

# Year in Review 2014-15

All Hazards All Emergencies



Working in conjunction with  
Communities, Government,  
Agencies and Business

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# Introductions & highlights

## Chief Executive Neil Robertson



In July 2014, Victoria embarked upon the most significant reform of emergency management arrangements in the State's history.

The Victorian Government was very clear in its mandate and legislative support for developing and implementing an all hazards, all agencies approach to emergency management.

Since its creation on 1 July 2014, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) has pursued an agenda of whole of government, multi-agency reform to achieve a safer and more resilient Victoria.

At the same time, the organisation itself has been formed, developed a structure, employed people from within and outside of the sector, and determined how to follow its mandate.

The challenge of improving the way we work together has been a recurrent theme of various reviews and inquiries into major emergencies. Those reviews have offered strong guidance as to what should and could occur in better improving community safety and resilience, infrastructure, livelihoods and health. It also lies at the core of the Victorian Government's emergency management reform agenda.

EMV was established to facilitate the implementation of this transformation across the sector.

Emergency Management Victoria does not have a statutory obligation to complete an Annual Report; however, the "Year in Review 2014-15" provides an opportunity to highlight the challenges, the changes and the achievements of the sector in moving towards safer and more resilient communities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Robertson', written over a horizontal line.

**Neil Robertson PSM**  
Chief Executive  
Emergency Management Victoria





## Emergency Management Commissioner, Craig Lapsley



Extreme bushfires, floods, pandemics, biosecurity and security threats are some of the emergencies highlighting the need for a fundamental shift in emergency management to deal with the future challenges faced by both Victorians, and the sector.

In addition to the impacts of climate change, we also face significant changes

in population, demographics and technology, urbanisation and land use.

The Emergency Management Act 2013 introduced a range of measures including the establishment of Emergency Management Victoria and the Emergency Management Commissioner as a recognition that a joined-up approach to emergency management is the only way to ensure a sustainable emergency management system.

As the State's first Fire Services Commissioner, and now as Victoria's first Emergency Management Commissioner, I have seen firsthand the work that has been undertaken by the sector to get to this point.

In the year since Emergency Management Victoria was established, there is already clear evidence that emergency services, government, not-for-profit organisations, business and local communities are working together in a more cohesive and effective way.

For the first time, the threads of "before, during and after emergencies" have been drawn together with the aim of building a consistent and community-centred approach.

Some of the most significant pieces of work begun and completed in the 12 months to June 30, 2015 are representative of the way this sector operates together before, during and after emergencies.

The development of the sector-wide vision for "safer and more resilient communities" has been a major piece of work that has resonated in organisations and been adopted across the sector. Our shared goal is to develop a sustainable and efficient emergency management system that reduces the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies on communities.

The first year of EMV's existence was one of both consolidation and the development of new, collaborative approaches.

EMV and the sector commenced delivery of actions within the one-year Emergency Management Interim Strategic Action Plan which provided a step change for the sector. At the conclusion of 2014-15, more than half of the actions were either completed or migrated into agency business plans and the remainder were integrated into agency projects. This has provided a good base from which to develop, with the sector, the three year Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2015-2018 (The SAP).

The SAP 2015-2018, released 1 July 2015, provides a blueprint for Victoria's emergency management. It contains the vision and priorities supporting safer and more resilient Victorian communities. The SAP addresses risks beyond fire, flood and storm to include emergencies in the areas of transport, marine safety, hazardous material, heat wave, pandemic influenza and animal health, plant and pest disease, mine failures, energy and telecommunication failures.

There is no doubt the first year has proven just how critical partnerships are. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) took a significant lead in running relief and recovery for the first 12 months of EMV's existence.

State coordination responsibilities returned to EMV on 1 September, 2015, but the strength of DHHS in delivering regional relief and recovery activities with our not for profit and municipal partners cannot be overstated.

The Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy also provides an example of Government, agencies and industry working cooperatively to mitigate risks and consequences through effective planning.

Drawing on previous achievements, new arrangements were developed and adapted within a new 'all hazards' resilience framework following extensive consultation with Victorian industry and government and put in place from July 1, 2015.

All initiatives within the sector have at their heart building safer and more resilient communities in Victoria. Collectively, we are working to understand and support communities that are informed and assisting them to become resilient. Victorian communities are many and varied and the sector needs to focus on developing new ways to engage and work with communities.

The challenge then for each and every Victorian is to accept individual roles as an integral part of the new approach.

Collectively, we are developing pathways to ensure our planning and preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies is innovative, world leading and above all sustainable and community-centric.

This is an ongoing challenge and opportunity this sector will continue to embrace.



**Craig Lapsley PSM**

Emergency Management Commissioner  
Emergency Management Victoria

## About Us

Emergency Management Victoria is a statutory entity supported through the Department of Justice and Regulation. EMV's Chief Executive is also Deputy Secretary in the Department.

EMV supports the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC), a Governor in Council appointment.

## Our staff

EMV consists of a staff of 114 focused on working with the emergency management sector, to strengthen emergency management before, during and after emergencies with the community firmly at the centre.

