



Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry Newsletter

306 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000
emergencies@vcc.org.au 9650 4511

JULY 2011

VCC RESPONSE TO THE VICTORIAN FLOOD CRISIS

The Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry continues to support Victorian flood affected communities. Outreaches in Charlton, Horsham, Yarriambiack have occurred recently. To date, the VCC has made contact with **over 700 homes** in the Loddon, Buloke and Central Goldfields Shires.



It is anticipated that we will work in conjunction with Red Cross to provide outreach activities in the near future.

The VCC's response to this flood event is the longest deployment in recent history and possibly since the programme began in 1977. It has challenged our capacity in some parts of Victoria, raised issues, and provided essential intelligence of what is needed to move forward.

The Department of Human Services and Local Government Authorities have been very supportive and grateful for the support the VCC has offered in this event.

Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) Scholarship



Rev'd Stuart Stuart succeeded in obtaining an ESF scholarship to tour the United States of America to find out what training programmes were offered and at what standard. He also looked into whether the faith based services were integrated and coordinated in any capacity.

Stuart participated in two training programmes offered by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, in Emotional Spiritual Care and Group Crisis Intervention, both of which he had completed in Australia many years ago.

Stuart discovered that most faith based organisations responding to disasters focus on Critical Incident Stress

Management (CISM) training as their core. This is consistent with Psychological First Aid training offered by the VCC Emergencies Ministry programme. He also discovered that depending on where you went in the US depended on how organised the systems were for coordination and deployment. In some parts, the lead support agency is a church community and in others it's a non government organisation. There is no consistency across the United States and there are too many agencies and organisations to bring the system together nationally.

Unfortunately, many of the key stakeholders that Stuart interviewed indicated that the training of faith based organisations has become an industry in itself. Something we do not want to replicate here is Australia. He says we have an opportunity here in Victoria and Australia to develop a set of guiding principles to lead the way forward for faith based communities wanting to engage support services in times of crisis.



9/11 Cross now located at St Peters Catholic Church New York.

FUNDING

The VCC Emergencies Ministry programme has been operating off a small recurrent funding base that only just enables the program to maintain a coordination function. There is no provision for responding to disasters a part from invoicing Local Governments and DHS for extra services provided. The program also operates on small grants being made available

through the Department of Justice for the provision of equipment like tabard/vests.

Recently, the VCC EM programme was successful in obtaining funding to look at a website specific to the EM programme needs. I look forward to sharing this with you when the design is complete and it is online for you to use.

We ask that if anyone knows of or has skills in sourcing funding options to contact Stuart on 9650 4511.

TRAINING



There are a number of training programmes being made available throughout the year, at both Level 1 and Level 2. Calendar pamphlets have been sent out previously.

Level 1 training builds capacity across the State and enables a quick and measured response when required.

For further information on training dates and locations, please go to the VCC website: www.vcc.org.au.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS - Craig Campbell

Eight weeks into this exciting role I am deeply impressed by the extraordinary generosity of volunteers – members of diverse congregations who come together giving time and resources to both the possibility and the reality of disaster as it affects all the people of Victoria.

So many volunteers give just by being there, ready to be called. They have trained and they patiently await call out. In John Milton's phrase:

They also serve who only stand and wait.

Many other volunteers have been called out during

the Floods recovery effort over the last three months, and what remarkable people they are. I have witnessed first hand personal support workers and chaplains in this ministry of accompaniment. They rise early to travel for hours, underway in Charlton by 9.30am. The visitors work with quiet hope among the hard realities of loss and grief. Those affected by the floods receive the visitors gratefully, and only reluctantly allow them to leave.

Generous volunteers working within a ministry that works!

Craig Campbell

TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS - Emotional Spiritual Care News

Waiting: This can be a challenging task for those of us who are used to 'doing' something and find it hard sitting around seeing things that can be achieved. Emergency Management and response is so often about the waiting. I've heard it said that emergency management is 99% waiting and 1% organised chaos. We see an event unfolding on the news or hear it on the radio and we think to ourselves, "I'm trained to respond to incidents like this, perhaps I will be called?". We sit and wait for the phone to ring and it doesn't. We can become frustrated. The VCC has worked very hard since 1977 to establish protocols with the emergency service system to develop arrangements for faith based volunteers to respond. We are called when we are needed. The interpretation of when we are needed can differ at times, but generally speaking the VCC can advocate for the response of Chaplains and Personal Support volunteers by following the established arrangements. **Self deploying** will only work to frustrate emergency service organisations and local government and ultimately push the Church out of the system.

Emotional Spiritual Care

Having returned from the States and asking the question, what is Emotional Spiritual Care (ESC)?, I found myself frustrated by the responses provided. Many answers were clichés or simplistic (not simple). If ESC, as described by many, is the provision of a process like Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), then all

psychosocial providers are delivering ESC. I do not believe this to be the case or an accurate description of ESC. ESC has to be *more* than a process. I believe that ESC is about an intentional provision of 'sacred space' to enable a trauma affected person the opportunity to emotionally, psychologically **and** spiritually process the event. ESC is the deliberate act of creating opportunities for people to sit with their thoughts, feelings and emotions and to find their own meaning in what has taken place. This meaning making is integral to post traumatic growth.

ESC is also supporting the person through the provision of basic needs, but goes well beyond that. This means that providers of ESC must prescribe to a faith tradition.

I would strongly argue that non-faith based providers are not equipped to provide ESC as part of their of service delivery.