



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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Moira Shire Outreach

VCC EM continues to support flood affected communities in the Moira Shire

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Operations

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

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Multi-faith Project

Martin outlines some of the developments in the Multi-faith Project

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Research

Stuart shares his understanding on recent research

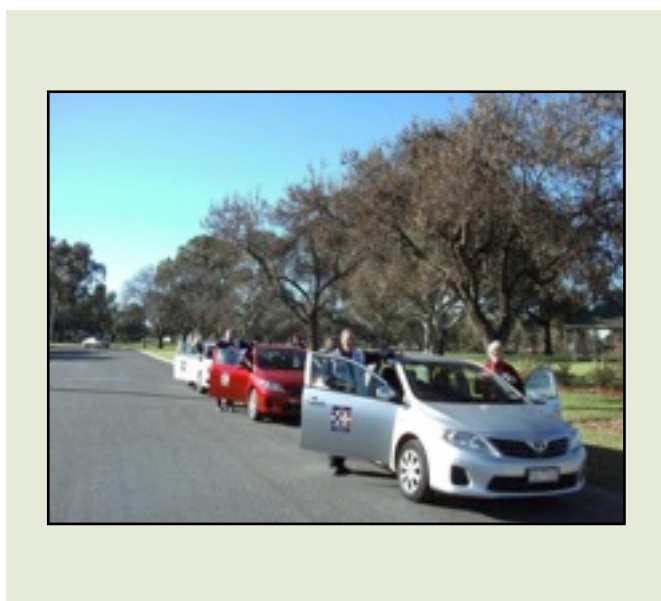
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Moira Outreach - VCC EM Response

“This campaign has broken new ground for the VCC EM agency in many ways”, says Debbie Laphorne Operations Coordinator.

- The length of deployment being nearly 5 months, with further outreach to be undertaken;
- The scope of deployment relief, recovery and outreach;
- The extent of the area approximately 150km east to west, 30 km north to south covering 4500 square kms;
- Building logistic equipment capacity such as rental vehicles, magnetic car door decals, polar fleeces and heavy outdoor jackets, UHF radios for communication in



remote areas, VCCEM developed reporting forms and processes;

- Improved Coordination techniques through the use of our newly trained Incident Activity Coordinators who managed specific activities and centres.

All of these processes worked to build a strong capacity to support affected individuals and communities in Victoria.

•The provision of accommodation and transport logistics over extended periods of time and extended locations

•The use of our multifaith capacity and the opportunity to deploy some of our newly trained multifaith workers, as part of an integrated team.



Moira Outreach with Cars



Gippsland Team



Gippsland Team

Operations:

Debbie Laphorne

In the past two months, the VCC EM has continued to develop its structures to respond to emergencies anywhere in Victoria. There has been significant improvement in Regional and Area Coordinators training designed to build the skills to manage an event from the VCC EM perspective.

Incident Activity Coordinators continue to be trained in readiness for the bushfire season.

Training of three new Incident Commanders will soon take place, which is the last level of structural improvement. These new Incident Commanders will relieve the State and Assistant State Manager in the VCC EM Coordination Centre during protracted events. This supports a strong need for greater self care by all staff and volunteers ensuring we are able to manage any event for any length of time.

Numerous meetings have taken place around the State with municipalities who are conducting Emergency Exercises. This has been a positive experience, and the inclusion of the VCC EM in emergency management arrangements will only strengthen local governments response to an event.

Upcoming exercises include; Eastern Metropolitan Region, Maroondah, Hume City, Darebin, Stonnington.

If your municipality is having an emergency management exercise, please let the State Office know.

NUMURKAH SUPPORT

A request was made to VCC EM to support the Numurkah Junior Soccer Club after the tragic accident that claimed the life of a 9 year old boy in Shepparton last month.

Six VCC EM volunteers attended the junior soccer training, with 4 other volunteers on stand by. There was the potential for 200 people to attend the session for a BBQ and get together.