EMV has specific statutory responsibilities including supporting the Emergency Management Commissioner in performing his overall coordination role before, during and after major emergencies. Importantly, agencies and departments with clear emergency management accountabilities retain their identities, core purpose and relationships with their communities.

## What we do

EMV supports a sector-wide approach to achieve joined up outcomes that are community-focused. It is only by agencies, departments, industry, business, all levels of government and community working together that we will fully realise a sustainable and efficient emergency management system that reduces the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies.

## The ribbon

The three ribbons of the Emergency Management Victoria landmark represent before, during and after – or knowledge, action and renewal.

Our collective success is based on creating an integrated network capable of operating seamlessly before, during and after emergencies, in conjunction with a range of agencies, organisations, businesses and communities. This means that a number of illustrations are being used to represent the sector at its broadest and most encompassing.



## Our performance

The EMV Year in Review 2014-15 outlines EMV's activities in its foundation year.

*Performance measures are fully reported in the Department of Justice and Regulation Annual Report 2014 – 2015.*



## Shared Vision

*“Safer and more resilient communities”*

## Shared Goal

*“A sustainable and efficient emergency management system that reduces the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies”*

*“We work as one”*

### EMV's Role Statement

We do this as a sector by:

- maximising the ability of the emergency management sector to work together and achieve joined up outcomes that are community focused
- leading and facilitating key initiatives focused on system-wide reform with integrated policy, strategy, planning, investment and procurement
- ensuring a stronger emphasis on shared responsibility, community resilience, consequence management and post emergency recovery activities
- embedding emergency management across government, agencies and business
- leading and coordinating emergency preparedness, response and recovery with the emergency management sector and community

The emergency management sector connects to people that strive toward a common vision of “safer and more resilient communities” through our shared goal, common values and behaviours.

## Values and Supporting Behaviours

**The Values are:**

- Leadership
- Accountability
- Integration
- Agility

**Value Statements:**

Leadership – We show personal drive and inspire others to achieve shared goals as leaders of emergency management in Victoria

Accountability – We work to clear objectives in a transparent manner

Integration – We recognise the importance of building effective and cooperative relationships with our emergency management colleagues

Agility – We respond quickly and effectively to dynamic situations and changing demands

**The Behaviours are:**

- respect others
- work as one
- focus on the community
- listen and communicate
- acknowledge good and focus on opportunity

# The Emergency Management Framework

## A new approach, firmly established

The Victorian government mandated the all hazards, all agency approach to emergency management, supported through legislation.

2014-15 was the first year of operation of the Emergency Management Act 2013 (The Act). The Act is focused on mitigation, emergency preparedness, co-ordination and networked response and recovery.

The new governance arrangements include:

- The State Crisis and Resilience Council (SCRC) as the State peak emergency management advisory body responsible for providing advice to the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services on emergency management policy and strategy;
- EMV has a role in ensuring Victoria is fully prepared for future emergencies and able to recover more quickly from their impacts;
- The Emergency Management Commissioner, who provides operational leadership of the emergency sector, coordinates state resources in response to emergencies to reduce the impact of major emergencies and coordinates recovery efforts. The Commissioner also drives sector improvements in operational capability and interoperability;
- The Inspector-General for Emergency Management, who is responsible for developing and maintaining a monitoring and assurance framework, and evaluating the performance of the sector; and
- A new Volunteer Consultative Forum which focuses on volunteer-related issues and sector reform and provides volunteers who are vital to delivering all aspects of emergency management with a direct 'voice' to Government.

## Increased capability of the emergency management sector

Historically, Victoria has been vulnerable to a range of hazards. Bush and grass fires pose the largest annual risk; however, other hazards exist, which will affect the physical, social, environmental and economic well-being of Victorians.

EMV works closely with communities, government, agencies and business to reduce the impact and consequences of emergency events.

Current and future programs are focused on strengthening capacity to withstand, plan for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

## Moving to an all agencies approach – preseason updates

Regional Control Teams provide support and advice to Regional Controllers preparing for or responding to major emergencies.

In October and November 2014, EMV conducted a Regional Control Team Information Forum in each of the eight Emergency Management regions. The forums provided senior EMV staff and each Regional Control Team with their first formal opportunity to discuss mutual expectations and clarify arrangements as a collective.

Forum attendees comprised around 134 regional emergency management leaders from CFA, DELWP, MFB, VICSES, Victoria Police, DHHS and Ambulance Victoria.

The forums included discussion of the updated State emergency management arrangements, impact and consequence management and a review of recent emergency events. The forum focused on issue resolution, relationship building, and clarification of mutual expectations, and concluded with interactive exercises.

When we get past the immediacy and emotions of tragedy and disasters, how do we keep our focus on the things that need to be done to minimise the risks and consequences of similar future occurrences?



## Review of Summer Season 2014-15

The 2014-15 Victorian summer tested Victoria's full range of emergency management agencies with a mix of heat, fires, flood and storms. From November 2014 to February 2015, there were around 4250 grass and bushfires and almost 8650 storm and flood requests for assistance responded to by agencies including CFA, MFB, DELWP, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and SES.

