



from THE PRESIDENT - Honouring the Service of Our Deceased Members

It is with profound sadness that we acknowledge the recent passing of four esteemed current and former members of the State Emergency Service in WA.

Their dedication and selfless service have left an indelible mark on our organisation and the communities we serve. We extend our deepest condolences to their families, friends, and fellow volunteers during this difficult time.

Mike Wadley OAM served as a volunteer and career officer with unwavering commitment. His leadership exemplified the spirit of volunteerism and greatly enhanced our operational capabilities.

Terry Swetman was known for his expertise, contributing significantly to training and operational response. His passion and professionalism inspired many within our ranks for decades.

Marc Poupart dedicated many years to supporting our community, always ready to respond with compassion and skill. His efforts in responding to community recovery actions was invaluable.

Helen Doye played a vital role, demonstrating exceptional dedication. Her commitment to training and mentoring new volunteers strengthened the foundation of our service.

Collectively, these four individuals embodied the core values of WA SES Volunteers Association—courage, resilience, and community spirit. Their contributions have not only advanced the mission of the SES in WA but have also fostered a legacy of service that will continue to inspire current and future volunteers.



The Association is deeply grateful for the extraordinary service and friendship of these remarkable members. Their loss is felt profoundly across our community, and we honour their memory with heartfelt respect and gratitude.

Members and community supporters were invited to join in commemorating their lives at memorial services.

In this time of mourning, we encourage all members to seek support as needed. Resources are available through the DFES counselling services and peer support networks. Please do not hesitate to reach out to: [Mental Health and Wellness](#)

Together, we remember and celebrate the lives of these dedicated volunteers whose spirit will forever remain a guiding light within the SES in WA.

Greg Cook, President, SES Volunteers Association

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Potential liability if SES allows a driver to take too many sandbags

When someone rolls up to an SES sandbag point and drives off with 2.5 tonnes in their trailer, it definitely raises an eyebrow—or two. But here's the real kicker: if that overloaded trailer ends up causing the driver to get a fine or even worse, a crash, could the SES actually be held responsible for letting it happen?

Michael Eburn's blog breaks down a surprisingly tricky question about common sense, duty of care, and where responsibility really stops. It's an eye-opening read you won't want to miss.

Check it out here: [Is SES Liable if Someone Takes Too Many Sandbags](#)

The blog is available here: [Potential liability if NSW SES allow driver to take too many sandbags – Australian Emergency](#)

'With a position of Presumed Incompetence – Is there really a future for volunteers?'

A Strategic Discussion Paper – by an SES volunteer

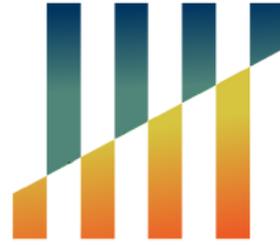
The paper argues that Western Australia's long-standing volunteer-based emergency services model is under serious strain, as declining volunteer numbers, poor retention, increasing administrative burdens, and organisational practices that undervalue volunteer skills are eroding capability.

Despite volunteers providing enormous economic and community value, their competencies are often questioned or invalidated through rigid training-currency rules and automated systems that presume skill decay, while experienced local volunteers are frequently sidelined during major incidents in favour of incoming paid staff.

These practices, combined with growing time pressures and insufficient recognition of volunteers' expertise, local knowledge, and community role, are accelerating the loss of seasoned volunteers whose experience cannot simply be replaced through recruitment.

The paper warns that without meaningful improvements in respect, inclusion, competency recognition, and genuine support, Western Australia risks losing the cultural foundation and operational capacity that its emergency services have long relied upon.

Read the paper [here](#).



WAFES AWARDS

2026

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

The awards are a fantastic opportunity to recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of volunteers and DFES staff over the past 12 months.

In 2026 there are 17 awards on offer for young people (aged 18 to 28), individuals and teams.

This includes the new WAFES Young Person of the Year Award – the pinnacle of recognition for our young people. This new award is not open for direct nomination, instead a panel of judges will select the winner from the four service young person of the year award winners:

- Marine Rescue Young Person of the Year
- SES Young Person of the Year
- Volunteer Firefighting Young Person of the Year
- DFES Young Person of the Year

The winner of the WAFES Young Person of the Year Award will be announced at the gala dinner on Saturday 5 September at Crown Perth.

There are great incentives for getting nominations submitted with nominators of a successful finalist invited to the WAFES Awards gala dinner. Cash prizes are also up for grabs for volunteer finalists and winners.

Need help writing a nomination? Refer to the [nomination guide](#) with handy tips and sample nominations.

