



Victorian Council of Churches  
**Emergencies Ministry**  
**Newsletter**

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

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue No 10. May 2013

**VCC Response to  
 Victorian Fires**

VCC EM continues to support affected communities in emergencies

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VCC EM has responded to or been placed on stand by for number of events across Victoria.

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## VCC continues to support affected communities and work with local government to support recovery efforts.

VCC Emergencies Ministry has been involved in numerous activities since the last newsletter in February 2013.

Our operations in the fire affected areas continued through to April 28th. Outreach was conducted by volunteers in Southern Grampians Shire and in particular Mirranatwa.

Corangamite Shire requested a small outreach service also.

VCC EM volunteers responded to a number of community meeting which were held after the fires to provide an opportunity for community members to ask combatant and recovery agencies



what supports were available and to clarify why events occurred as they did.

Behind the scenes, there has been a large amount of work being undertaken by state office staff to ensure coordinators are effectively trained and

supported, and to grow the ‘middle management’ part of the program.

More than 150 volunteers have been deployed across 10 different faith communities. I think this is an amazing effort.

As we move into June, outreach activities will begin in the Wellington Shire Gippsland where fires had earlier in the year destroyed many properties. Local volunteers will be deployed with support from elsewhere in the State as the need arises.



## Operations:

Debbie Laphorne

A significant amount of work has occurred in the operations area of the program.

### OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

#### Southern Grampians

Recovery Outreach visiting completed. Waiting on any further needs from MRM. Positive involvement on MEMPC and Recovery Committee by AC

#### South Gippsland

Hallston community. Attendance at 2 community meetings. Positive engagement with MRM

#### Wellington Shire

Completed outreach late March. Shire not funded for any psychosocial recovery. Discussions ongoing with WSC re further work. Good working relationship with WSC EM. Active on MEMPC and RRC

#### Alpine Shire

No Outreach primarily due to financial restriction as in Wellington.

#### Yarra Ranges

Contact from MRM regarding possible support for single incident fire. No resulting deployment but excellent contact with LGA and VCC EM AC and team

### NON OPERATIONAL

#### Emergencies Services Foundation

4 VCC EM team attended this forum, It was a very beneficial opportunity to see and be seen.

Upcoming ESF conference in July. Encouraging participation by as many AC and RCs as possible Cost is \$80 per day registration

#### Collaboration opportunities

Ongoing involvement in planning in collaborative process in North West Metro and Loddon Mallee regions.

#### IAC training

April 29<sup>th</sup> 2013. 20 AC and RC attended IAC training. This represented almost 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of our middle management in the one training

#### Operational forms

Operational forms are being reviewed, amended and updated, in preparation for 2013 – 14 summer

#### Emergency Exercises

We are beginning to see LGA and region exercises on our calendar. It is likely to

be a very busy last half of the year with these happening around the state

#### United Way Volunteer Award

Ballarat Area VCC EEM team has been chosen as a finalist in the 2013 United Way Volunteer awards, in recognition of their work in the recent fires.

### ONGOING TASKS

Advanced training for AC and RC to increase operational readiness

Competency gaps in some areas of the state – Hume, Western

VCC EM involvement in as many EM exercises as possible this year

Continue to identify and develop IAC and Operations Coordinator support roles.

# Training & Development

**Craig Campbell**

**Report 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

## Training Statistics Jan - Apr 2013

Accreditation Training	149
Team Leader Training	12
Coordinator Training Module A	11
Coordinator Training Module B	-
(Incident Activity Coordination)	16
Total persons to date 2013	<b>188</b>

## Team Leader Training

During May Terry Mervin has developed and trialled a new Team Leader training course. Some further testing in June-July will be followed by strategic roll-out across the state. This Team Leader training, along with Coordinator training modules, supports important building of management capacity needed for VCC EM response in large scale events.

## Capabilities Framework

Over recent months a Capabilities Framework has been developed.

The Capabilities Framework is a tool that identifies the skills, knowledge and attributes (collectively called 'capabilities')

that are needed by the people within the VCC EM work setting.

