

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY

## RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services



**VOLUME 35 NO. 2 WINTER 2022**

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VOLUNTEERS  
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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 [web@aies.net.au](mailto:web@aies.net.au). Please be aware that all content must go past the National Secretary prior to web publication to ensure it meets required guidelines.

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Official Journal of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services

Winter 2022 • National Emergency Response

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#### FRONT COVER

SA Country Fire Service staff and volunteer trainers provided firefighting training to people in the remote communities of the state's far north - the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.  
Photo:  APY Lands – Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara



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# NEW MEMBERS

The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services is pleased to announce the following emergency services people joined the AIES between 22 March and 3 July, 2022.

NAME	DIVISION	ORGANISATION
Andrew Cribb	NSW	Surf Lifesaving
Jim Delaney	NSW	Mines Rescue
Kai Darwin	NSW	Surf Lifesaving
Matthew Elrick	NSW	SES
Pauline Ross	NSW	Police
Tylar Shephard	NSW	St John Ambulance & RFS
Frank Fiorenza	QLD	Chaplin Watch Bundaberg
Kane Edson	SA	Boeing
Kate Goldsmith	VIC	Moira Shire Council
Martin Page	VIC	Charles Sturt University
Richard Teychenne	VIC	Disaster Relief Australia
Trudi Pratt	VIC	Greater Shepparton City Council



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

Articles, photographs and short stories are sought for the *National Emergency Response Journal*. Please submit items for the next edition to [editor@aies.net.au](mailto:editor@aies.net.au) by **24 October 2022**. There is an annual award for the best article submitted by an AIES member.



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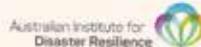
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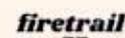
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# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Robert (Bob) **Maul**, LFAIES, JP (NSW)

*National President*

If the COVID-19 virus and its various strains did not wreak enough misery on the population of Australia in the period 2020-2022, what was to come in the first quarter of 2022 was even worse.

From early February until the early part of April, the east coast of Australia from south-east Queensland, including practically the whole coast of NSW from Tweed Heads to the Sydney metropolitan area, was lashed by a series of intense rainstorms termed 'rain bombs' by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Torrential rain of 400mm, and in some places exceeding that over two days, caused major (some 'catastrophic') flooding along many rivers, including the Brisbane, Logan, Tweed, Wilson, Richmond, Clarence, Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers.

These coastal floods were the costliest floods to occur in Australia's history and fifth costliest in insurance terms (\$3.4 billion in losses) of all natural disasters to occur in Australia since settlement.

The inner Sydney hailstorm of April 1999, in which I was heavily involved as Sydney Eastern Police Region Emergency Management Officer, was the costliest disaster ever to occur in Australia with insurance losses amounting to \$5.6 billion.

It should not be forgotten that many properties affected by the floodwaters were either not insured or were uninsurable, so the losses were far higher in real terms than the amount quoted in the foregoing paragraph.

Apart from the catastrophic damage done to homes including personal possessions of countless individuals in the abovementioned river valley systems, major damage also occurred to roads, fencing and utility infrastructure. Additionally, stock losses were high, and many residents lost their lives due to the quick onset of rising river levels.

The majority of severe to catastrophic damage to housing occurred along

the Brisbane River and its immediate tributaries and to the town of Lismore along the Wilson River. Thousands of homes were either destroyed or became unable to be repaired, with families needing to find alternate accommodation or be relocated to welfare centres for an extended period.

The AIES National Board wishes to convey its sincere sympathy to the families who lost their loved ones, and others who suffered the loss of property and possessions. Today (July), many of those affected are still without accommodation or unable to return to their homes due to the destruction of these assets, or because the means of reparations are currently unavailable due to a shortage of repairers and builders.

On 9 April 2022 the Institute held its 45th Annual Meeting in Sydney. On the same date the Board also held its Annual General Meeting. The AGM this year was conducted both as a face-to-face and virtual meeting, via Zoom. The AGM was attended by over 30 members and guests with some members attending in person from Port Stephens and the Blue Mountains; while the virtual option allowed members from across the states in both metropolitan and country areas to join.

At the AGM retiring Tasmanian Division AIES President Ron Jones LFAIES was presented with the AIES' highest award, the Medal of Excellence. This was in recognition of his over 30 years of involvement with the AIES both as a member and as President of the Tasmania Division, including his outstanding service to both the AIES and other Tasmanian emergency management organisations over a prolonged period.