To review the awards criteria and to submit a nomination, visit the [WAFES Awards website](#)

**Nominations close
9am Monday 23 March**



A Tribute to Assistant Commissioner Gary Gifford

From the SES Volunteers Association on behalf of WA SES volunteers

On 31 March 2026, Assistant Commissioner Gary Gifford ESM will retire after more than 26 years with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and a long career committed to community safety.

AC Gifford began with FESA in 1999 as Regional Director SES for the Pilbara and Kimberley. From his earliest roles, he demonstrated strong operational leadership in some of WAs most demanding emergency environments, providing clear direction, sound judgement and reliable support during major cyclones, storms and flooding events.



Across senior appointments—including Director Metropolitan SES, Assistant Chief Operations Officer Hazard Planning and Response, and later Assistant Commissioner overseeing several key operational portfolios—he played a central role in strengthening WÁ’s preparedness and response capability for major response operations. His strategic oversight enhanced SES operational standards, improved coordination across the State and supported the ongoing development of resilient volunteer and staff capability.

A defining feature of AC Gifford’s career has been his commitment to developing people and building organisational capability. He provided steady guidance, fostered emerging leaders and approached decision-making with consistency, clarity and a strong focus on safety and operational effectiveness.

His leadership also extended to Marine Rescue volunteers, where he supported improved integration, capability development and alignment across coastal and regional communities.

AC Gifford contributed to numerous significant natural hazards incident responses across WA;

- deployment to Myanmar in 2015 following catastrophic flooding;
- support during the 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires in New South Wales;
- secondment to the Department of Health during COVID-19 as Deputy Incident Controller;
- and strategic leadership during multiple high-risk WA bushfire seasons.

His service was formally recognised with the Emergency Services Medal in 2010.

As AC Gifford concludes his career, the SES Volunteers Association also congratulates Chief Superintendent Paul Carr on his forthcoming promotion to Assistant Commissioner and looks forward to continuing a strong, collaborative partnership with DFES under his leadership. CS Carr commenced with the WA State Emergency Service at the State headquarters in Belmont 30 years ago and served in the Kimberley region and the South West region with WASES until moving back to the Metropolitan area about 20 years ago when he transferred to the Emergency Management division of the FESA. Paul was appointed as a Superintendent when the DFES was established in 2012.

On behalf of SES volunteers across Western Australia, the SES Volunteers Association expresses its sincere appreciation to Assistant Commissioner Gary Gifford ESM for his decisive leadership, steadfast support and enduring contribution to community safety. We wish him and his family every happiness in his retirement.

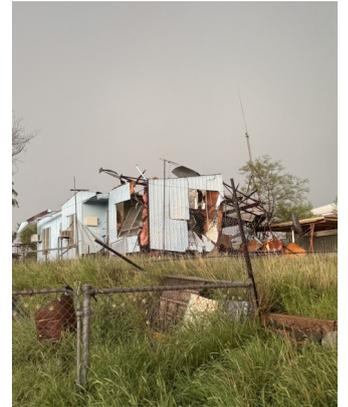
Hedland SES – 2025 Year in Review

It's been a very busy 12 months for Hedland SES, beginning with the arrival of Tropical Cyclone Zelia in February 2025.

Zelia rapidly intensified offshore before crossing the Pilbara coast as a Category 4 system near the De Grey River mouth on 14 February, bringing record rainfall and widespread flooding.

Damaging winds impacted Port Hedland and Marble Bar, with gusts exceeding 100 km/h, bringing down trees and causing extensive damage across several pastoral stations. Heavy rainfall resulted in record flooding along the De Grey River, where levels at Marble Bar peaked at 10.23 metres—almost two metres above the previous record.

Flooding cut the Great Northern Highway, isolating Pilbara and Kimberley communities and prompting evacuations from remote areas.



Community Engagement

In July 2025, our mascot Stormy Bear was out meeting the public at the annual Spinifex Festival. The event also provided a great opportunity to showcase our new SES marquees, proudly supported through a generous donation from BHP.



Milestones and Training

Also in July, our Secretary Rhonda Coffey celebrated her 70th birthday with the team. Rhonda has been a dedicated SES member for almost 10 years and continues to play a vital role managing our administration and secretarial work.



In September 2025, the unit took delivery of a new flood rescue vessel. The team put it through its paces during a Sunday training session at Finucane Island, with District Officer Peter Cameron leading familiarisation and ATU training.

To round out the year, in December 2025, unit members had their biggest (and brightest) job of the year—assisting Santa at the Hedland Christmas Carols.



