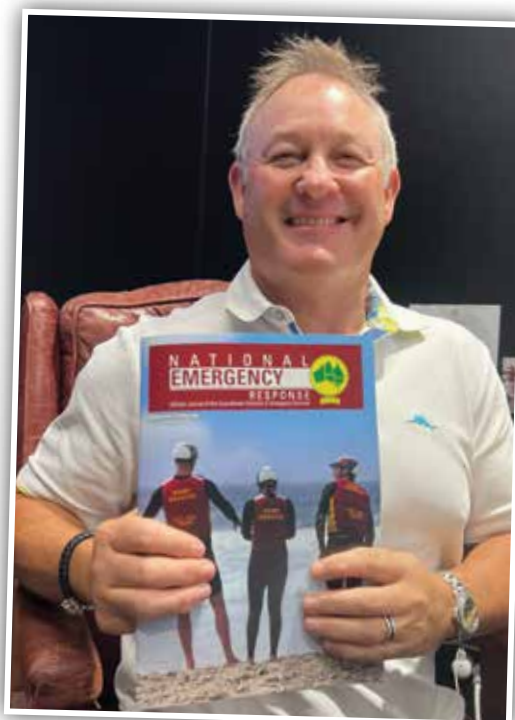
Since then, we have been the proud publisher of more than 70 editions of *National Emergency Response*.

As I reflect on the last 20 years of our partnership, it's impossible not to feel immense pride in what we've built together.

I want to thank everyone at the AIES for their vision and dedication. I would like to pay tribute to past presidents Maurice Massie, John Rice, Alan Marshall, Barry Archer, Steve Jenkins

and Bob Maul, and current president Christine Miller. Thank you also to AIES treasurer, Jenny Crump, who has been a vital link and liaison between our two organisations.

I would also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the editors who have provided us with countless engaging and entertaining articles that bring *National Emergency Response* to life each edition. Thank you to Mark Sawzac and Allan Calleja and a very special thank you to Kristi High, our current editor, who has been at the helm for the last 15 years along with the AIES sub editors who have supported her.



As we look forward, I'm confident that the future will bring even more exciting opportunities for us to explore together.

Here's to the next chapter of our shared story. •

# WANTING TO 'RETURN TO NORMAL' AFTER A DISASTER IS UNDERSTANDABLE, BUT OFTEN PROBLEMATIC

Media coverage of the recent fires in Los Angeles showed the heartbreaking damage in Pacific Palisades and elsewhere across Los Angeles County. People lost not only their houses but also the thriving communities of which they had been part.

By Senior Lecturer and Deputy Director, Te Puna Ako Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning, University of Waikato **Anthony Richardson**

Source: *The Conversation*, published January 27, 2025.

**W**hat was quickly apparent was the desire to rebuild. People often want their lives to bounce back from every crisis or disaster and to recreate what they have lost.

And this points to a broader issue that emerges after many natural disasters. People want to rebuild and return to normal when, in the face of an increasingly volatile climate, the best option may be to adapt and change.

There is a tension between a common understanding of personal resilience and the resilience of complex adaptive systems such as cities. People have a psychological and social need for stability and permanence, but all complex systems are resilient only because they adapt when forced to.

In New Zealand, the same tension emerged in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle. Ahead of the second anniversary of the devastating cyclone – and as Northland is battered, yet again, by severe weather and flooding – New Zealanders need to ask how we can balance our personal resilience and need for stability while also acknowledging the need for a managed retreat.

## THE LONG HISTORY OF FIRES IN LOS ANGELES

In his essay *The Case for Letting Malibu Burn*, writer Mike Davis outlines how fire is an inescapable part of Los Angeles history and how after each fire the city has always been rebuilt.



The Conversation - Australia + New Zealand  
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When it comes to flood risk, we have a blind spot. We pay less for houses in 1-in-100 year flood zones - but dismiss the risk of anything rarer. As @UTSEngage experts write, this is dangerous as climate change makes floods steadily worse



Davis' work focuses on Los Angeles but raises important questions about the future of all communities facing increasing risks from climate change.

The repeated rebuilds in Los Angeles have created an expectation that the city will be rebuilt after every fire.

But the city also has unique physical features that make such fires inescapable: the combination of

the Santa Ana winds blowing from the desert with chaparral vegetation growing in the steep and dry canyons.

Fire has always been a natural part of the cycle of regeneration in this landscape. What has changed is the encroachment of human dwellings at the foot of these hills and canyons, and into them. Between 1990 and 2020, nearly 45% of the homes





built in California were placed in these high fire risk areas.

Climate change is also making both localised rain events and droughts in the Los Angeles environs more extreme, creating larger and then drier fuel loads.

From a systems perspective, a managed retreat from the areas of worst fire risk makes sense. The resilience of cities requires them to be adaptive.

Yet adaptation in Los Angeles is largely not happening. After previous fires, rebuilding has generally occurred within six years and with minimal to no change in building design or placement. People have found comfort in the idea of “bouncing back” like a rubber ball.

