



Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry Newsletter

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*Suffering is not what destroys people, rather "suffering without meaning".
(Victor Frankl)*

A Bi Monthly Newsletter

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Policy Position

The VCC EM reference group is addressing a query from a volunteer about adequate reimbursement for costs associated with volunteering.

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DPC Green Paper

The Dept. of Premier and Cabinet has just released a 'Green Paper' on Emergency Management

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Exercises 2011

VCC EM participated in a number of exercises across the State since September 2011

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Further Impressions

Craig will continue to share his experience coming into the Assistant State Coordinators role.

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Research

Stuart shares his understanding on recent research

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Coordinators Conference 2011

On October 26th, the VCC EM program held its annual Coordinators Conference. Twenty five coordinators attended the day where important information about the program was delivered.

The day began with an exercise. Coordinators were not briefed prior to arriving at conference that an exercise would be taking place. This was an opportunity for Coordinators to be exposed to the Australasian Integrated Incident Management System (AIIMS). This system has four main management functions in emergencies and disasters, Incident Controller, Planning, Operations and Logistics.

The exercise was code named 'Operation Leviathan' and involved a main CBD infrastructure incident where hundreds of people were affected.

This was not a test of skill or ability, given most Coordinators had not experienced this level of exercising. It was a way of exposing



Logistics Team supplying volunteers with resources in Operation Leviathan

the Coordinators to what is required to manage a large scale multi agency event. Therefore, helping them to understand the VCC EM role in emergencies and some of the challenges that could be faced when trying to coordinate volunteers within the Local Government and State arrangements.

This led the introduction of the new Handbook for Regional and Area Coordinators. The Handbook, which incorporates Policy, Standard Operating Procedures, Code of Conduct and proforma's needed for deployment. This

Handbook will ensure a consistent approach by VCC Coordinators across the State when responding to events, and remove lengthy delays in responding due to a lack of information and process.

This will mean that some Coordinators will have to re learn some new ways of doing things, but will ultimately save time and energy by not having to re invent the wheel each time volunteers are called upon to support affected individuals and communities.

Please be safe over the Christmas
New Year period.





Policy Position

There has been recent discussion at the VCC EM Reference Group regarding the policy on the reimbursement of expenses to volunteers. This issue was brought to our attention by a volunteer who felt that the current policy does not reflect the real costs associated with volunteering.

The current policy in relation to fuel costs states that volunteers will be covered for actual expenses incurred on lodgment of receipt, NOT mileage.

In relation to accommodation, this will be provided by VCC if volunteers are rostered for more than one day and travel distance home is too great. Billeting will be explored before accommodation in caravan parks and motels.

In relation to meals, if volunteers are rostered for more than a single day, reimbursement will be provided for up to a maximum of \$50 per day.

These reimbursements can ONLY occur IF internal VCC funds or monies from Local Governments are available. It cannot be automatically assumed it will be made available.

The VCC EM program is funded for salaries only and NOT Operational costs. The current Relief Handbook provides for VCC EM and other agencies to invoice Local Government for reimbursement of some operational costs. Local Government then has to apply to the Federal Government under the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). This can take months to arrive. Some Municipalities are still waiting on money from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires.

DPC Green Paper

The VCC EM submitted a response to the Department of Premier and Cabinets Green paper on Emergency Management in Victoria.

The Executive Summary of the VCC response states:

1. In large scale emergency and disaster events in Victoria, a model similar to VBRRRA which reflects the whole sector, not just whole of government, be established to support relief and recovery at all levels.
2. Within the Response process, the inclusion of Health & Human Services Emergency Management Branch at the earliest stage of an event is essential to ensure Relief and Recovery issues are addressed.
3. The current Command and Control framework be developed to engage community at the earliest stage of an event. Whilst the Emergency Management team structure is designed to pick up on community matters, it is limited to assisting with combatting the event. Broader scope needs to be applied.
4. Financing of relief and recovery long term including capacity building and maintenance in expectation of events.
5. Clarification on triggers and scale up processes from Municipal to State based arrangements. careful integration of local and Statewide arrangements.
6. Greater recognition of emotional spiritual care from a multifaith perspective.



Exercises

The VCC EM has been involved in a number of simulated exercises with Local Government and NGO's since September 2011. Barwon South West had a mock evacuation exercise with over 150 participants from schools and the community taking part. Wendy Hudson and Terry Mervin attended and indicated it was an exercise well worth experiencing. Eastern Region ran 2 exercises to test Emergency Relief Centre arrangements. Stuart attended the centre in Nillumbik Shire. In the morning session, no provision was made for Personal Support a part from registration (NRIS) and Government Grant Scheme (DHS). This was addressed in the afternoon session when it was raised by VCC EM and others, and the PM session was much more efficient and effective!! An interesting observation that Personal Support was not considered in the first place!!!

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE IN YOUR CONGREGATION TO TAKE UP TRAINING AND BE A PART OF THIS VITAL MINISTRY TO THE COMMUNITY!!!

Call 9650 4511 for further details.

The VCC EM staff would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year



Training & Development

The 2012 Training Schedule has been released.

To view training dates and register, please go online at www.vccem.org.au and go to Training page. There you will find these dates and the registration process.