Submitted by: **Barry Harrison**
SESVA Management Committee—Pilbara Representative

Kalgoorlie-Boulder SES Revives Retired Trailer—Boosting Storm Response Capability

The Kalgoorlie-Boulder SES Unit has demonstrated classic SES ingenuity by transforming an unused vertical rescue trailer into a fully functional storm damage response asset—delivering increased operational flexibility at a fraction of the cost of a new build.

For years, the unit relied on a single storm damage trailer and its truck for callouts. While effective, this setup became limiting during widespread weather events when multiple crews needed to hit the road quickly. The challenge was simple but significant: not every volunteer holds a truck licence, and relying on one primary vehicle meant response capacity could bottleneck at the worst times.

Looking for a solution, the team turned to something that had been quietly gathering dust—an old vertical rescue trailer that hadn't been used for nearly a decade.

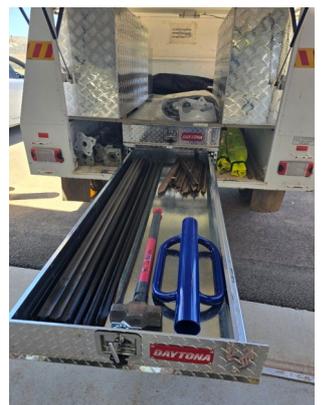
With some thoughtful planning, practical modifications, and a modest outlay—approximately \$3,000 for new toolboxes and around \$1,000 for tool fit-out (with most equipment already on hand)—the trailer has now been reborn as a dedicated storm callout trailer. It is officially operational and already proving its worth.

The upgrade didn't just add capability—it empowered more volunteers to deploy without needing truck licences, enabling multiple crews to head out simultaneously when the community needs them most.

Kalgoorlie-Boulder SES is sharing this initiative with fellow volunteers across the state and with DFES as a potential concept for future trailer builds. It's a great reminder that innovation doesn't always mean starting from scratch; sometimes it simply requires a fresh look at what's already available.

The unit welcomes contact from anyone involved in equipment planning or interested in discussing the design further.

Another example of SES volunteers leading with creativity, problem-solving, and practical knowhow—delivering real outcomes for their community and sharing ideas to strengthen our capability statewide.



What an adventure — a visit to Newman Early Learning Centre



Local Manager Connie and Training Manager Colin packed up the D-Max and headed out to engage with a small (but very enthusiastic!) group of future SES members.

“We kicked things off talking about flooding, weather events, and how they can damage houses. Then suddenly a little voice pipes up: **“My trampoline ended up on the neighbour’s roof!”**”

Funny enough — that was one of the calls our unit actually responded to! And now here we were, meeting the young owner of *that* trampoline. It made for a great chat about strong winds, how they can lift something as big as a trampoline.

The children were full of their own weather stories — one event affecting a whole community in so many different ways. It gave us the perfect chance to talk about flooding, sandbagging, fences and trees coming down (some over power lines), and what to do to stay safe.

We moved on to explaining some of our roles — supporting emergency agencies, assisting with Karijini rescues — which sparked lots of excitement as many of the kids had visited the area. That led into a chat about remote travel: taking food and water even on “short” trips. As we know, a simple 4-hour drive from Newman to Port Hedland can easily turn into 6 if an ore train breaks down across the road.

Luckily in one recent case, parents had spare supplies, truck drivers shared with those who didn’t, and the mine brought out extra water. A perfect lead-in to the topic of heatwaves.

Then we talked about how SES help police with searches. We explained why you should stay with your vehicle, or at least leave a note if you leave it or get a lift. It’s much easier to find a vehicle from the air than a person walking on foot.

The children suggested satellite phones and mobiles, which opened up the important message: **“Tell someone where you’re going and when you’re expected back.”** If you’re not back on time, we know you might need help — and exactly where to start looking.

And then came the highlight of the visit: **Rescue Ted Senior!**

Ted had a possible broken leg and needed to be carried to safety. The children offered up all sorts of ideas on how to carry him, and together we settled on a blanket stretcher since he couldn’t be carried by one person with that dangling leg (much to their disappointment — they all wanted a turn!).

As all good things must end, we wrapped up by handing out special edition Newman SES colouring books, cards declaring they helped rescue Ted Senior, and stickers and magnets with emergency numbers for parents — especially handy during cyclone season, which just keeps on giving.

We also shared a few more exciting parts of our work: travelling six hours to a remote Aboriginal community as liaison officers, ensuring cultural areas were respected while crews fought bushfires creeping too close; making sure our Newman Volunteer Fire Brigade members were fed and had a place to sleep; and providing logistical support — including being one of the few SES units in WA to attend a **space debris recovery**.