Tragically, there were 14 drowning deaths in Victorian waterways, including swimming pools, during December 2014 and February 2015, increasing the number of drowning deaths since July 2014 to 26.

In reviewing the summer, the EMC stated that:

*"Summer is not just about fire anymore, it's about summer safety and working as one emergency management sector."*

*"We have seen the new emergency management strategies work well this past summer season and although we haven't been as busy with fire compared to the 2013-14 summer, we were challenged with some unstable weather that has brought with it severe storms, some flash flooding and a heatwave in early January where Heat Health Alerts were issued for most parts of the State."*

In November 2014, an updated Southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook released by the Bushfire Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre forecast that Victoria would potentially face a major fire season. This followed a very dry spring with the least amount of rainfall for at least 20 years in many parts of Victoria.

In mid-December 2014, lightning ignited more than 350 fires in the north east of Victoria, including at Creighton's Creek near Euroa, Lake Rowan - Warbys near Wangaratta, Stewarton near Benalla and in central Victoria at Pastoria East. Combined, the fires burnt through almost 15,000 hectares.

Across 2-3 January 2015, Victoria experienced severe to extreme fire danger, with high temperatures, damaging winds, severe thunderstorms and significant fires in the west at Moyston, Edenhope, in the Little Desert and at Hastings. More than 26,000 hectares was burnt.

Fortunately, there were no deaths as a result of these fires; however, some firefighters suffered minor injuries and farmers and agricultural businesses incurred extensive loss and damage to property, livestock and land. Victoria was also grateful for the assistance of 220 personnel from New South Wales during this period.

In the Hume, Moyston, Hastings and Edenhope fires, more than 8500 sheep and cattle suffered, and damage occurred to up to 1000 kilometres of fencing, thousands of hectares of pastoral land, crops and up to 500 ton of hay. There were seven houses destroyed, more than 270 properties damaged and sheds and out-buildings were burnt.

During the 2014-15 summer, more than 2,200 warnings were issued and around 57,100 voice calls and text messages were sent using the national telephone alerting system, Emergency Alert.

Communities also made good use of emergency information channels with the FireReady app registering 237,000 new devices and bringing the total number of app registrations to 850,000. Over 14,300 people called the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) between November and February.

This is part of a two year process of review to ensure continuous improvement.

The critical role of aircraft was demonstrated in the 2014-15 summer, with Victoria's fleet of 46 flying for around 4000 hours and firebombers dropping more than nine million litres of foam, water and retardant.

Victoria's aircraft and emergency management experts were also deployed interstate. In January our Large Air Tankers and 250 personnel travelled to South Australia when bushfires threatened the Adelaide Hills and in February, 185 personnel travelled to Western Australia to assist with fires south of Perth.

The summer season also saw some important operational, reforms to take effect for the first time with:

1. The formation of the State Coordination Team (SCOT). SCOT combines response and recovery coordination, the Chief Health Officer, health coordination and state consequence management; and
2. The Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC) refined to bring together strategic communications directors and senior operational leaders in response and recovery to set communications priorities.

Both SCOT and EMJPIC focus on all hazards, all agencies, all communities.



## LATS – Aerial Firefighting model that changed the game

Victoria's firefighting fleet was greatly enhanced over the 2014-15 summer with the use of two large air tankers (LATs), the Hercules and the RJ. These large capacity (12,000 litre) aircraft are suited to the Victorian environment and can operate in difficult terrain.

The LATs joined Victoria's air fleet comprising a mixture of water bombing and intelligence gathering helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. The mix addresses the State's varied fire risk and terrain. Victoria leads Australia in its model for use of aircraft in firefighting. LATs were deployed from Victoria to Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia.

The aircraft are strategically positioned across the State during summer. In all, 46 aircraft were available over the previous summer.

Firefighting aircraft are suited to rapid attack in the early stages of a bushfire, supporting ground crews, and developing control lines with fire retardant.

The State's firefighting fleet is reviewed each year based on needs and seasonal outlook.



## Increased capability of the emergency management sector

### Interim Strategic Action Plan and work programs through a collaborative process

In its first year, EMV's focus included delivering against the actions outlined in the one-year Interim Strategic Action Plan (ISAP). The ISAP actions concentrated on strengthening Victoria's emergency management capability under the three key themes of Risk and Resilience, Response and Capability, and Relief and Recovery.

Key achievements of the interim Strategic Action Plan 2014–15 include:

- completion of five community-based emergency management plans and the continuing development of additional plans in priority risk areas (see p.24);
- update of existing standard operating procedures, and development of others, required for joint operations by responder agencies;
- ongoing development of shared protocols to foster more effective joint operations by responder agencies;
- the Country Fire Authority and Metropolitan Fire Brigade conducting the first joint recruit course to deliver fire-fighter training at the new Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre (VEMTC) located in Craigieburn;
- development of an impact assessment model and associated guidelines to assist with recovery planning and reduce duplication of effort by multiple agencies; and
- completion of the Victorian Emergency Management Capability Blueprint, which outlines the current and desired future state for Victoria's emergency management capability (see p.17).