Elevation in status and certificates of service awards were also presented to AIES Company Secretary James Pullin FAIES (40 Years Long Service), Graham Tomkinson (elevated to Fellow), Craig Ronan (elevated to Fellow), Samuel Corby (Commendation), Sven Nilsson (Commendation), James Logan



*The AIES National Board wishes to convey its sincere sympathy to the families who lost their loved ones, and other who suffered the loss of property and possessions.*

(Commendation), Benjamin Pickup (Commendation) and Dwight Robinson (Commendation). We extend our sincerest congratulations to the foregoing recipients.

Another recipient of a certificate and an AIES Challenge Coin was General Manager and Director of Risk Frontiers Andrew Gissing, who gave an excellent presentation entitled 'The Creation of Catastrophe Risk and the Reimagination of Disaster Management'. Mr Gissing's presentation was well received by members.

Details of the AGM are contained in the AIES NSW News Sheet on page 10 of the journal.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations imposed by governments in the past two years, various lockdowns



*AIES National Board of Directors. (L-R) Grant Coulton-Smith (Victoria), Stephen Jenkins (Immediate Past President), Jim Pullin (Company Secretary), Rachael Hunter (South Australia), Jenny Crump (Treasurer), Christine Miller (ACT), Doug Caulfield (Victoria), Michael Young (Queensland), Robert Maul (National President), David Parsons (NSW), Ron Jones (Tasmania).*

and difficulties facing our *National Emergency Response Journal* publisher to print hard copies, the Board agreed to producing electronic copies emailed to members. Those who do not have access to the internet were mailed printed copies.

This will continue in future. Please contact our National Treasurer (contact details at the back) if you need a printed copy.

Our State Division committees will continue to arrange for a series of webinars this year, which will be conducted by well-known and credentialed speakers from a variety of Australian Emergency Management entities. Details of those webinars will be advised to members by newsletters prepared by each committee and circulated to members by newsletters or published in this journal.

Please follow AIES stories, news and events on LinkedIn and Facebook and join in discussions and share our posts.

Members will recall that last year the Board sought input from members



*Award recipients at the 2022 AIES AGM. (L-R) Sven Nilsson (Commendation), Dwight Robinson (Commendation), Robert Maul (National President), Jim Pullin (Company Secretary), Luke Freeman (NSW Vice President) and David Parsons (NSW President).*

regarding whether there was a need to revise the Vision and Mission statements for the Institute with a view to making them more contemporary. As a result of a year-long review and strategy paper, the Board has agreed on final versions of a Vision and Mission statement.

The agreed statements, along with our objectives, will be published in full in the next edition of the journal.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

"Australasian communities served by progressive emergency and allied services and emergency management practitioners."



Award recipients at the 2022 AIES AGM. (L-R) Dwight Robinson, Sven Nilsson (FAIES), Graham Tomkinson (FAIES), Ron Jones (LFAIES), Samuel Corby, James Logan and Company Secretary Jim Pullin (FAIES).



Andrew Gissing, guest lecturer, addressing members of the AIES and other emergency management operatives at 2022 AIES AGM in Sydney.

### MISSION STATEMENT (STATEMENT OF PURPOSE)

"Firstly, to provide Australasian emergency services and emergency management practitioners with premium opportunities to interact, network, exchange ideas and recognise their professionalism."

"Secondly, to provide Australasian emergency services and emergency management practitioners with a voice to advocate and contribute to the development of their industries' professional practices."

The National Board looks forward to any comments members may

wish to make in response to the foregoing revised statements.

As agreed at the Annual Meeting, the National Directors' main attention in the next 12 months will be directed to focused recruitment programs, webinars and forward planning on webinar content, holding discussion forums and seeking further MOU opportunities with kindred emergency management agencies in Australasia.

Lastly, but not least, our members are reminded that there are several emergency management training courses available for members to attend in the next six months throughout Australia, both in country and city areas, at no cost to them except transport costs.

May I suggest that if any of our members are interested in attending these courses that they contact their respective Division Presidents and Secretaries to obtain details of the dates and venues of these activities. ●



# THE ADF IS NOT THE ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION

By Gill Savage

*This article was published on The Strategist website  
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The Australian Government announced [on Monday] that 1,700 Australian Defence Force personnel will be deployed to support the aged care sector. The intent is to provide immediate assistance with managing COVID-19 outbreaks and alleviating staffing shortages in residential care facilities. While Defence nurses will be deployed to work in medical care, other personnel will screen entrants to facilities, provide companionship and deliver meals to residents, and perform other non-direct care functions to 'take the pressure off qualified aged care workers and medical staff.