#### PRICING IN THE RISK

There is one group within this complex system which is actually adapting in the face of increasing climate change – in Los Angeles and elsewhere, including in New Zealand.

Home insurers have drastically raised premiums in Los Angeles, or removed cover entirely from many homeowners, to cover ever-growing losses. The insurance bill for these recent fires is predicted to be US\$30 billion and the frequency and cost of such climate disasters is increasing.

Together, the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods and Cyclone Gabrielle cost insurers more than NZ\$3.5 billion. The cost of insurance in New Zealand rose by 14% in 2024, significantly outpacing general consumer price inflation.

In system terms, increased insurance premiums represent some of the adaptive capacity of a community that insists on rebuilding in the face of increasing risks.

In economic terms, you can also think of insurance premiums as a market signal which is pricing the ever-increasing risk of disaster into the cost of living in such fire or flood zones.

#### ACCEPTING RISK OR ACCEPTING CHANGE IN NZ

The approaching second anniversary of Cyclone Gabrielle and the ongoing debate over managed retreat demonstrates the same tension in Aotearoa New Zealand between increasing climate risks and our very human need to rebuild and restore what we have lost.

City and regional councils are facing questions about whether to build (or rebuild) in high-risk areas.

But with two thirds of our population living in flood risk areas and both flood risks and insurance costs increasing, how many times can New Zealand rebuild in these risky areas?

In the end, we need to remember that a crucial, and sometimes overlooked, element of psychological resilience is acceptance of change.

In a world of accelerating climate change and related disasters this is increasingly the more realistic response. ●



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# CYCLONE ZELIA: PREPAREDNESS AND ACTION SAVES WA COMMUNITIES

Severe Tropical Cyclone Zelia was a powerful Category 5 system that impacted Western Australia's Pilbara region in mid-February 2025.

The cyclone formed as a tropical low on February 7, 2025, near the Kimberley region and rapidly intensified, reaching Category 5 status by February 13. It made landfall near De Grey, approximately 34 miles northeast of Port Hedland, on February 14 at peak intensity, bringing wind gusts up to 290 km/h.

The Pilbara region bore the brunt of Zelia's fury, with towns like Marble Bar experiencing severe flooding due to rainfall amounts reaching up to 600 mm.

Communities such as Warralong were isolated, necessitating emergency airlifts; approximately 60 residents were relocated to safety in South Hedland via helicopter.

Infrastructure suffered significant damage, with reports indicating that the Carlandie Homestead was destroyed.

Major highways, including sections of the Great Northern Highway, were closed due to flooding, disrupting supply chains and leading to shortages in towns like Broome, where supermarket shelves were emptied as deliveries were halted.

Emergency services were on high alert before, during, and after Zelia's landfall. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) conducted numerous rescue operations, emphasizing the importance of timely evacuations and adherence to safety advisories.

Evacuation centres were established to accommodate displaced residents, and tourists, ... and multiple schools and public facilities were closed to ensure public safety.

Authorities issued cyclone emergency warnings from Pardoo Roadhouse to Whim Creek, urging residents to secure properties and relocate to safer areas.

Post-cyclone assessments revealed that while major mining operations,



*Delivering essential goods to the Pilbara and west Kimberley via plane.*

*Photos courtesy of WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services.*

including those of Rio Tinto, BHP, and Fortescue, reported minimal damage, the extensive rainfall and flooding posed ongoing challenges. Rio Tinto's operations faced nearly two weeks of disruptions, highlighting the need for robust contingency planning.

The aftermath of Cyclone Zelia underscored the critical role of emergency services in disaster response and recovery. The swift actions of DFES and other agencies were instrumental in minimising casualties and facilitating the region's resilience. This event serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of preparedness, inter-agency coordination, and community engagement in effectively managing natural disasters. ●



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# EMPOWERING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS THROUGH DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Source: WA Department of Fire & Emergency Services



*Eight hundred participants took part in the Bushfire Officer Development program hosted by DFES Bushfire Centre of Excellence.*

In October 2024, the DFES Bushfire Centre of Excellence hosted the third round of its Bushfire Officer Development program, an initiative designed to enhance the skills and operational readiness of volunteer firefighters across Western Australia.

This comprehensive, live-in program welcomed 16 experienced volunteers eager to enhance their management and leadership capabilities in a bushfire context.

The program offered a balanced approach to learning and practical application, combining intensive classroom instruction with hands-on field exercises. Participants engage in a variety of topics, including personnel management, conflict resolution and technical bushfire skills such as fire weather analysis and machine supervision. These topics equip volunteers for real-world operational challenges and foster a peer-mentoring culture that strengthens bushfire brigade operations statewide.

Participants, including representatives from Bush Fire Service, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Volunteer Fire and Emergency Service as well as two officers from Department of Justice, thrived in the collaborative and supportive environment.

The program also included evening sessions designed to maximise learning opportunities and ensure each volunteer is well-equipped to lead effectively and adapt to the evolving challenges of bushfire management.