**“We work as one, with the community, agencies and businesses to be ready for, withstand and recover from emergencies. The SAP is the overarching plan that will guide this once in a lifetime opportunity to reduce the risk to people and property and build resilient communities – and this is through taking what we know, what we have learned through the many emergencies that have affected Victoria. The SAP is a key means to guide all-hazard, all-agency reform over the next three years and give the community confidence that progress will be made,”**

**- EMC Craig Lapsley**

On 1 July 2015, the Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2015–2018 was released. The SAP is a three-year rolling plan that outlines state-wide strategic priorities, with corresponding actions, to support Victoria in achieving its vision of safer and more resilient communities. It guides reform, identifies priority actions across government and assists with investment decision making.

EMV coordinated the development of the SAP on behalf of SCRC and in close collaboration with the sector.

EMV also coordinates the reporting and monitoring of the actions within the SAP. Reports on progress are provided to the Minister for Emergency Services, SCRC, IGEM and the community through the EMV website.



## Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report was tabled in Parliament on 2 September 2014. The Victorian Government tabled the Implementation Plan on 14 October 2014 in response to the Inquiry Report.

EMV leads and/or participates in implementing the response to a number of the inquiry's recommendations and affirmations from the report including the establishment of a dedicated taskforce with relevant agencies and the four Victorian brown coal mine operators to work together on planning and preparedness for the 2014-15 and future fire seasons.

On 26 May 2015, the Victorian Government announced the reopening of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry, to be led by the Honourable Bernard Teague AO and joined by Professor John Catford and Mrs Anita Roper. The reopened inquiry's terms of reference focus on human health impacts and mine rehabilitation.

EMV will continue to contribute to the government's implementation and monitoring plan and provide evidence to the reopened inquiry as required.



## Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce Status Report

The Coal Mine Emergency Taskforce was convened in September 2014 as part of the broad response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry. The Taskforce ensured all parties – including government departments, agencies and the owners and operators of The Latrobe Valley Coal Mines – were prepared for any threat in and around the mine during the summer of 2014-15.

The Taskforce was chaired by the Emergency Management Commissioner and released a report in January 2015. The report captures the activities of the taskforce up until 31 December 2014. A separate Taskforce was established for the Surf Coast to cover the operation of the Anglesea Coal Mine.

A significant achievement of the Taskforce was the development and implementation of an Improvement Plan relating to preparedness and response to fire emergencies and the creation of a Communications Group to ensure communities are kept informed of progress.

Although the primary focus of the Taskforce was on readiness for the 2014-15 summer fire season, it also fostered the adoption of standards by all mines in Victoria that will reduce the risk of major fires now and into the future.



## Research Foundations Strategy

The Research Foundations Strategy has been a significant area of work for the Research Coordination Unit over the past 12 months.

This work program aims to ensure greater coordination and integration of research interests across response agencies in Victoria.

Integral to setting up the strategy's success has been the commitment of the sector's Research Community of Practice, with whom the work program has jointly been developed.

The Research Foundations Strategy establishes a program of work (coordinated by EMV) to enhance the existing emergency management research arrangements in the State. Activities outlined in the strategy include:

### **Adopt a set of guiding principles**

The strategy outlines guiding principles that focus on research process, alignment of research and strategy, greater coordination and utilisation of research. The guiding principles outline the tasks, philosophies and processes that underpin robust, effective and credible research endeavours.

### **Emergency management sector research mapping exercise**

A whole of emergency management sector research mapping exercise will be conducted to better understand our collective knowledge on which to build. This will include agencies, Government departments and stakeholder organisations with an interest and capability in emergency management research.

### **Emergency management sector stakeholder map**

A stakeholder map of the broader emergency management sector will highlight the research priorities and interests of these agencies. It will assist in navigating the vast and diverse range of research being undertaken across providers in the sector.

### **Emergency management sector research repository**

The outputs produced by government funded research projects, will be made available for agencies, departments, researchers and the community via a searchable online repository. This will provide a means to ensure the legacy of past research can be accessed, used and enable future research to build on established knowledge.

### **Research community of practice and research forums**

EMV will build on the existing work of the Research Community of Practice to include a broader range of emergency management organisations. The Terms of Reference of this group will be expanded to include forums that address research issues and needs (such as forums on particular research topics, supporting utilisation and policy development).

### **Sector Research Agenda**

Using the work from the emergency management research mapping and stakeholder map, EMV and its partners will work together to develop an overarching research agenda for the sector. These initiatives support the existing imperatives of emergency management agencies. The strategy is designed to achieve a common operating picture of our collective expertise and sharing knowledge.



## Victorian Emergency Management Capability Blueprint

The Victorian Emergency Management Capability Blueprint outlines the current and desired future state for Victoria's emergency management capability. The Blueprint has three objectives:

1. To achieve a shared understanding and appreciation of the sector's capabilities, capacity and underlying responsibilities;
2. To improve integration for the future by maximising current emergency management capabilities whilst building and developing future capabilities based on emerging risks;
3. To connect and enhance capability across community, business and government partnerships.