The training program for 2011 has been a huge undertaking.

Since August 2011, the VCC EM program has trained 252 volunteers. We are seeing more and more people nominating for training for the first time.

It is also good to see more volunteers coming back to re train.

It is recommended that people refresh their training every two to three years. Many volunteers have not had the opportunity to respond to an emergency or disaster and therefore not had to use their training. It is also true that disaster information develops over time and the VCC EM is always updating and adding new material to the training package.

Contact Craig Campbell regarding training options and venues.

9650 4511

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Further Impressions - Craig Campbell

Advent is the Christian season of anticipation, waiting, readiness. From my earliest days with VCC EM it was clear how important are the volunteers who make themselves ready to respond even though they may not be called for a number of years.

We need each of the 1500 + volunteers on our database. Not all will be called out this year, and many will serve for several years between callouts. Each person is needed though so that we have capacity to serve anywhere in the State, at any time.

And to be ready each volunteer cultivates the knowledge, skills and attitudes required so that we make a difference for good, and certainly "do no harm" when we are called upon.

A great deal has been happening in recent months to build our readiness:

- The August Coordinators Conference is reported elsewhere in this newsletter;
- The newly published Handbook will greatly assist our deployment effectiveness, and it is already proving valuable in
- Visits to various Regions and Areas of Victoria. These visits are intended to encourage and assist Coordinators, to promote recruitment and training, and to strengthen connection to Local Government and to DHS emergency planning and recovery;
- We were pleasantly surprised to total those attending training over the last three months at more than 250 people!
- The launch of the new website www.vccem.org.au has already produced a healthy number of registrations for training in 2012, and is growing awareness and readiness in many other ways;
- Dropbox is another 'readiness' tool for Coordinators, making available a large quantity of tools and

resources wherever computers can be accessed;

- Branded clothing that builds our identity and availability is arriving soon, and will be made available through our Coordinators for deployments;

Of course I need to be ready too – carrying my Handbook and information, my ID card and branded clothing. Most of all being in the headspace, or is it 'heartspace', to come alongside another person and make a difference for good.

Craig Campbell, D Min Studies.

THE VCC EM WEBSITE IS NOW LIVE!!!!!!

WWW.VCCEM.ORG.AU



Incident Activity Coordinators

Incident Activity Coordinators begin training for the fire season in their new role.

The VCC EM is developing a model to complement the existing structure and systems in times of emergency and disaster.

Since the 2010/11 Victorian Flood Crisis response by the VCC EM, there has been a growing awareness and expectation by Local and State Government as to the capacity of the VCC EM.

The Incident Activity Coordinators (IAC) will be an addition to Regional and Area Coordinators. Their role will cover; 1. initial response where local capacity issues exist, or where Regional and Area Coordinators need back up to start a deployment until local volunteers can respond, and 2. for long term outreach campaigns where an IAC can coordinate a response to Municipal requests for Outreach and where local Regional or Area Coordinators are unable to commit to the long term deployment.

The IAC's will utilise local volunteers where possible and have access to a pre determined **Rapid Response Team** who can be deployed anywhere in the State at anytime.

The VCC EM is currently recruiting Rapid Response Team members for the fire season.

Part of the training day included a LIVE test of a simulated exercise. This provided exposure and experience for the IAC's and also gave some indication as to strengths and challenges of current systems.

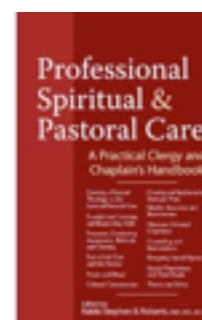
A number of learnings came out of the exercise both for the IAC's and also the State office in relation to readiness for future events.

Learnings from Exercise

1. Regional & Area Coordinators were willing to support the campaign of testing systems
2. Confirmation of capacity for rapid response and indicates that we can build on this capacity
3. Benefits of the newly released Handbook for those who had it available
4. The current system works well
5. Confirmation that this Ministry always sits in the background of every day living, and not just when the sky turns grey or black.
6. The need to continue to test systems as part of ongoing risk management strategies.

Research

New research is emerging related to the benefits of providing an holistic broad based psycho-spiritual care framework for disaster trauma affected individuals and communities



Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care 2012

The above book, not yet released, is the second edited by Rabbi Stephen Roberts. I have just placed an order for this book and will be able to speak to the contents in later newsletters.

In the last newsletter, we discussed the need for Emotional Spiritual Care in disaster settings and outlined evidence in research for this.

To build on this evidence and understanding, Peres et al, 2007 indicates that "some clinical and neuroimaging findings suggest that posttraumatic stress disorder patients experience difficulty in synthesizing the traumatic experience in a comprehensive narrative.....personal quest to understand ultimate questions about life, meaning and relationships with the sacred or transcendent take place". Where an affected person can be provided with safe physical and emotional space to dialogue about their experience, and where in time HOPE is a part of that conversation, there is a greater health outcome.

Sitting with an affected person, listening intently to their story and (in time) supporting them in the re appraisal and re interpreting of their worldview is profoundly helpful in addressing trauma. This transcendent meaning making and discovery of new experiences assists in maintaining a meaningful view of life despite the event (Vis 2008)

TBC