45 families turned up and 25 individuals were supported in the process. The teams also went over and made themselves known to the netball club who witnessed the accident and were upset by the event.

One affected person said to a volunteer, *"it is just nice to know that someone cares"*

**ENCOURAGE PEOPLE IN YOUR FAITH
COMMUNITY TO TAKE UP TRAINING AND BE
A PART OF THIS VITAL SUPPORT TO THE
COMMUNITY!!!**

Call 9650 4511 for further details

www.vccem.org.au/training



Training & Development

the 2013 training dates will appear on our website by the end of October!!!!

please update your training if you were trained prior to 2010.



HOBEX Exercise -

From the Perspective of volunteer Hsar Htoo

Volunteering in HOBEX was a great experience for me. To prepare for an emergency, Hobsons Bay City Council set up a relief centre. Forty Karen-speaking residents came into the relief centre. I was one of four Karen-speaking Personal Support Workers who was there to assist them.

I worked with the council staff to help register the people from my community as they came into the relief centre. Most of the Karen were newly arrived refugees who do not speak a lot of English, and of course the council staff and Red Cross workers doing registration did not speak Karen. Even with four Karen-speaking Personal Support Workers, it took an hour to register everyone. Afterwards one of the Red Cross workers came and shook my hand and thanked me for helping them.

What I found really interesting was seeing all the different agencies in their different roles. I had learned about this in the training, so it was really interesting to see it in a relief centre. I had also learned about psychological first aid in the training, and whilst this wasn't used to its full

potential here, I would need it in a real emergency.

For Karen people, having Karen Personal Support Workers is very important. If they go into an emergency relief centre and see us, they know there is someone to help them and they know they will be able to communicate.

The VCC EM is not an interpreter service per se, and it cannot be guaranteed that at each event we will be able to supply specific cultural or language response, we are growing in our capacity to support municipalities in these areas.

To find out more about cultural and religious seminars, please contact Martin West on 9650 4511 or mwest@vcc.org.au



Multi-faith project

Since commencing as Multifaith Project Officer in January this year, we have made great progress in becoming a genuinely multifaith program.

This year roughly one quarter of the volunteers we have trained or retrained have come from non-Christian faith traditions.

We have also trained Christian volunteers who come from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Our Melbourne Airport Team now includes Buddhist chaplains who speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, Malay and Indonesian.

Like many volunteer organisations we have an ageing volunteer base. We have formed a partnership with the Islamic Council of Victoria, InterAction and Praxis, and this week we have started training a Youth Rapid Response Team.

None of this would have been possible without the support of the different faith communities. Lama Tendar, Thich Thien Tam, Thich Phouc Tan, Siripattho, Gontug Rinpoche and Thien Tuan are some

of the Buddhist monks and nuns who share our vision and have championed VCC Emergencies Ministries within their Buddhist communities. We have held three training sessions in Buddhist temples.

In Muslim communities, Nail Aykan from Islamic Council of Victoria, Hisham Moustafa from Muslim Emergency Management Organisation, and Syed Abul Qasim from Panjtan Society of Victoria have promoted volunteering with us.

While we have come a long way, we still have a long way to go. Hinduism and Sikhism are fast growing religions but we are still in early days of working with these communities.

While Buddhist and Muslim communities are large and well established, the Hindu and Sikh communities are smaller and relatively new. Our Airport Team still needs Muslim, Hindu and Sikh chaplains.

We also have a lot to learn. The Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities in Victoria are as diverse as Christian communities are. Hinduism is “a family of religions” rather than a single religion. The

minor doctrinal differences between different Muslim traditions are far less important than cultural and linguistic differences. There are vast doctrinal differences between different Buddhist traditions; but in Buddhism, the doctrinal differences are rarely important.

Significantly, our Christian volunteers have overwhelmingly welcomed the transition to being a multifaith program. In training and on deployments our Christian and non-Christian volunteers have enjoyed the experience of working together.