The collaborative approach towards understanding and developing capability across the sector is underpinned by the following capability principles:

- Driving improved public value by working as one;
- Maximising utilisation of capability and capacity;
- Embracing continuous improvement, innovation and research;
- Enhancing partnerships and shared responsibilities;
- Commitment to leadership at all levels.

The Blueprint is aligned to the SAP: Progress to an all-hazards emergency management capability model that captures and baselines the State's current capability and capacity, and identifies current gaps and reinvestment opportunities.

The next step in the project is the development of a capability framework and model for the sector to understand its current capability and capacity.



# Innovation & Partnerships

**We ‘work as one’ with communities, government, agencies and businesses to be ready for, withstand and recover from emergencies.**

## **Joined up – DHHS role in relief and recovery**

Under section 46 of the Emergency Management Act 2013, the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC) is responsible for the coordination of agencies with responsibilities under the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (Part 4 of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria).

However, from 1 July 2014 when the new Act came into effect, the EMC delegated this responsibility to the Secretary of Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), with supporting details outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding.

On 2 July 2015, the EMC advised the Secretary DHHS that this delegation would end on 1 September 2015, when the EMC assumed responsibility for state-level relief and recovery coordination.

## **Working in conjunction with business**

In June 2015, a major project was announced to construct 109 mobile towers across rural and regional Victoria to reduce communication blackspots and improve mobile phone coverage.

The Victorian Government committed \$21 million to the Victorian Mobile Project in a joint bid with Telstra for federal funds from the Commonwealth Government's \$100 million Mobile Black Spots Program. The EMC is actively contributing to the Victorian Government's work, to ensure emergency management priorities and bushfire vulnerable areas are addressed through this program.



## Airbnb Partnership

In an Australian first, EMV and the Victorian Government entered into a partnership with online booking company Airbnb before to the 2014-15 summer season, to provide short term accommodation arrangements for people forced to flee from significant and major emergencies including fire and flood.

The Airbnb Disaster Response Service agreement will facilitate free or low cost accommodation for people displaced by emergencies with registered hosts and is the first formal agreement of its kind to be signed outside of America.

The agreement with Airbnb provides:

- Airbnb will identify registered hosts who have committed to opening their doors to displaced persons and emergency services personnel when an emergency occurs and accommodation options are required;
- Airbnb technology will notify hosts and guests about significant emergencies and inform them the Airbnb Disaster Response Service is available;
- Hosts will be provided with emergency preparedness educational materials with access to community education programs; and
- The platform will be available to people not currently registered, but who want to offer accommodation during emergencies.

A similar agreement exists between Airbnb and the American cities of Portland, New York and San Francisco.

## Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy

Victoria's Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy was released in July 2015 and marked a significant achievement in reform of the sector.

The CIRS highlights partnerships built across government, industry and community, ensuring all processes and structures are in place to build the resilience and limit disruption to the supply of essential services to the Victorian community.

The best protection is achieved by improving the resilience of critical infrastructure to all natural or human induced potential hazards. Resilience is resistance, reliability, redundancy, response and recovery.

The CIRS reiterates priorities and sets out the priorities and management arrangements for critical infrastructure resilience. The arrangements contain two broad approaches to improving critical infrastructure resilience:

- A Victorian Critical Infrastructure Model under which the criticality of infrastructure is assessed and interventions prioritised, implemented and communicated; and
- Ensuring legislation and regulations governing resilience arrangements for vital critical infrastructure remain relevant.

Legislation underpinning the CIRS came into effect on 1 July 2015.

EMV maintains and coordinates whole of government strategy and policy for critical infrastructure resilience to ensure a consistent approach across government.

EMV also supports the EMC in the fulfilment of his functions under legislation and relevant State emergency management plans.



## Victoria's Emergency Management Operational Communications Program

Victoria's Emergency Management Operational Communications Plan (OCP) describes a blueprint for the emergency management sector's operational communications. Critically, for the first time in Victoria, the plan was developed in collaboration and agreement with all Victorian emergency service agencies.

Released in October 2014, the program articulates the State's 2025 operational communications vision for the sector, and outlines a high-level plan to progressively move towards that vision.

The vision provides broadband data services and a resilient voice and narrowband network for all agencies state-wide, to enhance interoperability and provide better support to operational personnel in the field. The ongoing collaborative efforts of Victorian police and emergency services will be critical to successful implementation.

The program consists of four key actions:

1. Leverage new State contracts to move to a single, integrated narrowband data and voice network;
2. Establish a state-wide, sector wide broadband capability;
3. Adopt a phased implementation plan; and
4. Deliver the plan through EMV's centralised governance.

## The Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme

Natural Disaster Resilience Grants have been awarded to assist communities across Victoria to build resilience to natural disasters. Under the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience, the Commonwealth allocates approximately \$4.2 million per annum to Victoria. Additional contributions are made by the State, through Department of Land, Water and Planning (previously DEPI), for flood projects; together with contributions from applicants.

Thirty projects were funded as part of the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme 2014-15.

The grants provided were between \$10,000 and \$250,000. They included flood studies, mitigation works, bushfire risk projects and hazardous tree management.