Course attendees engaged in activities focused on self-reflection, collaboration and public speaking. Through

tools like the DiSC profile assessment – (D)ominance, (i)nnuence, (S)teadiness and (C)onscientiousness – volunteers gained deeper insight into personal motivators, a key aspect of for effective leadership.

Participants applied their skills in high-pressure bushfire simulations to reinforce their decision-making abilities. This critical hands-on component is essential for effective operational leadership during emergencies.

The program offers a unique networking opportunity for aspiring officers to connect with fellow volunteers, share best practices and help build a resilient leadership community within DFES.

Participants said that they not only enhanced their communication and leadership abilities but also gained valuable personal reflection skills.

Robert Schmidt, Baldivis Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Brigade, praised the course and the opportunity to put the skills into practice through exercises.

"I've learned how to manage stress in challenging circumstances, push forward as part of a team and navigate difficult conversations for positive outcomes. The exercise was a prime example – staying calm and level-headed under stress demonstrated the skills we were taught," Schmidt shared.

For volunteers that are looking to get involved in the program this year, keep an eye out on Volunteer Hub for more information.

For more information, contact the Bushfire Centre of Excellence Training Team at [bcoetraining@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:bcoetraining@dfes.wa.gov.au) •



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# CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Yvonne Helps' firefighting career with the CFS



International  
Women's Day

Source: CFS South Australia

As the world celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March 2025 with the theme 'March Forward: For ALL Women and Girls,' we commemorated the 30th anniversary of the United Nations' Beijing Declaration. This year's theme was a call to action for gender equality and empowerment. In honour of this milestone, SA Country Fire Service revisited the journey of Yvonne Helps, a dedicated volunteer firefighter whose 30 years of service have left a mark on her community.

As we sat down to talk, we were surrounded by the old and new symbols of Yvonne's firefighting career. On the table in front of us were the original Volunteer magazine cover photo, her original helmet and her new one, and her Hard Yakka coverall - a reflection of how far she has come since joining the CFS. Looking at the photo of Yvonne at 31, it was striking to note the symmetry of the moment - 30 years on, Yvonne sat across the table, and the interviewer was the same age Yvonne had been when the photo was taken. Her original gear, worn over decades of service, was a reminder of her volunteer journey.

These worn and well-loved items are not just reminders of the past but also symbols of the legacy she has built through her decades of service. On the sleeve of her coveralls, Yvonne had sewn the training badges she earned over the years, each representing a milestone she reached—Breathing Apparatus, Road Crash Rescue (formerly Vehicle Accident Rescue), and First Aid. Each badge reflects her

dedication to learning and personal growth within the CFS.

Yvonne's story began in the late 1980s when she joined the Hahndorf Brigade. 'I started in the late '80s at Hahndorf Brigade and then moved to the Stirling Brigade when I moved house,' she recalls. After a break of over 25 years, Yvonne returned to volunteering with the Yorketown Brigade following the devastating 2019/20 bushfires. 'I had a big break of 25 years and then joined the Yorketown Brigade after the 2019 fires,' she says, highlighting how the crisis prompted her to re-engage with the CFS—just as many others returned or joined the service during that challenging time.

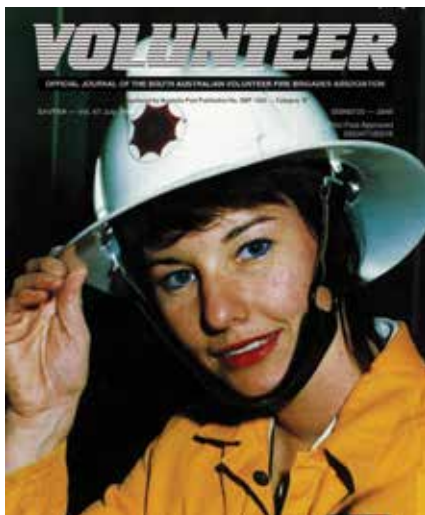
Reflecting on her early years, Yvonne recalls balancing her volunteer work with her personal life, particularly as a new mother. 'I was alone during the day with a young baby and didn't have anything to do. My husband joined the CFS, but it wasn't really his thing. The captain at the time recognised I was feeling isolated and struggling with

post-natal depression.' The captain asked Yvonne to help distribute emergency stickers to local businesses, which brought her out of her shell.

She remembers when the siren would go off at the station, conveniently just behind her house. Without hesitation, she would rush to the station, knowing that the woman across the street would be there to look after her baby. This simple but meaningful act showed how community and women support one another - whether stepping in to care for a child or answering the call to serve when needed. These moments highlight the strength of shared responsibility and how women have always played a crucial role in keeping their communities safe.

Her involvement with the CFS grew over time. 'I started answering calls, taking down details, and eventually, the captain said, "You're going out more than the regular people; I think it's time you do a course,"' she recalls. This marked the beginning of her deeper involvement in firefighting.