What a way to end one year and begin another.

Connie Reed

Local Manager, Newman SES



Esperance SES – Joint Exercise with DFES Marine Rescue

In December, Esperance SES took part in a joint exercise that coincided with a visit from our District Officer. The scenario involved Marine Rescue responding to a fire on a boat in a remote location, with an injured person requiring transfer to emergency medical care.

The exercise required the “casualty” to be moved from their vessel onto ours, then transferred from the boat to the Polaris, and finally on to a waiting ambulance.

One of the standout moments for our team was how smoothly the transfer process ran. Even with our older Polaris, it only took around 10 minutes to move “Boris” from the back deck of V4, up through the hatch, and onto the Polaris for onward transport.

This exercise has given us confidence in our current capability—and set a benchmark for what we can achieve once our new Polaris arrives. We are already planning another joint exercise to compare performance and continue improving our response capability

Submitted by: **Leonie Henderson,**
Local Manager, Esperance SES Unit ; Commander, Marine Rescue Esperance

Mandurah SES get into the team spirit!



The Mandurah team are wearing their T-Shirts with pride... **we have a few extras left!**

If you'd like one – please contact Linda with your size to check availability.

E: Sesva.office@ses-wa.asn.au

M: 0499 619 287.

\$25 + postage.



NOTE:

A reminder that these shirts are for casual use only—not for operations.

FREE - SES Promotional Products and Equipment

Reminder to all Units – if you're hosting a community event, SESVA has **banners, flags and gazebos for loan** – and free promotional products for you to give away.



Find out more



Celebrating 40 Years of Service: Lawrence “Carl” Nicoletto Honoured at Bassendean SES



Carl Nicoletto received his 40-year Service Award from DFES District Officer, Karina Skipworth and Local Manager Steve Blackford, who received his 25-year Service Award on the night.

The Bassendean SES held its annual Awards & Recognition Night on Saturday, 13 December 2025, at the Bassendean Bowling Club.

The evening celebrated the unit’s achievements throughout 2025 and acknowledged the families—wives, husbands, and partners—whose ongoing support enables SES volunteers to answer the call for training and emergencies.

Across the night, members were recognised for a combined 120 years of service, with awards presented for:

- 3 × 5 year service awards
- 1 × 10 year service award
- 2 × 15 year service awards
- 1 × 25 year service award (presented to Unit Manager, Steve Blackford)
- 1 × 40 year service award

Right: 100 years of Service.

Carl (41 years), Steve (26 years) and Mark (33 years)

A major highlight was the recognition of Lawrence “Carl” Nicoletto, who received his 40 Year SES Service Award, marking four decades of dedicated volunteering entirely with the Bassendean SES unit. Carl’s long-standing commitment, reliability, and deep knowledge exemplify the spirit of SES service and the strength of community volunteerism. Although officially named Lawrence, Carl shared— as he often does—that he has been known as Carl since birth and sees no need to change now.

Awards on the night were presented by DFES District Officer Karina Skipworth alongside Unit Manager and fellow award recipient, Steve Blackford.

The event was made possible thanks to the excellent planning by Linda Sengsourinho and the delicious catering provided by Nosh Catering. The celebratory cake was shared among all members to mark their collective efforts and achievements.

Carl’s 40 years with Bassendean SES stand as an inspiring milestone—one that reflects unwavering dedication to the community and a remarkable legacy within the unit.

Congratulations on your 41 years of service Carl, from the SES Volunteers Association and SES volunteers.



Life Membership Tribute – Les Hayter ESM

from Margaret River SES (MRSES)

“As we welcome the new year, Margaret River SES is proud to celebrate one of our most valued members and acknowledge an extraordinary milestone in SES service.

Les Hayter ESM has been awarded Life Membership, in recognition of an exceptional 35 years of service to the State Emergency Service and emergency management across Western Australia. This honour has also been acknowledged by the SES Volunteers Association and DFES, reflecting the breadth and impact of Les’s contribution.

Les began his SES journey in 1990 with Karratha SES, where he served both as a volunteer and as an employee of FESA (now DFES). Over the years, his commitment to community safety and operational excellence has seen him volunteer with Swan SES and, more recently, become a highly valued member of the Margaret River SES family.

Throughout his career, Les has been widely respected for his passion for training and capability development. He has held Training Manager roles across multiple units and is a highly regarded Trainer Assessor in numerous SES disciplines. Les was also instrumental in the development and delivery of training packages for SES volunteers while working as a DFES staff member, ensuring training remained practical, balanced, and fit for purpose.

