



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 requirement to have both a Working With Children's Checks and Police checks continues to frustrate some volunteers .*

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**Multi-faith response to Disaster in Victoria**

*The appointment of a Multi-faith project officer (Martin West) will assist to respond cross culturally*

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**Exercises & Rapid Response Teams 2012**

*VCC EM will increase response capacity through the development of a specialised Rapid Response Team which can respond quickly across the State*

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**Training & Development**



*2012 training plan*  
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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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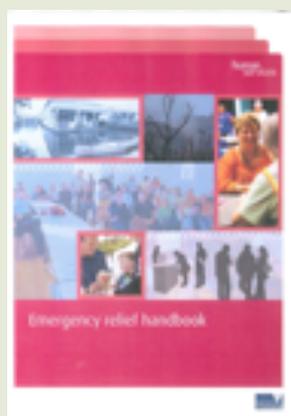


## Increased representation in Government policy

In 2011, the VCC Emergencies Ministry program took part in the review of the Emergency Relief Handbook.

The Department of Health & Human Services Emergency Management Branch in partnership with the Australian Red Cross (Victoria) re worked the Emergency Relief Handbook in consultation with other relief agencies.

The VCC Emergencies Ministry successfully negotiated the inclusion of Emotional Spiritual Care (ESC) into the Victorian Relief & Recovery arrangements.



**Emergency Relief Handbook 2011**

The statement on ESC included in the 2011 review states:

“Emotional Spiritual Care roles are provided by qualified and experienced faith based volunteers, and are concerned with the ultimate search for meaning in times of crisis.

Emotional spiritual care is inclusive of psychological first aid principles and skills. It utilises psychological, spiritual

and theological resources to aid persons in psychological and /or spiritual distress while taking careful account of cultural faith and diversity.

In the early stages of an emergency, emotional spiritual care roles can include:

- intentional creation of safe and calm spaces to aid in the emotional and spiritual processing of the event.
- grief and loss support
- support with religious and spiritual needs.”

This is the first time Emotional Spiritual Care has been named and defined in this way in Victorian Government documentation pertaining to relief and recovery.

To this end, the Emergency Management Manual of Victoria (EMMV) has been adjusted to more accurately reflect the role of the faith community in disaster relief and recovery.



## Policy Position

There is much discussion around Working With Children's Checks (WWCC) and Police Checks. Many volunteers ask the question: "Why do we have to have two checks?"

In 2010, I wrote to the Department of Health & Human Services Emergency Management Branch Director, Carmel Flynn asking for exemption from the Police Check if people have a valid WWCC.

Carmel wrote back explaining that volunteers will need to have both checks completed as they ask for slightly different information when applied for.

This is a requirement in the contractual arrangements with DHHS.

Volunteers with a valid Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) accreditation are exempt from obtaining a WWCC.

At this stage the VCC Emergencies Ministry program is seeking to be registered to conduct these checks through Crimtrac. This would give is greater flexibility in applying for and obtaining information regarding Police Checks and WWCC.

Therefore, at this stage all volunteers will need to have a valid Police Check and WWCC (apart from VIT holders).

## Multicultural response to disasters

The VCC EM was successful in obtaining a grant from the Department of Justice to explore a multi-cultural and multi-faith response to disasters in Victoria.

Martin West has been appointed to the position and comes with a wealth of experience, both personally and professionally in working with CALD communities. Martin worked with the Department of Immigration on relocation of refugee's in rural Victoria. He has also worked with the Department of Justice supporting CALD communities (among others) in obtaining Working With Children's Checks. He has married into the Karen community and spent time working in Burma.

There are many cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) Christian communities within Victoria (even culturally specific congregations).

This position will explore ways of engaging these communities more effectively in responding to emergencies.

## Exercises / Rapid Response Teams

Further exercising was conducted in January 2012. We now have 5 Incident Activity Coordinators trained and in place ready to respond and support affected communities in absence of local arrangements.

In the first half of 2012, the VCC EM will be looking to implement a number of Rapid Response Teams who can be deployed across the State with short notice.

**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**

**[www.vccem.org.au/training](http://www.vccem.org.au/training)**

**DONATE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!!**  
 If you would like to support the VCC Emergencies Ministry in making a meaningful difference in people's lives affected by disaster  
 Go to our website and donate or send cheques to VCC Emergencies Ministry to Level 4, 306 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000





## Training & Development

The 2012 Training Schedule has been released.

**To view training dates and register, please go online at [www.vccem.org.au](http://www.vccem.org.au) and go to Training page. There you will find these dates and the registration process.**

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

[ccampbell@vccem.org.au](mailto:ccampbell@vccem.org.au)

## FURTHER IMPRESSIONS

*“There are significant shortcomings in Victoria’s emergency management arrangements”*

This lead statement in The University of Melbourne supplement in The Age, 13 Feb 2012 quotes former state Police Commissioner Neil Comrie. The supplement introduces the Natural Disaster Management Research Initiative (NDMRI), headed by Professor Peter Taylor in a

## Further Impressions - Craig Campbell

partnership with IBM Research and Development.

This quote and its context alerts us to a number of crucial issues:

1. There is a widespread and well-informed sense that we must do better as a state in preparation for, response to, and recovery from disasters.
2. Disaster preparation, response and recovery are drawing focussed attention from a surprising range of institutions and people.
3. The somewhat separate elements of preparation, response and recovery are being drawn together as part of a more holistic approach. *“By linking planning, exercise, actual disaster management and recovery into a coherent system, we will be able to provide more resilient systems and services to society, government and business,”* says Dr Juerg von Kaenel of IBM in the same article.