The projects, led by state agencies, local councils, non-government organisations and volunteer organisations are all designed to help communities better prepare and respond to natural disasters.

Grant funding is made available to projects which contribute towards the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, adopted nationally in 2011. The strategy aims to communicate and educate people about risk and disaster resilience to bushfires, floods, pandemics, influenza, heatwaves, severe storms and earthquakes. It also works to reduce risks in the built environment and lead change.

Those who have been successful in receiving grants as part of the 2014/15 program vary from councils, volunteer emergency services, small businesses, research institutions, government departments and agencies and other peak bodies and organisations with an interest in emergency management.



## Multi-Agency Regional Exercise Grants

Grants totalling \$33,500 were awarded during 2014-15 as part of EMV's Multi-Agency Regional Exercise Grants Program. The program was open to Regional Emergency Management Planning Committees and encouraged the development and conduct of multi-agency, multi-hazard exercises. Exercises focusing on strategic risk and consequence were given priority over tactical response based exercises.

An initial evaluation of the program incorporating feedback from regional personnel, identified a number of opportunities to further improve the grants process, which will be implemented for 2015-16.



## Resilient Melbourne

A global initiative funded by the Rockefeller Centre features Melbourne City Council as one of 100 cities around the world developing resilience strategies. The 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) challenge aims to help cities become more resilient to the physical, social and economic challenges of the 21st century.

**The program defines urban resilience as:**  
**"...the capacity of individuals, communities, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and grow no matter what chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience."**

The development of a Resilience Strategy is an opportunity for Melbourne to promote the long-term viability, safety and wellbeing of our interconnected communities and municipalities. Improvements in coordinating and integrating councils, business and not-for-profit organisations, emergency and other State and non-state agencies are critical. The development of Melbourne's resilience strategy is a collaborative project that will involve the 31 municipalities that make up metropolitan Melbourne.

EMV is actively supporting this project along with the City of Melbourne, Department of Premier and Cabinet and Municipal Association of Victoria, which all have senior representatives on the Resilience project's steering committee. The EMC represents EMV on the project's steering committee.



# Supporting Volunteers

**“An awareness and acknowledgement of the vital role volunteers play in the performance of emergency management functions in Victoria is central to EMV and the role of the Commissioner.”**

## Volunteer Consultative Forum

The Volunteer Consultative Forum (VCF) provides a forum for consulting with emergency management volunteers on volunteer related issues and broader sector reform. The VCF meets quarterly with EMV providing secretariat support.

The strategic priorities for emergency management volunteering in Victoria are informed by a broad understanding of volunteer needs, sustainable volunteering, and in turn safer communities. It is designed to inform strategy, planning and investment decisions in volunteer based agencies and be applied within strategic and business planning processes.

The VCF has matured from an individual issues focus to a sector focus with a clear strategic narrative that helps to understand the fundamental importance of volunteers to a sustainable emergency management system.

The key focus of the VCF during 2015 is the development of a statement that will formalise Government's commitment to volunteerism and the shift from responder agencies to the broader coalition of emergency management volunteers.

The Volunteer Consultative Forum (VCF) provides a direct voice for volunteers to the Minister for Emergency Services. It facilitates the Government's commitment to consult and engage with emergency

management volunteers on strategy, policy, investment and broader sector reform. The VCF meets quarterly, and is chaired by the EMC, with EMV providing secretariat support.

The VCF recently finalised the Strategic Priorities for Emergency Management Volunteering in Victoria. This instrument is directly informed by volunteers, a broad understanding of volunteer needs and how progressing the priorities directly contributes to volunteers and sustainability of the community based service delivery model in Victoria. It is designed to inform strategy, planning and investment decisions across the sector, within government, agencies and the business community.

Overall, the VCF is maturing from its initial focus on better understanding the individual issues to a clear focus on common needs of volunteers across the sector and working together better. It has never been so important to clearly understand and embed the 'fundamental importance of volunteers to a sustainable emergency management system' within agencies, across government and with our partners in the business community, many of whom employ volunteers.

## Emergency Management Volunteer Statement

In recognition of the significant contribution that volunteers make in all aspects of emergency management, Emergency Management Victoria has worked closely with the VCF, agencies and Government to progress the development of an Emergency Management Volunteer Statement (the Statement).

The Statement will reinforce the Victorian Government's commitment to consult and engage with volunteers in emergency management, and their representative bodies on matters that affect them. It will also reflect government and agencies commitment to recognise, value and respect volunteers from all agencies and from all backgrounds.

The Statement refers to the requirements in the Emergency Management Act 2013 that both EMV and the EMC must, in performing their functions “have regard to the fundamental importance of the role that volunteers play in the performance of emergency management functions in Victoria”. It is aligned to, and reinforces the sector vision, goals and values and the importance of volunteers, to government, agencies, business and the community.

## Valuing Volunteers Program

In 2014-15, \$1.38 million was allocated to deliver volunteer training, leadership and health and well-being initiatives under the Valuing Volunteers Program (VVP). The recipients of VVP grants were Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, CFA, Emergency Services Foundation (ESF), Life Saving Victoria (LSV), Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) and Victorian State Emergency Services (VICSES).