This announcement comes after many years of concern about the level of care the elderly receive in aged care facilities.

COVID has exacerbated those concerns and many others, but how can the ADF be the only answer we have to every national emergency question? And what do we risk losing by continuing to utilise well-trained and professional ADF personnel for seemingly anything other than what they are trained for?

The visible crises in the healthcare, aged care and education sectors, to name just a few, have been decades in the making. Our supply-chain deficiencies and sovereignty challenges have intensified during COVID, but they have been exacerbated by short-term thinking and poor decisions long ago.

ADF personnel are being pulled in all directions—carrying bags at airports, doorknocking in Sydney's west during COVID outbreaks and in Canberra's

southern suburbs during bushfires, running the vaccination rollout, and now cooking and cleaning in aged care facilities. The impact of this on ADF personnel in the long term isn't well understood, but the possibility exists that it will harm the sense of purpose that many ADF members hold dear.

The implications for ADF retention and recruitment are worrying. While the separation rate for the permanent force at 30 June 2021 was 9.5% and is consistent with the previous four-year average, it remains to be seen whether there will be an increase in separations and a widening gap in recruitment.

The Australian community has a deep respect for the ADF. But we won't do the ADF any favours if we continue to expose them to situations outside their

training or expertise. And we risk the emergence of not so much a police state, but one excessively dependent on the military.

We've failed to listen and respond to the concerns raised by experts in other sectors. There appears to be a return to the lack of confidence in our specialists that was prevalent in pre-COVID times. The many comparisons in recent weeks between the wages earned by those working in the aged care sector and the earnings of those in retail and other (better paid) sectors provide tangible evidence of what the nation values. It's the same debate that occurs when we consider the contribution of teachers, nurses and childcare workers. Introducing a differently trained, differently remunerated workforce into a poorly paid, chronically stretched and exhausted workplace will create other problems no matter how good the intentions.

The ADF, state emergency services, volunteer fire services and any number of other organisations, including the Red Cross and St John Ambulance,

all know that a surge workforce needs to be trained and able to contribute effectively prior to an emergency arising. Such training is often provided over long periods to develop the instinctive responses needed in times of emergency. Failure to provide appropriate training not only results in the surge workforce being ineffective but it also has the potential to put others in harm's way.

Applying a band-aid to problems created over a long period that have been aggravated by a pandemic establishes the potential for severe flow-on impacts.

But that's the crux of this crisis and those in other sectors. If you accept the need to pre-train a surge workforce, then you're accepting that there is a problem in that sector. In the case of aged care, family members and community organisations (which already visit these facilities) are better placed than strangers to assist the elderly. The most vulnerable in our community need to be comforted by people they know.

COVID has highlighted many areas that need more attention, better decision-making, and longer-term thinking. At some point soon we need to extract ourselves from a situation where we lurch from one crisis to another with a short-term fix in hand, and act for the long term.

I have no doubt the ADF personnel will do what they can to assist the aged care sector. They will apply the highest level of professionalism and dedication. But we need to stop expecting them to fill every gap created by decisions that are letting the country down. ●

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gill Savage is a senior fellow with ASPI's Northern Australia Strategic Policy Centre and deputy director of ASPI's Professional Development Centre.

## Living with PTSD? We Can Help



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# POLICE DISTRIBUTE BOOKS TO TRAUMATISED CHILDREN

Police in Queensland's Far North are working with libraries to collect and distribute books to children involved in traumatic events, providing them with a welcome and healthy distraction during a time of crisis.

## Queensland Police

*myPolice Queensland Police News*

**B**ackseat Books is an initiative led by Senior Sergeant Marty Ots, and is now being rolled out throughout the Far North policing district after being trialled in regional towns including Mareeba, Atherton and Yarrabah from 2020.

Senior Sergeant Ots said that providing children with a book while they are in the back seat of a police vehicle allows the children to redirect their attention and reduce the lasting impacts of trauma.

"Unfortunately, children can bear witness to confronting and challenging situations that can leave them quite distressed," Senior Sergeant Ots said.

"Through this program, our aim is to have a range of books in the back seat of police vehicles that can be distributed

to a child in crisis, providing a welcome distraction and calming the child."