What might this mean for VCC Emergencies Ministry?

The VCC EM will have opportunity through volunteers who have been deployed in recent years to inform one particular research project – The Victorian Disaster Mental Health Workforce

Capacity Survey. By this means the importance and the resources of the faith communities of Victoria can be built into the information gathered.

Also we are part of a wider system that knows more effective effort is needed in the face of growing frequency and intensity of natural and human induced disasters. VCC EM is not exempt from this on-going challenge, even as we

celebrate substantial development many dimensions. In particular we must have Area Coordinators in each our Local Government Areas who are fully part of the LGA emergency recovery planning arrangements. Without this involvement we are far less likely to be activated; likewise for our Regional Coordinators in Regional DHS arrangements.

If we the faith communities of Victoria cannot operate in this collaborative and coordinated manner we will be moved aside, squeezed out, excluded.

As we find the useful and appropriate language for the work that we do, the official documents and the research bodies are willing to include it. An example of this is the inclusion of the title *Emotional Spiritual Care* in the 2011-2012 version of the DHS Emergency Relief Handbook. A further example is the opportunity we have had to comment on the NDMRI.

A final issue emerges from the increased levels of preparedness that are expected of us. We need volunteers who continue to update their training even when they may not be called out for several years. Even an event on the scale of Black Saturday has only a percentage of our Chaplains and Personal Support volunteers deployed. Deployment will always depend on specific needs in specific locations, circumstances unique to each event. The fact that you have not been called does not indicate that you are not wanted! We will always need multiples of those deployed simply to be available. Such is the nature of disasters.

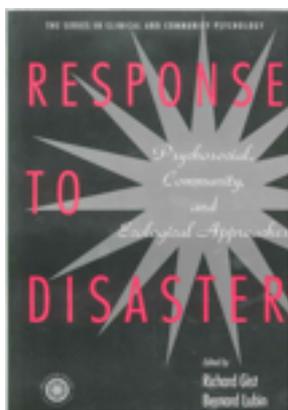
In the meantime, we make ourselves ready. Our website [www.vccem.org.au](http://www.vccem.org.au) lists training opportunities, including excellent events delivered by DHS.

Craig Campbell, D Min Studies.



## 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*



*Response to Disaster - Psychological, Community and Ecological Approaches.*

Chapter 2 titled: The Experience of Disaster : Individuals and Communities Sharing Trauma.

Kanaisty and Norris go about explaining the work of trauma in a shared context. What happens when trauma of a single event is experienced by many people? To explain further, the writers use the ‘Necker Cube’ which identifies that what we focus on or draw our attention to is what is perceived to exist in isolation to other perspectives. In other words, what you look at can often become the totality of your focus. Some would say that trauma is an individual experience only, whilst others state that trauma is both an individual and community experience.

Some key points in the chapter include:

- I. When losses incurred because of stressor(s) surpass the individual level and cause losses for others in the community, the resulting depletion of communal coping resources, may easily reduce the communities actual ability to help and protect its members (p28).
- II. ....disaster victims might be ‘touched’ by the spontaneous generosity of outsiders but their assistance tends to be valued less than assistance received from locals.

- III. Difficulties in providing services to affected communities call for the involvement of the victims and other local residents in the relief efforts.
- IV. The overexposure to emotional disclosure about trauma can be psychologically threatening and emotionally damaging (p44). *This raises the challenge of relief and recovery centre management and the adequate provision of individualised support. Often relief centres are a collection point of people with many and varied affect. Treating all people the same can actually disadvantage some.*
- V. Research shows that sharing traumatic experiences with respectful and supportive others aids people in discovering the meaning of the experience, gaining control over their emotions and rebuilding shattered assumptions about the world (45). *This of course is only the case if the supportive ‘other’ provides an emotional, psychological and spiritual ‘safe’ place in which to have a meaningful conversation. Much of what occurs today in relief and recovery centres are rapid impact assessments, registering of affected people, and data gathering. For people to be truly supported, much more needs to take place.*

## Be Ready - Prepare Early to Leave!

**Do you need help leaving early before a high fire risk day, or know someone who does?**

Leaving early before a bushfire is the best way to ensure your safety – but for some people, it’s not that easy.

People who are frail or elderly, have a physical disability, or have problems thinking clearly or acting quickly under stress may be reliant on others to help them leave early on Severe, Extreme or Code Red fire day.

If this sounds like someone you know - especially someone living alone in an isolated area – then talk to them about how you could help.

Or, if this sounds like you, then ask your family, friends or neighbours to help you plan how to leave early, using a copy of the Red Cross ‘Bushfires: preparing to leave early’ plan. You can fill out the plan online or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line to request a copy.

Discuss the ideas in the plan with family, friends, neighbours and anyone else in your support network. If you need help filling out the plan, ask one of these people or anyone else who could assist, such as a carer.

**For your free copy of the Red Cross ‘Bushfires – preparing to leave early’ plan, go to [cfa.vic.gov.au/redcrossplan](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/redcrossplan) to fill out a plan online or print out a plan to fill in, or call the Victorian Bushfire Information line on 1800 240 667. For people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677.**

1800 240 667  
[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

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**FireReady** Victoria

Making Victoria FireReady: