



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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**New Relief Handbook**

The Department of Human Services is currently reviewing the Relief Handbook which will soon be commissioned for 2012.

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**DPC Green Paper**

The Dept. of Premier and Cabinet has just released a 'Green Paper' on Emergency Management

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**Coordinators Conference 2011**

On October 26, 2011 a conference will be held to

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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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# Flood Crisis

The Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry continues to support Victorian flood affected communities. Outreaches in Campaspe, Gannawarra, Northern Grampians have already occurred and soon Yarriambiack and Skipton will take place.

The longer the requirement for Outreach continues the more challenging it is to find volunteers willing to support the effort. This is common among all volunteer organisations. Clergy particularly, are often time poor due to the work of parish ministry and other commitments. This raises questions as to how we do Outreach in the future?

The world of emergency management is changing rapidly and with this change are



**VCC & Red Cross Volunteers working together in the Shire of Campaspe August 2011**

the expectations of both Local and State Government on all providers of support during disasters.

However there is no reason why these raised expectations should not make us more effective at what we do.

Somehow we have to find a balance between the expectations of Government and the work of ministry which can

sometimes be more organic than structured.

The challenge for 2012 is to grow and develop our Level 1, Lay Teams across the State. This can only happen when churches get behind the work of the VCC Emergencies Ministry and inform their congregants to the opportunities.

Our experience with the fires in 2009 and now the floods is that people are affected for many months, even years after the event. For some, it is not until they have completed sorting out insurance and clean up that they stop and reflect on how the event has affected them personally. Our teams are continually making contact with people who are just starting to feel the affects of the floods which began in September 2010.

You can help by letting your church members know of this ministry and how they can become involved.

**WE URGENTLY NEED VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH OUTREACH IN OCTOBER**



## New Relief Handbook DPC Green Paper

The Department of Human Services (DHS) officially took over the role of Relief in 2010. The State Emergency Services was originally responsible for coordinating relief activities with local municipalities. This was a challenging fit given the State Emergency Services is a Response agency.

The review period for this handbook is to take three years, with updated versions in each year until 2012.

The VCC Emergencies Ministry program has been a part of these reviews as it sits on the Department of Health and Human Services Social Health and Community Recovery Sub Committee.

The original version of the Relief Handbook was released in October 2010. A dilemma with this release date was that many municipalities were already experiencing crisis due to flood. This meant that many Municipal Recovery Managers did not have the opportunity to read the document or action that necessary changes.

A second review was undertaken in July of 2011. The VCC has had significant input into this review process and has indicated the need to include Emotional Spiritual Care into the arrangements to more accurately reflect what happens in the Relief and Recovery space.

This paper is due for release in October 2011.

A further and final review will be undertaken in 2012.

“Victoria’s emergency management framework in nearly 30 years old and no longer meets the needs of the State. Our recent experience of natural disasters, including the heatwave and bushfires in early 2009 and the floods in 2010-11, shows clearly that the risk environment has changed in Victoria. Victoria is experiencing more regular and more severe natural events, in line with the global trend. According to research, in 2010 a total of 385 natural disasters killed more than 297,000 people worldwide, affected over 217 million others and cause US \$123.9 billion in economic damage.”

“Victorians are, and will continue to be at risk from a broad range of natural and human induced hazards. The CSIRO has predicted that Victoria is likely to see more extreme bushfires, floods, droughts and storm surges. Many communities, and industries and, much infrastructure, are located in areas that are likely to be affected by these severe weather events. It is important that municipal councils, communities and individuals are supported to develop these skills to navigate and mitigate the risks and local impacts of crisis events.”

“With more extreme events likely to occur, it is more important than ever for Victoria to have effective arrangements in place to manage the risks facing the State and to assist people to be safe in the face of adversity and uncertainty. The findings of both the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission and the Victorian Flood Review show that Victoria’s existing legislation, policy, governance, and operational arrangements for crisis and emergency management need modifying and upgrading to meet the challenges ahead. Victoria manages smaller emergencies relatively well, but needs legislative, administrative and cultural change to break down the organisational ‘silos’ that inhibit an ‘all hazards, all agencies’ approach to managing major emergencies.”

This Paper is designed to stimulate community discussion and invite public comments on the proposed policy response.

## Coordinators Conference 2011

On October 26, a Coordinators conference will be held at the State Office of VCC. There are a number of newly appointed coordinators around the State, and this conference provides an opportunity for people to get together and discuss regional issues.

The conference is also designed to inform and educate coordinators on new policy and procedural arrangements for the program as well as Local and State Government changes to emergency management arrangements.

Testing capacity and exercising emergencies is an important part of ‘being prepared’. Part of the day will be set aside for coordinators to participate in table top exercises to become familiar with expectations in the field.

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



## Training & Development

The 2012 Training Schedule has been released.

### Level 2 Training - Clergy & Pastoral Carers

CBD 1	April 17 & 18 VCC Office
Gippsland	May 29 & 30 Traralgon
Barwon SW	June 22 & 23 TBC
CBD 2	August 7 & 8 VCC Office
Loddon Mallee	October 19 & 20 Bendigo

### Level 1 - Lay members

Metro North & West	March 17 VCC Office
Metro East	
Metro South	May 19
Barwon SW	June 23 TBC
Grampians	July 28
Loddon Mallee	August 11
Hume	October 27
Gippsland	November 10

Contact Craig Campbell regarding training options and venues.

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## Further Impressions

The first six months in any role is the best opportunity to function as an “observer” - able to sustain some distance and perspective while deepening knowledge of the organisation. Having been around for about six months we are more deeply a part of the culture, more “participant”. A primary effect is that during the first six months we can see readily the growth edges (problems) . Around six months into leadership and involvement we can become part of those problems!

I am now officially a part of any problems!!

A key observation for me has been the way VC Emergencies Ministry straddles two worlds - the ‘command and control’ world of emergency services and the consensus driven, networked world of individual and community life. We need to be capable in both worlds.

We must understand and be able to operate in the structured environment of emergency response services as they work to reduce the impact of disasters on life and property. Without such knowledge and skill we get in the way.

However our ministry of presence with individuals and communities is inherently relational, offering gracious and hospitable space for another person and seeking where possible to connect them with a network of community life.

The operational handbook of the VCC Emergencies Ministry, to be introduced at the Coordinators Conference, is intended to resource our effectiveness in both worlds.

Craig Campbell, D Min Studies.

## Research

The Victorian population according to the 2006 Census was 4,932,422. The number of people identifying themselves as having some form of religious affiliation was 68.4% or 3,390,804. This is a significant figure, especially in light of the work of the VCC Emergencies Ministry (VCC EM). What does this mean in terms of the support offered to disaster affected individuals and communities? Essentially it means that we can confidently predict that 2 out of 3 people will have some appreciation for spiritual matters.

It is widely accepted that when an individual experiences a traumatic event like a disaster or emergency, their meaning structures, constancies, coping abilities, and world views are challenged (Farley, Vis, Farkas). Herman (1992) goes on to say that trauma events breach attachments, shatter the self, undermine belief systems, and violate faith in a natural and divine order, which can have an impact on one’s spiritual life.

It is also true that for many, traumatic experiences can cause people to question the spiritual and religious. Decker (1993) states that “whether or not a person subscribes to certain religious beliefs, most survivors of trauma are impelled to reexamine the meaning and purpose of their lives.”

The work of the VCC EM is to support individuals to tell their story and begin the process of emotional, psychological and spiritual recovery. Our colleague, Rev Dr. Peter Crawford (1998) stated that for far too long we have tended to concentrate on the physical and now the emotional. He goes on to say Recovery is often incomplete if the spiritual dimension is overlooked. This is well supported by research.

*“Several researchers in the area of post traumatic recovery agree that individuals who report positive post trauma outcomes or growth go through a process such as re appraisal, re orientation, and re framing, which offered them the opportunity to re evaluate their worldviews” (Janoff-Bulman 1992).*

Mattis (2002) confirmed a relationship between religiosity/spirituality, meaning, and interpretations in coping during times of adversity. Furthermore, Cadell et al (2003) found that spirituality is part of meaning making and coping and contributes to posttraumatic growth. **TBC**

## Urgently Needed!!!

Volunteers to assist in Flood Outreach

OCTOBER 24TH - OCTOBER 28TH

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