Acting Chief Superintendent Chris Hodgman said the initiative helps improve relationships between young people and police.

"Research indicates that children exposed to multiple adverse experiences are more likely to lead a dysfunctional lifestyle, and be more susceptible to getting into trouble with police as they got older," Acting Chief Superintendent Hodgman said.

"Backseat Books is designed to provide a safe space for children to escape from their crisis."

The books have been collected over the past six months, donated by local councils and State Library of Queensland, who donated 60 boxes of books to the program.

State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM said the program introduced children to a constructive distraction and fostered a love of reading in young people.

"Stories and storytelling are the heart of what we do at State Library of Queensland," Ms McDonald said.

"We understand the importance of books in helping to transport children to magical, happier places.

"State Library is proud to support the Backseat Books initiative and its role in helping children in stressful and traumatic situations.

"We hope the books will not only provide comfort in times of trouble but also nurture a lifelong love of reading and knowledge." ●

# NATIONAL AGM AND NSW DINNER MEETING

There were many highlights at the AIES AGM, and the NSW Division Dinner, with the following awards presented to AIES members.

## NATIONAL COMMENDATION AWARDS

**Sven Nilsson** and **Dwight Robinson** received National Commendation Awards for their roles as Health Disaster Managers.



*National Commendation Awardees: Sven Nilsson FAIES and Dwight Robinson.*

### ABOUT SVEN NILSSON

Sven has worked long hours every day with minimal days off. His commitment to his role has been exceptional and sustained relentlessly. Achievements in his role as Disaster Manager for south-east Sydney Local Health District include:

- Responsible for developing emergency plans, conducting training and exercises for the Area Health Service covering 900,000 people
  - Tasks in the pandemic included establishing community screening clinics, mass vaccination centres and vaccination sites for vulnerable groups, liaising with emergency management districts, and supporting hotel quarantine, airport arrivals screening and specialist accommodation.
- Sven is also a member of St John.

### ABOUT DWIGHT ROBINSON

Dwight has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic.

Achievements in his role as Health Disaster Manager for Liverpool Hospital

– one of the State's major trauma centres – include:

- Disaster planning, training and exercising
- Part of a team treating thousands of COVID-19 patients

Dwight worked in the hospital's EOC, south-west Region Emergency Management District as Health Liaison Officer, NSW Health State Control Centre as well as additional shifts as an Intensive Care Unit nurse. Dwight is also a member of the Blue Mountains State



*National Secretary Jim Pullin FAIES with National Commendation Awardees Samuel Corby and James Logan.*

Emergency Service.

**Benjamin Pickup, Samuel Corby, James Logan** from the NSW State Emergency Services (NSW SES) received awards for their service in the Australian Task Force deployed to support Canada in wildfires in 2021.

### FELLOW STATUS

AIES members Craig Ronan and Graham Tomkinson were elevated to Fellow status for their long-term commitment to the Institute, and their communities.

### ABOUT CRAIG RONAN

- Member of the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) as both a volunteer and paid staff for over

34 years, currently Coordinator of Hazard Planning for Western and Southern zones.

- Registered Level 2 Incident Controller and Planning Officer through the Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme supported by AFAC.
- Awarded the Emergency Services Medal in the 2007 Australia Day Honours List for distinguished service to the NSW SES and the community.
- Member of the Rotary Club of Bathurst Daybreak for more than 11 years. President of the Club twice.
- A Paul Harris Fellow and a member of the Rotary District Environment Team for the Rotary District for D9705.
- NSW Justice of the Peace.
- Life member of the NSW SES Volunteers Association.

### ABOUT GRAHAM TOMKINSON

- Joined the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) and Civil Defence Organisation in 1968.
- Established the Bankstown Unit of NSW SES and became the Local Controller in 1977.
- Served 54 years with the NSW SES and received Commissioners Commendation, A Unit Citation and Life Membership awards.
- Served as a Regional Emergency Management Officer (1990-2020). During this time attended the Emergency Management Australia Institute as a visiting lecturer and Assistant Course Manager, seconded to NSW Police Force (NSWPF) Emergency Management Unit to develop/review NSW state level policy plans and emergency management (EM) training, provided advice and mentoring to many NSWPF senior officers in EM response, and managed many significant EM response operations over 30 years.