Yvonne's dedication to the CFS extended beyond firefighting itself. Encouraged by her volunteer experiences, she pursued a degree in psychology. 'I finished my undergraduate degree in psychology because of my experiences as a volunteer, which led me into peer support - a field that was new at the time,' she explains. Yvonne was especially interested in trauma involving young children and how to support them. Together with the Lions Club, the Stirling Brigade created the early versions of trauma teddies to offer comfort to young children after incidents. After her studies, Yvonne continues her work in wellbeing as a Study Coordinator at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI). She is part of the Aboriginal Health Equity Unit, which is Australia's biggest Indigenous health research unit.

Her work in peer support was pioneering, particularly when she initiated a joint team involving CFS, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS), and St John Ambulance for Critical Incident Stress Management. 'I ran after the speaker in the car park after a lecture, saying I wanted to be involved,' Yvonne laughs. That led to forming a team that provided psychological support to emergency responders. This later evolved into Stress Prevention and Management (SPAM), a confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for South Australian Emergency Service volunteers, staff, and their immediate families, which continues today.

Over the years, Yvonne has witnessed significant changes within

the CFS. 'The training is very different now. It's more structured, and you can focus on specifics like pumps and first aid,' she notes. The evolution of equipment has also been significant. 'The way things are positioned on the trucks now is so much easier. It's much more user-friendly,' she adds.

Reflecting on some of the challenges she faced, Yvonne fondly remembers how she adapted in the early days. She used to keep a cloth nappy in the top of her helmet as it was too large for her. It also doubled as a makeshift P2 mask while fighting fires, she shares with a laugh. She continues that male colleagues were often jealous of my nappy trick, as it worked so well.

Her influence extended beyond her own experience and into her family. Yvonne recalls a touching moment with her daughter. 'My daughter once said she wanted to be a nurse and a firefighter so she could save people from fires and then treat them. Her grandmother told her, "Women aren't firefighters," to which my daughter replied, "Well, Mum is." Her grandmother said, "Well, she's different."'

In a proud moment for Yvonne, her daughter, who joined the CFS as a cadet, is now on the waitlist to join her local brigade. Yvonne is looking forward to her granddaughter reading this article, hoping it might encourage her to consider following the same path and join the CFS as a cadet. It's a great example of how the involvement of women in firefighting is becoming a tradition in families.

Yvonne's story is also a testament to women's progress in the CFS. 'When I joined, I was the first female in the

Hahndorf Brigade. Now, there are many women involved in active roles across different ages,' she reflects. Her advice to young women considering joining the CFS is simple: 'Be confident about what you've gained in skills. If you really like a particular aspect, put yourself forward for it.'

As we mark International Women's Day, Yvonne's journey reminds us of the importance of inclusion and support in volunteer organisations. 'It's about setting people up to succeed,' she says, reflecting on the supportive environment she has found within the CFS. 'It's not just about doing the job; it's about learning from each other and mentoring others along the way.'

Yvonne Helps' 30-year journey with the CFS is an example of dedication, resilience, and the impact of women in volunteer services. As we "March Forward" for all women and girls, her story inspires us to continue striving for equality and empowerment in all aspects of life. Within the emergency services sector, women like Yvonne Helps have been breaking barriers and creating change, paving the way for more inclusive environments.

While significant strides have been made, challenges remain, from gender stereotypes to barriers in leadership. The theme reminds us that we must continue pushing forward, turning commitments into action, especially in areas like emergency services where equality can have a direct impact on both the workforce and the communities they serve. Just as Yvonne's contributions to the CFS have inspired change, we all must keep working towards a future of true gender equality for all. ●



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# POSTCARD FROM MUMBAI, INDIA

I subsequently flew from Goa to the City of Mumbai with my family for five days of sightseeing and shopping. This included a visit to the Gateway of India planned for Monday 16 December.

By Canada Bay SES Volunteer **Bill Hoyes** MAIES

Goa: Bill Hoyles relaxing on a beach in Goa.

My daughter, her husband and my grandson also made separate plans to meet up with friends visiting from Paris and take a ferry ride from the Gateway of India across to the World Heritage site of Elephanta Caves on either Thursday 19 December or Friday 20 December.

On Wednesday 18 December, 110 men, women and children decided to make that same journey and boarded the Mumbai to Elephanta Island ferry Neel Kamal for a trip of their lifetime to Elephanta caves.

During their journey, those on-board were treated to the exciting spectacle of an Indian naval speedboat performing fast manoeuvres while apparently testing its engines.

However, something went tragically wrong when the naval speedboat ploughed at high speed into the side of the Neel Kamal ferry and capsized it.

The whole incident was captured by one of the ferry passengers on his mobile camera and uploaded to YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRqaUT00k9M>

A massive search and rescue effort followed involving other ferries, the Indian Coastguard and Indian Navy.

When I flew out of Mumbai on 22 December, the death toll stood at 15 including naval personnel and ferry passengers.