In 2013 we will continue the exciting journey as a multifaith program.

Martin West - Multi-faith Project Officer.



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

Multiple session early psychological interventions for the prevention of post traumatic stress disorder - Roberts N, Kitchiner N, Kenardy J, Bisson J; 2010

This research article look at the efficacy of intervention methods which claim to prevent Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Traumatic stress can have a significant impact on individuals', families' and communities' abilities to cope, especially after a large scale community wide disaster event. Many individuals show great resilience in the face of such experiences and will develop short lived stress reactions that diminish over time. In fact most people recover without medical or psychological intervention. There have been a number of intervention strategies developed aimed at preventing continuing psychological difficulties.

PTSD is not the only condition a person may experience post disaster. Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), depression, anxiety, phobic reactions and substance abuse are common features of post traumatic events.

This review evaluated the results of 11 studies that tested a diverse range of psychological interventions. A total of 941 participants results were recorded. The study review randomised trials, which included individuals exposed to traumatic events that matched the DSM-IV for PTSD. "Therefore most of the participants had experienced, witnessed, or been confronted with an event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others" (Roberts et al p 3).

The authors conclusion suggest that there is little evidence to support the use of psychological interventions for routine use following traumatic events and that some multiple session interventions may have an adverse effect on some individuals. The clear practice implication of this is that, at

present, multiple session interventions aimed at all individuals exposed to traumatic events should not be used.

As an example, following the terrorist attacks at The World Trade Centre, more than 9000 grief and crisis counsellors arrived in New York with the expectation that most people who experienced the attacks would develop PTSD (McNally R, Bryant R, Ehlers A; 2003 p 45). Many therapists have conceptualised PTSD as a normal, expectable reaction to an extraordinary stressor, despite its classification as a mental disorder (McNally et al p 49). Galea (2002) surveyed residents of New York City as to their response to the 9/11 event. "Five to 8 weeks after the attacks, 7.5% of the random sample of adults living south of 110th street in Manhattan had developed PTSD....."

What does this mean for early psycho-social recovery practices and processes, in particular the practice of Emotional Spiritual Care?

Current practices in Victoria champion the process of personal support with psychological first aid (PFA) as one component. Psychological First Aid is part of a continuum of care that is provided by the whole psycho-social sector. Some are now referring to this as 'stepped care' and simply means that people access services where they are best placed to get support and are assisted throughout the care cycle - ranging from PFA, ESC to formal mental health treatment.

Whilst there is little empirical evidence to suggest that PFA is effective in reducing the likelihood of PTSD specifically, it is accepted that PFA is unlikely to do further harm to the affected person because the person determines what they want to talk about and when (McNally et al p68).

The additional application of Emotional Spiritual Care supports all other forms of intervention and adds value through the understanding that questions of identity, worldview, and matters of meaning are not strictly psychological, rather spiritual in nature. These questions require appropriately trained Chaplains and faith

based Personal Support Workers who can adequately sit with these questions, supporting affected individuals to go on a journey of their own discovery in finding answers to these questions. Often the formal psycho support structures are unable to make the time for this reflection due to competing operational, organisational and political issues.

It is part of the ethos of the faith community to provide compassion in times of crisis, to sit with affected people and to ensure a safe space is made to reflect and journey with the struggle of the new worldview and perspective on life.

Emotional Spiritual Care is not a process, it is not doing something to a person. It is not a seven step plan for this or a five stage process for that!!!!

"We are human **beings**, not human doings."

Emotional Spiritual Care is about being **with** an affected person, fully engaged in the conversation and journey that they choose to take. Staying with that person until such time as they have had their needs met is essential to total care and support.

Therapy and other formal psychological intervention methods can be unhelpful in the early post disaster stage. Emotional Spiritual Care and Psychological First Aid are sufficient to help most people recover well. Where this is not the case a referral to an appropriate agency is conducted.

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