- Assisted with the introduction of the UK-based Major Incident Medical Management System training to NSW Health and became one of the only non-medically trained accredited instructors.
- Awarded Pride of Australia Medal in 2009.
- NSW Justice of the Peace.
- Serves on Community Safety Committee, Floodplain Management Committee, and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee.

### 40-YEAR LONG SERVICE AWARD

National Secretary Jim Pullin FAIES and Graham Tomkinson FAIES were both awarded their 40-year Long Service Award membership certificates.

We thank Crisis Management Australia for being our sponsor and significantly reducing our meal costs.

In a few months we will call for nominations for awards in 2023. Please start thinking about members and non-members as well as organisations who should be recognised. ●



National President Bob Maul LFAIES with 40-year award recipients Jim Pullin FAIES and Graham Tomkinson FAIES.



Awardees: Dwight Robinson, Sven Nilsson FAIES, Graham Tomkinson FAIES, Ron Jones (Tasmania), Samuel Corby, James Logan and Jim Pullin FAIES (National Secretary)

# DATES & EVENTS



## VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM APPLICATIONS OPEN

This program equips volunteers from community organisations, not-for-profits, disaster relief organisations and local government within the emergency management sector with the skills and confidence to grow as leaders. The AIES has at least one vacancy on each course. Contact David Parsons on 0418 273 917 to apply.

Location	Program date	Applications close
Armidale, NSW	9-11 September 2022	12 August 2022
Shepparton, VIC	14-16 October 2022	16 September 2022
Launceston, TAS	28-30 October 2022	23 September 2022

Visit the website for more: <https://www.aidr.org.au/programs/volunteer-leadership-program/>

## INTRODUCTION TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT – FREE COURSE

Massey University's Introduction to Emergency Management short course has been updated and relaunched on a new platform. Participants progress at their own pace and the course is free. You can receive a Certificate of Achievement after completing a multi-choice exam (small fee).

Visit the website for more: <https://www.networked.ac.nz/course/view.php?id=4>

## AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND DISASTER MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

This 2022 Australia and New Zealand Disaster Management Conference will be held on the Gold Coast from July 23-26.

Visit the website for more: <https://anzdmc.com.au/>

## AUSTRALIAN DISASTER RESILIENCE CONFERENCE

The 2022 Australian Disaster Resilience Conference, themed Resilience in a riskier world – adapting and transforming for the future, will be held in Adelaide on 24-25 August 2022.

Visit the website for more: <https://www.aidr.org.au/programs/australian-disaster-resilience-conference/?locationId=32004>

## AFAC 22 CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

AFAC22 Conference & Exhibition, powered by INTERSCHUTZ, is Australasia's largest and most comprehensive emergency management conference and exhibition. The conference will be held in Adelaide, 23-26 August.

Visit the website for more: <https://www.afaconference.com.au/>

# CELEBRATIONS & AC

VOLUNTEER'S WEEK activities were held between 16 and 22 May by emergency services organisations in celebration of the millions of Australians who give their time to help others in need and during disasters and crisis events. This year's theme – **Better Together**.



**St John Ambulance Victoria** ✓  
16 May

When Jess was unwell and in need of help, Michelle was there by her side until she felt better. Just like many hundreds of St John Ambulance volunteers each week at events and deployments near you, they give up their time without expecting anything in return. And to patients just like Jess, they make the world of difference and change lives. This Volunteer Week, please join us and Jess in thanking a St John Ambulance volunteer.

In 2021 alone, St John volunteers:

- Provided health services at 1,519 events
- Contributed over 104,800 hours of service
- Treated 2,791 people at events
- Supported many COVID responses, including border checkpoints, destination management and COVID testing queues
- 104 volunteers contributed over 11,000 hours in Ambulance Surge Support, either in field driving ambulances, in communications or in triage

We thank you all for the difference you make to your patients, your community and Victoria!



Michelle  
St John Volunteer



**NSW Rural Fire Service** ✓  
18 May

This #NationalVolunteerWeek we want to say thank you to all volunteers across #nsw. Everyday our #nswrfs members work side by side with other volunteer members from our partner agencies to keep our communities safe. #NVW2022 #BetterTogether #waveforvolunteers NSW RFS and SES members during flood operations. – St John Ambulance, FRNSW and RFS members receive letters from school children. – Multi-agency Incident Management Team at Glen Innes during 2019/20 fire season.




**St John NT** ✓  
26 June

Wow! What a weekend! Our volunteers attended so many events this weekend.