A Government Investigation was immediately announced with stories and rumours being published that blamed the death toll on engine malfunction, a steering mishap, the actions of the navy crew, the lack of adequate life vests on the ferry, and inadequate safety briefings for tourists on how to use them.

My thoughts are with the loved ones of the deceased, of course, but I can't help but think that my daughter and her family could have been on the ferry that fateful day.

Undeterred, my daughter and her family eventually took a ferry across to

Elephanta two days later, by which time the Government had moved quickly to mandate that life vests be worn by each ferry passenger on the journey.

This was evidenced by the bright new lifejackets that were donned by my daughter, son-in-law and grandson. My daughter reliably informed me afterwards that some of the life jackets still had their price tags attached.

Bringing this tragedy even closer to home, the 15th body recovered in the Mumbai Ferry tragedy was that of a 7-year-old boy who was holidaying with his father and mother from their home in Goa. His mother's body had been recovered earlier in the search. ●

**Read more about this incident at** [www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/ferry-capsizes-off-mumbai-coast-indian-navy-conducts-rescue-ops/article69000626.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/ferry-capsizes-off-mumbai-coast-indian-navy-conducts-rescue-ops/article69000626.ece)







Bill Hoyles' daughter, husband and grandson on their Elephanta ferry wearing new life jackets.



The Gateway of India taken two days before the accident.



Indian newspapers cover the tragedy of the ferry accident and the rescue operation.



Surf lifesaving set-up at a beach in Goa.





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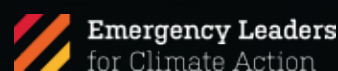
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# EMERGENCY LEADERS SPEAK OUT ON NUCLEAR REACTORS

Nuclear reactors would introduce significant and unnecessary risk to Australian communities and emergency responders, including firefighters already stretched by escalating climate fuelled disasters, warns Emergency Leaders for Climate Action (ELCA) in a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into nuclear power generation in Australia.

Source: **Emergency Leaders for Climate Action**



**G**reg Mullins, speaking on behalf of 38 former fire and emergency service chiefs from across Australia said: "Our firefighters are on the frontlines of escalating climate fuelled disasters, like bushfires and floods, fuelled by climate pollution. They're not trained or equipped to deal with nuclear emergencies that could arise from nuclear reactors or the transportation and storage of radioactive waste."

The ELCA submission highlights that nuclear reactor emergency planning and management has not been addressed by proponents of nuclear energy and emphasises that Australian emergency services lack the experience and resources to handle potential nuclear emergencies.

"Australian emergency services would have to be built up from scratch to respond to nuclear disasters, with no costings or plans in place to achieve this. There are no fully staffed urban fire service stations near the proposed sites for nuclear reactors, and it's neither feasible nor reasonable to expect volunteer bushfire fighters to handle such high-risk emergencies," said Mr Mullins.

"I oversaw the deployment of Australian firefighters to assist in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami that led to the Fukushima disaster, where the chaos and devastation caused by nuclear failures was stark.

First responders, many of them civilian firefighters, were thrown into situations they weren't trained for. That's not a risk we should take in Australia, no matter how remote.

"There are no safety or environmental frameworks in place to manage the risks of nuclear reactors or to safely transport and store radioactive waste in Australia.

"Placing nuclear reactors in disaster-prone areas like Latrobe, Lithgow, Singleton, and South Burnett would add to the burden emergency services already face responding to worsening bushfires, floods, and storms.

Beyond the safety risks, former Commissioner Mullins called the proposal a "dangerous distraction" from the energy solutions Australia urgently needs right now. "Every coal fired power station will shut down before a single watt of nuclear power can enter our system. Nuclear reactors simply cannot be built quickly to address the urgent task of slashing pollution and reducing climate disaster risks right now.

"Our communities and emergency services are bearing the brunt of worsening disasters driven by burning coal, oil and gas. We don't have the luxury of waiting decades for new power stations, we must slash climate pollution now to protect Australians. Australia can't afford to risk our energy security, economy and safety on

a nuclear fantasy when renewables can cut pollution today and help ensure a safer future for our kids."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the submission we detail three critical concerns about current proposals to build nuclear power in Australia:

Nuclear reactor emergency planning and management has not been considered in any plans for the development of nuclear energy generation in Australia.

Building nuclear reactors in Australia would be too slow to be a genuine climate solution.

Australia's emergency services are not trained or funded to respond to nuclear disasters, both at plants or in the transport of radioactive waste. International experience shows that local urban fire and rescue services will be required to be first responders to any emergencies at nuclear reactors. At present they are ill-equipped to do so. ●

## ELCA

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action is a growing coalition of former senior Australian fire and emergency service leaders representing every fire service in Australia, a number of SES and land management agencies, communicating the seriousness of the climate change threat, calling for government action on emissions and the necessary resources to better prepare fire and emergency services for increasingly frequent and damaging extreme weather events.





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# EARLY BUSHFIRE DETECTION AI TECH LAUNCHES

Dryad Networks, a leader in ultra-early wildfire detection, is setting up its first office in Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) to help tackle the region's growing bushfire crisis.