The VVP is designed to support and encourage emergency services volunteers with a particular focus on their retention, recognition and recruitment.

The VVP currently aligns with The Victorian Emergency Services Volunteer Framework developed in 2012. The four goals of the framework aim towards ensuring:

- a robust volunteering culture is created within Victorian emergency services and the community
- more Victorians become ‘life-long’ emergency services volunteers
- volunteers are proactively supported, valued, recognised and respected for their professionalism, dedication and quality of service
- volunteers are empowered to play an active leadership role in their local communities.

The VVP provides the opportunity for emergency services organisations (ESO’s) to develop new volunteer initiatives and pilot programs that support these framework goals.

## Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program

The Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment program (VESEP) is an ongoing program funded by the Victorian Government, which provides local emergency services volunteer groups access to grants for operational equipment, vehicles, trucks, tankers, watercraft, trailers and minor facility improvements.

The \$12.54 million program offers State Government grants of up to \$100,000 each, for trucks, equipment and building works.

The grants are on a two-for-one basis, giving three dollars in spending power for every one dollar raised by the emergency service volunteer groups and local community.

Eligible volunteer groups include CFA, VICSES, LSV and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association. Successful grants were announced in August 2015. Eligible volunteer groups include CFA, VICSES, LSV and Australian Volunteer Coastguard Association. Successful grant recipients were announced in August 2015.



# Working with communities

**Community is at the centre of what we do in emergency management. There are a number of long term projects underway to improve our connection and communication with communities.**

## Community-Based Emergency Management Project

To ensure communities are better connected and support each other before, during and after emergencies, the Community Based Emergency Management Project was developed and piloted to guide collaborative planning and engagement processes in the future.

The EMC is leading this project with the assistance of a project steering group comprising representatives from DELWP, MFB, CFA, VICSES, MAV and EMV.

The planning approach and framework supports the community to engage with key stakeholders from emergency management organisations, state and local government, business, industry and other non-government organisations, to build local disaster resilience through community based goals and solutions.

The project aims to support communities and organisations to:

- Connect before, during and after emergencies;
- 'Map' the local community profile and priorities;
- Understand local priority hazards and risks;
- Develop scenarios, actions and solutions;
- Prepare, respond and recover; and
- Aim for long-term resilience.

A five-step process, developed and successfully piloted with the local community in Harrietville, has been adopted as part of the project. The refined approach will include the following key areas to guide local collaborative planning and engagement activities in the future:

1. Connecting people;
2. Gathering local knowledge;
3. Understanding hazards and risks;
4. Developing goals and solutions; and
5. Continuing to learn, share and improve.

The project steering group is looking for more opportunities to advance collaborative decision making processes for the delivery of broad community based outcomes.

## Community based emergency management in Harrietville

Harrietville is a town in north east Victoria, on the Great Alpine Road, at the foot of Mount Hotham and Mount Feathertop. It has a population of 402 people, which increases to over 2,000 in summer.

Like other small communities, the people who live in and visit Harrietville use local connections and local knowledge to overcome the challenges of life in a remote area.

With no local medical facility, limited mobile phone and internet coverage and most emergencies managed by volunteers through the local fire brigade, the Harrietville community recognised the need to develop a preferred future.

The Harrietville Community Forum (HCF) identified the need to overcome the impacts and experiences of surrounding bushfires, flash floods and landslides that have affected the local economy. This included strengthening the relationships between the local community and businesses with supporting organisations and networks.

In August 2013, representatives from the local community were supported by EMV (then Fire Services Commission) to develop a local facilitated approach to engage and work with the local Council, emergency services and other key stakeholders.





This included the development of the following 5 step process to identify and discuss the important issues and build on community strengths.



The process encouraged local discussion through workshops and activities where the participants from the community and organisations could learn from the past while developing a better understanding current plans and activities that were in place for the future.

The discussion centred heavily around the recent emergencies and how people may become safer and more resilient and the mountainous environment where the weather conditions can drastically change with little or no notice.

The ongoing discussion and engagement through development and exercising of the 'local bushfire scenario' continued to strengthen relationships and shape the development of mutual goals and activities. This, together with a vision, plan of actions and pathway forward with the five steps has been captured in the Harrietville Community Emergency Management Plan.

This plan, launched by the community with the support of the organisations on 1 October 2014, is considered by the HCF as a 'live' document, requiring regular updating and improvement.

**“This approach provides opportunities for more people to become involved while allowing the plan to evolve and reflect the values and needs of the community over time”.**

**“It is recognized that building and strengthening relationships through these and other community based processes is just as important as developing the plan itself.”**

**“This plan is considered a small but significant contribution toward building local community resilience.”**

**- Harrietville Community Emergency Management Plan.**

# Community Information

**The provision of information to communities is an integral part of emergency management to enable them to make informed decisions about their safety before, during and after.**

## Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (EM-COP)

The development of the Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (EM-COP) is pivotal in assisting the emergency management sector to work together effectively.