Here are some photos from the Darwin Lion's Beercan Regatta at Mindil Beach, the St John NT annual church service at Christ Church Cathedral, Top End Drift Association round 3 at Hidden Valley Raceway and The NT Santos City2Surf Festival.

If you're interested in volunteering with St John NT to be a part of fantastic events like this head over to our website: <https://www.stjohnnt.org.au/volunteer/volunteering>




**Tasmania SES** ✓  
21 May

National Volunteer Week is a chance for all of us to celebrate and recognise the vital work of volunteers and to say thank you. Together, through volunteering, we are changing communities for the better. We are, Better Together.

Meet Heidi King – a dedicated SES Volunteer  
#NVW2022



**NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK** 



# KNOWLEDGEMENTS

NAIDOC WEEK celebrations were held across the country between 3 and 10 July with many emergency services organisations acknowledging First Nations People working in police, ambulance and fire services. This year's theme – **Get up! Stand up! Show up!**



**SA Country Fire Service** ✓  
4 July

Niina Marni, it's National NAIDOC Week! NAIDOC Week is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Alongside our colleagues at SA Metropolitan Fire Service, SA State Emergency Service, and SAFECOM, we were honoured to host Peramangk and Kurna Elder Uncle Ivan Tiwu-Copley OAM JP, who conducted a Welcome to Kurna Land and Smoking Ceremony this morning at Kumatpi Trruku (the Emergency Services Headquarters). On display as part of the celebrations were four emergency services vehicles displaying the artwork of Ngarrindjeri artist Jordan Lovegrove. Keep an eye out for these trucks around Adelaide and if you happen to spot our Morphett Vale Pumper out and about, please tag us! #NAIDOC2022



**Queensland Fire and Emergency Services – QFES** ✓  
7 July

Say 'Yaama' to Bushfire Safety Officer Burra McHughes. Burra recently jetted off to Canada to learn from and share knowledge with their fire service's First Nations officers on cultural burning. #NAIDOCWeek #NAIDOC2022



**NSW Ambulance** ✓  
3 July

This NAIDOC Week 2022, NSW Ambulance pays tribute to our first recorded Aboriginal Ambulance Officer, Leo Watts. Now retired after 3 decades of service, Leo Watts is 82 years young and still an active NSW Ambulance Legacy member. A proud Wiradjuri man, Mr Watts says NAIDOC week is about reflection and growth. "NAIDOC week is a time for remembrance and reminds me that we must continue to educate ourselves so we continue to do better and achieve success in our chosen fields – this is what our old ones fought for." Thank you for your service, Leo. #NSWAmbulance



**Western Australia Police Force** ✓  
4 July

NAIDOC Week ♥♥♥♥  
This week we continue to reflect on the history, culture, achievements and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





# CFS DELIVERS MUCH-NEEDED FIREFIGHTER TRAINING TO APY LANDS COMMUNITIES

CFS staff and volunteer trainers have this month undertaken a 1,600km round-trip journey – the equivalent of driving Adelaide to Melbourne and back – to teach basic firefighting skills to people in the remote communities of the State’s far north.

## SA Country Fire Service

Photos [f](#) APY Lands – Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

The SA Country Fire Service (CFS) has a long-standing history in rural and remote South Australia, including in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. Due to the transient communities of the APY Lands, this basic firefighter training happens more frequently than anywhere else in the State.

Regional Officer Outback Areas, Peter Ikonomopoulos, whose role was created to achieve a greater level of fire safety for outback communities in the pastoral regions of South Australia, said the training is vital.

“It’s amazing working with these communities and seeing how we can incorporate different cultural practices into our training,” he said.

During May of this year, the Outback Rural Team (ORT) conducted three Basic Firefighting Trainings across the APY Lands.

“This year we saw the ORT train 24 new brigade members from communities of Ernabella/Pukatja, Pipalyatjara, Kalka, Amata and Mimili. The newly trained members will now be able to provide support to their home brigades across the APY Lands,” he said.

Trucks and equipment are housed in appropriate community facilities instead of in dedicated stations, and whilst callouts are few and far between, the threat of bushfire is ever-present, particularly due to the increased growth of buffel grass, which is known to burn extremely hot and erratically.

Between 2017 to 2019, the APY Lands were ravaged by large-scale bushfires that threatened several communities and homelands in the region.

Mr Ikonomopoulos said CFS staff and volunteer trainers travel upwards

of 800kms from Port Augusta to deliver the much-needed training.

“The challenge of providing adequate firefighting support to communities in the APY Lands stems from several factors including remoteness, limited effective communications, and difficulty in readily understanding cultural and community needs.

“However, these challenges have not stopped the agency from ensuring the locals can protect the lands they call home,” Mr Ikonomopoulos said.

The CFS first established a presence in the APY Lands in 1987, with the opening of the Mintabie Brigade. Whilst this brigade has since closed due to the closure of the town, the CFS currently has five gazetted brigades across the APY Lands – Pukatja (Ernabella), Mimili, Pip-Kalka (Pipalyatjara & Kalka), Kaltjiti (Fregon) and Amata. ●





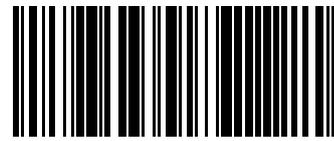
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# RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

A Special Operations Unit workshop, which brought together emergency service workers from different organisations, aimed to develop new and safer ways to extricate patients during vertical rescues.

## NSW Ambulance

[ambulance.nsw.gov.au](http://ambulance.nsw.gov.au)

Patients needing to be rescued from tight spaces, tall buildings and derailed trains were just some of the challenges facing teams at a recent joint agency Vertical Rescue Workshop, which was conducted by the Special Operations Unit (SOU).

Held last month, the SOU simulation – which also featured Critical Care Paramedics from Aeromedical Operations along with fellow rescue instructors from Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) and Police Rescue – aimed to develop new and safer ways to extricate patients from complex, high-risk situations.

These situations included moving patients down through buildings, across a street, inside a lift shaft and up through an overturned train carriage in low light conditions. The teams worked extremely well as they brought different experiences together to coordinate the safe access, treatment and movement of patients through these environments.

This collaboration between the services was a highlight for all involved, with rescue instructor A/Training Officer Andrew Crew discussing the benefits of this training.

"It was invaluable to learn more about how other services tackle the same vertical rescue situation with some different equipment to us," he said.

"Over the last two days I've learnt a lot from everyone's experiences."

While technical ability was put to the test, so were other key skills required on these jobs. Team communication, regular dynamic risk assessments and logistics played an important role in ensuring teams functioned safely and effectively, despite many of the individuals not having worked with each other previously.



The FRNSW Emergency Services Academy at Orchard Hills played host to the training and provided a range of environments to test the teams in realistic conditions. This included the use of the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) area, multi-storey training building and streetscape to practise different techniques for anchoring, artificial high directional frames and stretcher set-ups.

Bill Proctor, from Safety Access and Rescue, led the workshop and explained one of the key outcomes from the training.

"We're trying to give rescue officers the ability to look at the solution to a vertical rescue problem first, then work backwards to build what's required with the tools they have," he said.

"I've been really impressed with some of the innovative solutions the teams have developed."

Over the past three years NSW Ambulance has invested in updated vertical rescue equipment including new high directional frames, safety devices and hardware that has increased the safety for patients and staff during these operations.

"This investment, along with the program to deliver new state-of-the-art rescue trucks and a strong response to the recent rescue recruitment campaign, reflects an exciting time in the unit," Associate Director Counter Terrorism & Emergency Management, Richard Cohen, said. ●



# GOVERNMENTS LOVE TO TALK ABOUT 'SHARED RESPONSIBILITY' IN A DISASTER – BUT DOES ANYONE KNOW WHAT IT MEANS?

The devastating floods in Queensland and New South Wales have taken everyone by surprise.



Rowena **Maguire**

*Associate professor,  
Law School, Queensland  
University of Technology*



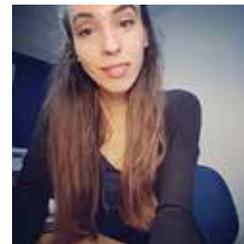
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Published:

The Conversation, 21 March





People have been left to fend for themselves while bickering governments scrambled to provide a coordinated and adequate disaster response.

The intensity of the rainfall may not have been possible to predict, but having clear roles for governments, emergency services, the military, the charity sector, volunteers and individuals is possible – and absolutely necessary.

## OUR RESEARCH

In upcoming research, we look at disaster risk reduction policies at the international, federal, state, regional and local government levels. We found all these policies refer to the principle of “shared responsibility” – yet none adequately defines what this means.

The research involved a detailed analysis across 12 disaster policies and pieces of legislation to identify how vulnerable populations were protected.