**B**ased in Macquarie Park, New South Wales, the new hub strengthens Dryad's ability to work directly with governments, emergency services, and industry partners to prevent fires before they spread.

Sohan Domingo, VP of Sales, Technology, and Operations leads the ANZ expansion. Dryad is starting with a dedicated local team and will scale up as demand grows. Having a local base means working closely with emergency responders, forestry services, and national parks to roll out fire detection solutions tailored to Australia and New Zealand's unique landscapes.

Sohan Domingo said, "Australia and New Zealand are on the frontlines of climate adaptation, and early fire detection is critical. With a local team, Dryad can work directly with authorities and land managers to stop fires before they spread."

Building on success in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia, the company is bringing its technology to ANZ to detect fires before flames appear and prevent devastating losses. Each sensor runs maintenance-free for up to 15 years, powered by a small, integrated solar cell. Designed for rugged conditions, the sensors form a wireless mesh network that provides reliable coverage even in remote areas.

Detecting fires at the smouldering stage gives emergency services a crucial head start. The system provides real-time fire



maps and outperforms spotting towers, infrared cameras, and satellites, which only detect fires once they've spread.

Sohan Domingo said, "Bushfires don't just destroy landscapes and communities, they also fuel climate change. Early detection is the key to stopping them before they spread. Dryad's expansion isn't just about growth; it's about protecting lives, infrastructure, and forests. By reducing fire risk, we're also cutting carbon emissions and building a more resilient future."

Dryad is also advancing wildfire suppression with Silvaguard, an autonomous artificial intelligence (AI)-powered drone that uses acoustic waves to extinguish fires. This innovation

will provide a rapid, automated response to fire outbreaks detected by Dryad's sensors, reinforcing early intervention efforts. Plans are underway to explore deployment opportunities in Australia and New Zealand, where fast-moving fires pose a critical challenge.

Dryad is partnering with Indigenous Industries Australia (IIAust), Thinxtra, Indicium Dynamics, and New Zealand's Direct Safety to accelerate deployment. These alliances tap into local expertise to scale bushfire detection across ANZ. Dryad also works with research institutions, government agencies, and emergency responders to refine its system and strengthen bushfire resilience in diverse landscapes. •





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# A BUSY PEAK SEASON ON THE BEACH:

## Safety challenges and community efforts

As the summer sun drew thousands to Victoria's beautiful coast, surf lifesavers faced one of their busiest peak seasons yet.

By Vice President Port Melbourne Life Saving Club **Tea-Rose Passon**

Despite a 22% decrease in coastal drowning deaths from the previous summer, 51 lives were still lost in the water. Alarming, every one of these incidents occurred at unpatrolled locations away from Surf Life Saving services.

The dangers of swimming outside the red and yellow flags remain a persistent issue. A quarter of all coastal drowning deaths happened during the peak holiday period when beaches were at their busiest.

Many of these incidents could have been prevented by following key water safety measures that have been drummed into us all:

- Swim at a patrolled beach between the red and yellow flags
- Avoid alcohol and drugs when in or around water
- Always supervise children in, on, and around the water
- Wear a lifejacket when boating, rock fishing, or using watercraft.



Tea-Rose Passon.

### IRB TEAM TRAINING FOR FUTURE COMPETITIONS

Our IRB (Inflatable Rescue Boat) team has been training in preparation for the upcoming IRB competition season starting in April and the Life Saving World Championships in Morocco 2026. Their dedication and commitment ensure they remain at peak performance, both for racing and vital rescue operations.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers have been the backbone of our lifesaving efforts, extending their support beyond beach patrols to a variety of community events. Their dedication was evident during Tough Tilly Day, where they provided essential water safety services to help raise awareness and funds for those living with Epidermolysis Bullosa. Additionally, our volunteers assisted with first aid support for the Bass Coast Cycle Challenge and Deb Rielly Run for the Kids ensuring participant safety throughout the event. Their generosity was also on display at the BBQ for the Total Tools and Bunnings event, where funds raised contributed to our lifesaving initiatives.

Our community's spirit of giving extends beyond these events. Volunteers dedicate countless hours to training new lifesavers, mentoring young Nippers, and ensuring our club remains a hub for education, safety,



and support not only for member but other local community groups as well. Their commitment highlights the power of teamwork, and the vital role volunteers play in keeping our coastline safe.

#### **NIPPERS PROGRAM: THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY:**

Beyond the challenges of a very busy peak season at the Wonthaggi Life Saving Club, this summer also showcased the dedication of our lifesaving community, particularly through the Nippers program. Designed to teach the next generation vital surf safety skills, the program saw record participation this season.

These programs are entirely volunteer run, and without the incredible support from parents, they simply wouldn't be possible.