EM-COP is an information sharing and collaboration platform that runs on devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones. It facilitates the way people share information, speeds up decision making and reduces the reliance on traditional forms of communication such as telephone and email, which are often overloaded during major emergencies. It operates anywhere on earth.

EM-COP uses a platform that was developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Laboratory (MIT LL) for command and control in military operations. When EMC Craig Lapsley was observing its use during the Southern Californian fires in 2013 as Victoria's Fire Services Commissioner, he identified that the MIT military platform could be developed to support emergency management in Victoria.

In March 2014 a partnership agreement between the State of Victoria and MIT sparked an intensive program of development. The State enlisted agile developers and key cloud service providers to re-design and host the system for the State's use.

A pilot of EM-COP commenced in Victoria in 2014 with input from more than 400 representatives and 58 organisations involved in the Victorian emergency management sector. As the pilot progressed, MIT LL became increasingly impressed with the innovative enhancements to the original software. There are plans to adopt many of the Victorian led enhancements and release a new version of the software globally under an 'Open Source' licence. The global emergency management community will now benefit from the innovative technology and partnerships.

**“The extension of the EM-COP licence enables the emergency management sector access to extensive information networks facilitating collaboration, innovation and the development of partnerships between everyone touched by, or involved in, an emergency.**

**The community, governments, Victorian industry and business need access to information that improves decision-making during emergencies. This is the future of shared responsibility.”**



## Summer fire awareness campaign

Victoria has achieved major cultural changes in our community attitudes to fire risk as a consequence of the summer seasons' 'leave and live' campaign.

These changes are a consequence of consistent, long term social marketing campaigns built around clearly defined and well-resourced strategies.

### 2014-15 summer campaign evaluation

The 2014-15 Summer Fire campaign was able to deliver successful results in reaching its two core objectives to:

- Increase community awareness of bushfire/ grassfire risks and fire safety; and
- Increase the number of people undertaking positive changes in behaviour to prompt them to leave early.

The benchmark and tracking research found, amongst other things, that:

- 81 per cent of Victorians in high risk bushfire areas recognize their community is at risk of fire; and
- 70 per cent who saw the campaign took steps to prepare.

## VicEmergency

The VicEmergency website at [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au) is a single all-emergencies website, simplifying the process of seeking emergency information for community members. Introduced in the 2014-15 season, the site integrates information from across Victoria's emergency services sector in a common data format to assist with emergency service provision throughout the state.

## Social media enhancement pilot

A pilot program analysing social media commenced in August 2014 and concluded in June 2015 at the State Control Centre (SCC) to ensure Victoria's emergency management networks understand how to best utilise this revolutionary form of communication.

The SCC Social Media Capability Enhancement Pilot included:

- Research on social media emergency management best practice;
- Identification and purchase of social media publishing and monitoring software tools; and
- Development of a social media training package – delivered to over 40 staff across Victoria.

The findings of the pilot demonstrated improvement in the SCC's ability to perform community engagement and intelligence gathering through social media. Social media personnel were able to implement their new skills from training and utilise the social media publishing and monitoring tools to improve their capability over the 2014-15 summer period.

Fifteen recommendations have been made following the pilot. These will be implemented over the 2015-16 summer.

## VicDeaf Partnership

During summer 2013-14, EMV, CFA and Vicdeaf teamed up to provide accessible information, updates and alerts to deaf and hard of hearing Victorians.

The strong partnership led to the introduction of Auslan interpreted and captioned weekly Bushfire Conditions updates, an Auslan version of the FireReady video including captioning, and a commitment to ensuring televised emergency announcements included Auslan interpreting and captioning.

On Monday 17 November 2014, as part of Fire Action Week, EMC Craig Lapsley and Vicdeaf Chief Strategy Officer Rachel McKay launched the OpenAccess Alerts app, providing emergency alerts, weather and traffic updates in text format

Vicdeaf launched an important webpage 'Community Safety Information' in Auslan for the 2015 bushfire season. The webpage continues to provide a guide for deaf and hard of hearing people to access important information in Auslan and English captions or transcript.

This collaborative commitment to communication was awarded at the 2014 National Disability Awards. The award recognised the partnership between Vicdeaf and EMV which led to the production of 21 videos with the EMC and Auslan interpreter, during summer 2013-14. Vicdeaf and EMV's General Manager Media and Communication Natalie Staaks received the "Improving Health and Well-being Outcomes Award." New videos are scheduled for production for the 2015-16 summer.

## National review of warnings

In April this year, the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) endorsed the National Review of Warnings and Information report, which made 42 findings and nine recommendations.

The review explored good practice, innovation and key challenges under six key themes: Policy and Practice, Channels and Systems, Construction of Warnings, Community Response, Workforce Capability and Continuous Improvement.

Funded by a National Emergency Management Project Grant, this National Review was overseen by a multi-agency, multi-hazard Steering Committee, drawn from all Australian jurisdictions, key national bodies and chaired by EMC Craig Lapsley. It investigated how warnings and information are currently provided to communities for multiple hazards and in different jurisdictions.

The National Public Information and Warnings Working Group, established under the auspices of ANZEMC, will work through the recommendations with the aim of making emergency warnings more timely, relevant and accurate.









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