These included the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework and the Australian Emergency Management Arrangements.

We found these documents repeat terms such as “resilience” and “shared responsibility” without clearly

defining the meaning or process for implementation. And they fail to specify who is responsible for increasing “resilience”.

## A MOVE TOWARDS INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

During the 1990s, there was a growing sense the public had become too reliant upon emergency services and needed to develop their own disaster management capacity.

A 2004 Council of Australian Governments report on bushfire management emphasised the idea of “shared responsibility”. From 2011, the principle of shared responsibility was embedded across federal and state disaster policies to signal that individuals and households were expected to develop their own disaster resilience.

Academics understand “shared responsibility” to be about distributing obligations among different groups or sectors. But what sounds reasonable in theory becomes messy and unworkable in the midst of a crisis.

Studies have shown shared responsibility actually means “diffused responsibility,” making it more difficult to determine responsibility – and accountability.

Indeed, our research was unable to determine who was actually responsible for helping vulnerable flood communities prepare for and respond to disasters. There seemed to be an assumption that volunteers and the charity sector would mobilise as needed.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

For example, the Federal Government’s Australian Emergency Management Arrangements aim to establish “disaster resilient” communities.

These guidelines explain the roles of federal, state and local governments and households. But the largest portion of responsibility lies with individuals. For example,

*It is the role and responsibility of families and individuals to attain the highest degree of physical and financial self-reliance – before, during and after an emergency.*

These arrangements suggest government and the volunteer/charity sector do not have the ability or the responsibility to fully offset the economic, social, cultural and human losses incurred during a disaster.

They also assume the individuals are responsible for adequate property and personal insurance. This, of course, is highly problematic as insurance premiums escalate and become unaffordable and some regions become uninsurable.

### **VOLUNTEERS, CHARITIES AND RESOURCES**

All the legislation we examined says managing and coordinating volunteers is a local government job.

But this assumes volunteers and charities will have adequate resourcing, skills and capacity to handle disaster recovery. The recent floods have shown much of the volunteer activities are largely unregulated, with people having to take matters into their own hands.

This is becoming more common as structured programs like those run through charities and state emergency services struggle to retain volunteers.

Some of these unregulated volunteers have literally saved lives. But some were in need of help themselves or took advantage of the situation to loot resources from flood victims.

### **BLAME GAMES**

Shared responsibility is also highly susceptible to politicisation. We have seen this play out since the flood disaster hit, with continued arguments between state and federal governments.

Following criticism over the speed and scale of Federal assistance, former Prime Minister Scott Morrison argued

*States obviously respond to emergencies. They run the SES [State Emergency Service], they run the police, they run the hospitals.*

Former Assistant Treasurer Michael Sukkar also claimed the Federal government had to wait for state premiers to declare an emergency and request federal help before it could send the military.

This is despite legislation which gives the federal government power to declare an emergency unilaterally. (Incidentally, this law was introduced following a recommendation from the Bushfires Royal Commission, following confusion over responsibility for emergency declarations.)

At the local level, disagreements have also erupted between opposing members of local government as to



*A local resident, walking through their flood-affected belongings in Ipswich. Darren England/AAP*



*Flood victims are facing many months of clean-up. Jono Searle/AAP*

the adequacy of drainage infrastructure, emergency alerts and volunteer coordination.

These politically-driven disagreements are enabled by the ambiguity of shared responsibility, and ultimately undermine the effectiveness of disaster response.

### **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN INSTEAD**

Clearly we need a better understanding of what "shared responsibility" actually means. Questions we need to answer include:

- Who makes the decision over the allocation of tasks at each stage of the disaster?

- Have all relevant groups and people been included in agreeing upon this allocation?
- Have duties been communicated and understood?
- Have allowances been made for unexpected situations?

Until we have these answers, the trauma of natural disasters will be compounded by confusion, inaction, political blame games and a lack of resources. And it will be individuals and vulnerable communities left to pick up the pieces. ●

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## THE INSTITUTE'S OBJECTIVES

- To raise the status and advance the interests of the profession of emergency management and counter-disaster services administration.
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- To provide opportunities for association among members and students to promote and protect their mutual interest.
- To facilitate full interchange of concepts and techniques amongst members.
- To bring to the notice of the public such matters that are deemed to be important for safety and protection of the community and to promote research and development of emergency services generally.
- To establish a national organisation to foster international co-operation in counter-disaster services administration.

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- 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.
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