A capability is “an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding used appropriately and effectively...”

This Framework will have many applications. It currently serves as an integrating platform for Coordinator training modules. We will use it as a basis to develop further the Accreditation Training for volunteers. The Framework also underpins specific refresher training packages to be developed over the next twelve months.

## Refresher Training

All volunteers trained more than three years ago are urged to attend refresher training. At this stage refresher training is the current Accreditation Training. (See website: [www.vccem.org.au](http://www.vccem.org.au) select 'Training' menu option, register online). It is important that our capabilities keep pace with the rising expectations of the quality of our service to the Victorian community.

ESTABLISHMENT SUMMARY		
REGIONS		
METROPOLITAN REGIONS	REGIONAL COORDS	AREA COORDS
CBD	1/1	1/1
NORTHERN & WEST	2/3	11/13
SOUTHERN	2/2	6/10
EASTERN	1/1	4/7
RURAL REGIONS		
GIPPSLAND	3/3	6/6
HUME	1/1	8/12
LODDON MALLEE	1/1	9/10
GRAMPIANS	0/2	5/11
BARWON SOUTH WEST	2/2	8/9
Unassigned to Region		
TOTAL	13/17 = 76%	58/79 = 73%

**CURRENT TOTAL VOLUNTEER NUMBER:**

**1700**



## 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*

**R**esponding to emergencies and disaster events is challenging for anyone. Supporting affected persons and communities that have experienced those emergencies and disasters can take a toll on the carer / helper / supporter / pastoral carer.

It is important that anyone responding to support people affected by disasters are also adequately cared for and supported.

There are many words that are used to describe the personal affects of caring for others; empathic strain, compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and burnout.

Another term is trauma stewardship. This term is used to describe 'bearing witness to trauma without surrendering the ability to live fully' (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk 2009 pg 4). I quite like this term, and its respective definition as it acknowledges that bearing witness to trauma and traumatic events will cause an emotional, behavioural, psychological and spiritual reaction, and yet it does not have to be so debilitating that it prevents you from experiencing life. The latter comes about with acceptance of the process and adequate support systems and structures around you. It also requires the helper to take some responsibility for their own wellbeing and have a plan to ensure they are sufficiently supported.

We have often heard people ask the question, 'who is helping the helpers or caring for the carers?'

This is a two fold process. There are responsibilities on the part of the organisation that the person is working for, and there are personal responsibilities also.

Being a trauma steward requires an understanding that we are being entrusted with people's stories and their very lives. It is the intentional creation of a safe space for and to honour others' hardships and suffering, and yet we do not assume their pain as our own (van Dernook Lipsky et al pg 6).

*"To participate in trauma stewardship is to always remember the privilege and sacredness of being called to help."*

But what does it look like when we have taken on more of the others pain that we can bear?

van Dernook Lipsky identifies 16 warning signs of trauma exposure that require attention.

1. Feeling helpless and hopeless
2. The sense that one can never do enough
3. Hypervigilance
4. Diminished creativity
5. Inability to embrace complexity
6. Minimising
7. Chronic exhaustion/Physical ailments
8. Inability to listen/deliberate avoidance
9. Dissociative moments
10. Sense of Persecution
11. Guilt
12. Fear

13. Anger and Cynicism
14. Inability to empathise/ Numbing
15. Addictions
16. Grandiosity: An inflated sense of importance related to ones work.

She then goes on to discuss ways of looking after yourself in the process.

1. **Open the inquiry and dialogue** - discuss the issue with others. Ask critical questions about work life balance, what brings you joy?
2. **Practice self care** - Acknowledge that the stress is genuine and you want a health way to deal with it. Stress resistant persons have the following traits:
  - a. A sense of personal control
  - b. Pursuit of personally meaningful tasks
  - c. Healthy lifestyle choices
  - d. Social supports
3. **Be patient** - things will not change immediately and will take new habit to form as you practice looking after yourself.

*Information gleaned from Trauma Stewardship - An everyday guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others - van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk 2009.*

**The Rev Stuart Stuart - State Manager  
M Em Mgt., B Soc Wk. MAASW**