#### **SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR BASS COAST SCHOOLS**

This season, we also ran school programs for students from around the Bass Coast and neighbouring



*As we reflect on another summer of surf lifesaving, we celebrate the lives saved, the skills learned, and the community spirit that keeps our beaches safer for everyone.*



regions, helping to educate young people on vital surf safety skills. These programs provided interactive, hands-on experiences to teach students how to stay safe around water. Sessions included identifying rip currents, learning how to signal for help, practicing board rescues, and understanding the importance of swimming between the flags.

Many of the participating schools incorporated these programs into their physical education curriculum, ensuring that water safety knowledge becomes second nature to students. By reaching children at an early age, we aim to build their confidence and awareness in the ocean environment, equipping

them with essential skills to prevent drownings and promote a lifelong respect for the water.

#### **TRAINING AND NEW COURSES**

Lifesaving training continues to be a priority, with a range of new courses available, including: First Aid Courses, Bronze Medallion Course and Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) Course. Not just for our members but also other local community organisations and sporting clubs.

As we reflect on another summer of surf lifesaving, we celebrate the lives saved, the skills learned, and the community spirit that keeps our beaches safer for everyone. Here's to another season of vigilance, education, and teamwork! ●



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# AUSTRALIA'S DISASTER RESPONSE SHOULD BUILD RESILIENCE

When ASPI's *Cyclone Tracy: 50 Years On* was published last year, it wasn't just a historical reflection; it was a warning. Just months later, we are already watching history repeat itself.

By **Anna Alexander** and **Courtney Hansen**

Source: Australian Strategic Policy Institute (*The Strategist*), reproduced under a Creative Commons License.

**W**e need to bake resilience into infrastructure, supply chains and communities, ensuring they are prepared for the next disaster, not just rebuilt to fail again.

This requires: a long-term effort to disaster-proof communities; cross-industry collaboration to strengthen supply chains; and a national resilience strategy.

In 1974, Cyclone Tracy forced Australia to rethink disaster preparedness. But in the five decades since, we've seen flood after cyclone after fire.

The February 2025 floods across northern Queensland—from Cairns to Townsville—once again exposed the region's vulnerabilities.

Communities in Ingham and Cardwell faced widespread devastation. For two weeks, road networks were severed, triggering food shortages and economic disruption. In Cairns, homes that had only just been repaired after Cyclone Jasper were inundated again, highlighting the compounding effect of disasters. Townsville, while spared the catastrophic flooding seen in 2019, remains at risk and may not be as fortunate next time.

In response, the federal government has committed \$84 million to strengthen disaster resilience in northern Queensland—a necessary but vastly insufficient sum.

The cost of inaction is rising rapidly, not only in infrastructure damage but in the long-term economic and social stability of the region.

The weaknesses seen during the February floods were not new. Essential supply chains were crippled as roads disappeared under floodwaters. The housing crisis worsened as displaced families were left scrambling for shelter in an already over-stretched market. Small businesses, the backbone of regional economies, were once again left picking up the pieces.

And yet, the response remains the same: mop up, rebuild, repeat.

Communities need immediate disaster relief. But real resilience isn't about recovery - it's about making sure the same destruction doesn't happen again.

That means disaster-proofing communities by:

- Retrofitting homes in high-risk areas with stronger materials and flood-resistant designs;

- Updating building codes for future-proofed development;
- Reinstating and expanding the Resilient Homes Fund to cover cyclone- and flood-prone regions;
- Reviewing the insurance system so unaffordable premiums don't leave people uninsured; and
- Investing in community-led preparedness, building resilience with local knowledge and digital tools.

While much of the focus remains on housing and road repairs, supply chain resilience continues to be overlooked. When floods cut off road transport, food shortages quickly followed. The conversation remained reactive, surfacing only after supply lines had already collapsed. There was no plan to use alternative routes.

Collaboration across industries can strengthen supply chains and critical infrastructure. It should include review processes after disasters.

Australia's national logistics framework must embed resilience into infrastructure planning. Maritime transport, for example, could have played a much stronger role in maintaining essential





goods distribution. But without a contingency plan, there was no mechanism to pivot away from road transport.

Australia needs a national resilience strategy to consider ways to bolster northern infrastructure, supply chains and communities.

The strategy should consider alternative freight corridors to reduce reliance on flood-prone roads. This could include pre-established plans for emergency supply distribution via maritime transport and would require strengthening port infrastructure.

Beyond supply chains, emergency infrastructure must also be adaptable. For example, the temporary single-lane bridge built by the Australian Army over Ollera Creek restored access between Townsville and Ingham, but was unsuitable for heavy vehicles.

A national resilience strategy should also consider strategically positioning maritime assets. Historically, HMAS Cairns has supported various naval vessels, including landing craft. Given

the region's vulnerability to cyclones and flooding, relocating both light and heavy landing craft to Cairns would enable faster disaster response across the region. HMAS Cairns is already well-equipped to support and service these vessels.

This isn't just a northern Queensland problem; it's a national crisis. The Colvin Review found that 87 percent of Commonwealth disaster funding is spent on recovery, while the economic cost of disasters is projected to reach \$40.3 billion annually by FY2050. The Insurance Council of Australia advised that redirecting funds from the 9 percent stamp duty on insurance premiums to resilience measures could save \$6.3 billion by 2050. Yet, funding remains locked in a reactive cycle—fixing damage rather than preventing it.

As we head into a federal election, there's a risk that disaster resilience becomes just another political football—but it shouldn't be. The escalating costs of disasters affect all Australians, regardless of who is in power.

Fifty years ago, Cyclone Tracy forced Australia to rethink how it built cities, leading to sweeping reforms in building codes and urban planning. Queensland Premier David Crisafulli has repeatedly stated a commitment to 'building back better'. It's time to turn those words into action. •

#### AUTHOR

Anna Alexander is an ASPI fellow with the Northern Australia Strategic Policy Centre and a consultant specialising in public policy, executive leadership and regional and workforce development. Courtney Hansen is managing director of North Marine and a leader in the maritime industry, specialising in regional economic development, workforce inclusion and strategic policy.

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# QPS CELEBRATES QUEENSLAND'S STRENGTH AND DIVERSITY THIS HARMONY WEEK

Source: Queensland Police Service

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) celebrated Harmony Week (Monday 17-Sunday 23 March), with events across the state, including at Police Headquarters in Brisbane.

**T**he QPS Multicultural Affairs Unit, alongside Police Liaison Officers and Cross-Cultural Police Officers, have held a morning tea to celebrate the many cultures, languages and backgrounds of QPS staff and officers.

The QPS reaffirms its commitment to fostering inclusive, respectful and safe working environments for all its people, with a continued focus on promoting cohesion within the Service and in the community.

Acting Commissioner of Police, Shane Chelepy APM, attended the Harmony Day celebrations at Police Headquarters and spoke of how important it was for QPS to reflect the cultural diversity of the community it serves.

"Our vision for the QPS is an inclusive, diverse and culturally responsive service where people of all cultures, languages and faiths feel safe, included and empowered," Acting Commissioner Chelepy said.

"The QPS is proud to have officers from all walks of life, and the experiences and perspectives of our culturally diverse

workforce makes QPS stronger and more effective in serving Queensland."

The QPS is committed to enhancing the cultural capability of the service to improve relationships and achieve positive outcomes for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

The recently released QPS Multicultural Action Plan 2024-27 reinforces this commitment and provides a framework of the meaningful steps the QPS is taking to achieve cultural change and improvement for our CALD workforce and communities.

The QPS has committed to undertake 14 activities across three focus areas in the Multicultural Action Plan: delivering culturally responsive services, driving diversity and inclusion, and promoting social cohesion.

Among the 14 activities, QPS has reiterated its commitment to taking a strong stance against racism by actively promoting anti-racism messages, and will develop and deliver targeted products and actions to enhance the confidence of people

from CALD backgrounds to report hate crime incidents to police.

The QPS will also develop and implement time-sensitive translation services for emergency situations to be utilised by CALD communities, and will continue to deliver training to uplift the cultural capability of all staff to help better understand and address barriers to inclusion.

For the full QPS Multicultural Action Plan 2024-27 visit: <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-03/QPS%20Multicultural%20Action%20Plan%202024-27%20%28QPS%20website%29.pdf>

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Australasian Institute of Emergency Services  
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**THE INSTITUTE'S AIMS**

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.

**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 organisation to foster international co-operation in counter-disaster services administration.

**THE INSTITUTE OFFERS**

- An opportunity to be part of a progressive Australasia-wide Institute dedicated to the progression and recognition of the Emergency Service role in the community.
- An independent forum where you can be heard and your opinions shared with other emergency service members.
- A journal with information from institutes and other sources around the world in addition to the interchange of views between Divisions in Australia, as well as access to the Institute website.
- Reduced fees for members at Institute Seminars and Conferences and an information service supplied by professional experienced officers.
- A Certificate of Membership.
- The opportunity to use the initials of the particular membership status after your name.
- Corporate members receive a plaque free of charge and can advertise on the AIES website, as well as provide articles for inclusion in the Institute's journal.

**MEMBERSHIP**

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Fellows: \$100  
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Applications for membership will be considered from persons who are at least eighteen years of age and who:

- Are members of a permanent emergency service or associated service, or
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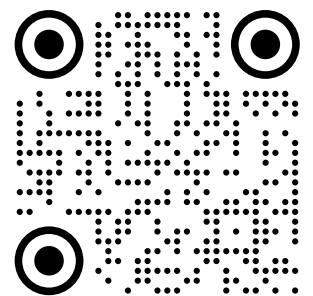
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To ring in the Lunar New Year in accordance with Chinese Buddhist tradition, Tasmanian Chinese Buddhist Academy of Australia invited the community to Jin-Gang-Dhyana Temple to ring the giant Peace Bell at Campania, Tasmania. This signifies good fortune for the year ahead.

We wish all readers a healthy and prosperous year, unite with family and all wishes come true.