After settling in Margaret River with his wife Gillian, Les quickly became an integral part of MRSES.



Les Hayter ESM, with his wife Gillian, receiving his Life Membership Award.



A self-described “shed man,” Les has contributed countless hours behind the scenes—sharing hands-on skills, mentoring members, supporting projects, and strengthening unit capability. He has played a pivotal role in welcoming and developing new volunteers, offering not only technical knowledge but encouragement, wisdom, and genuine camaraderie.

Les is known throughout the SES for his enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, and willingness to help. Dependable and passionate, he embodies the spirit of service that defines the SES and continues to positively influence generations of volunteers.

We would also like to sincerely acknowledge Gillian Hayter, whose support has enabled Les to dedicate so much time and energy to the SES over the years. Thank you, Gillian—you are an important part of this journey.

Congratulations, Les, on this well-deserved Life Membership. Your legacy of service, leadership, and commitment has shaped our organisation and strengthened our communities. **Thank you for everything you have given to the SES.”**



SESVA President Greg Cook, and Vice President Alan Hawke joined Margaret River SES Volunteers to celebrate.



Phil Rance, Mandurah SES, hangs up his compass after 43 years service...

Honouring a Career Defined by Courage, Compassion, and a Rescue That Changed Everything

At the Mandurah SES Awards Night on 3 December 2025, long serving volunteer Phil Rance ESM received one of the unit's highest honours: Life Membership of the Mandurah State Emergency Service.

The award marks the culmination of 43 years of dedicated service to the Murray (1988-1999) and Mandurah communities — years shaped profoundly by one unforgettable event early in his career.

The Rescue That Defined a Lifetime of Service — Coolup, 1985

In 1985, just two years after joining Murray SES, Phil took part in a rescue that would leave a lasting mark on his life. An 18-month-old girl had fallen five metres down a narrow bore on a newly purchased farm in Coolup. With limited equipment and relying on techniques of the time—such as the old string-line depth check—the team confirmed the child's location deep below ground.

A local farmer offered his backhoe to dig a parallel hole. Once the shaft was stabilised, Phil and two other volunteers descended by ladder to reach the trapped child. Working in tight, unstable soil with little room to manoeuvre, Phil did the bulk of the digging, eventually freeing the girl and passing her up to his teammates, who carried her to an ambulance 200 metres away.

Only then did Phil realise he was still five metres underground. Alone at the bottom and feeling the ladder shift beneath him he climbed out slowly and rejoined the team.

The event stayed with Phil for decades. It resurfaced emotionally in 2001 and again in 2022, eventually leading him to seek counselling and EMDR therapy—nearly 38 years after the rescue. That single moment, and the silent burden that followed, would go on to shape his commitment to mental health within emergency services.

A Legacy of Support: Becoming a Peer Support Officer

Determined that others would not face similar struggles alone, Phil became a Peer Support Officer in 1999, a role he held with deep personal conviction. His guiding message to volunteers has always been simple and powerful: “You cannot support others if you are the one who needs support.”

A Career of Milestones and Service

Across four decades, Phil contributed to the SES through training, leadership, and operational excellence. His major achievements include Map Reading Trainer Assessor, Search Controller (serving 30 years), 1999 – Peer Support Officer, 1999 – 4WD Trainer Assessor, On-Road Trainer Assessor, All Terrain Vehicle Trainer Assessor, Over 100 hours coordinating crews during the Waroona/Yarloop fires and 4WD Recovery Trainer Assessor.

Phil's adaptability and willingness to mentor others made him a pillar of both the Murray and Mandurah units across the eras of WASES, FESA, and DFES.

A New Direction — But Still Volunteering

After 43 remarkable years, Phil has stepped back to focus on himself and his wife Evelin, whose support has sustained his volunteer journey for over 52 years. But his service continues—he now trains 16–25-year-olds preparing for their driver's licences, passing on knowledge and confidence to the next generation.

Phil ended his SES chapter with modesty: “Thanks for an interesting time in my life.”

His Life Membership of Mandurah SES is a fitting acknowledgment of a volunteer whose courage, compassion, and unwavering dedication have shaped countless lives—and whose legacy will remain part of the SES story for many years to come.

Congratulations on your 43 years of service Phil, from the SES Volunteers Association and SES volunteers.

May the next chapter of volunteering be very satisfying for you and Evelin.



Top left: Phil Rance ESM received his Life Membership from fellow Life Member, Chris Stickland.

Above: Phil was congratulated by the Member for Dawesville, Lisa Munday (left) and Mandurah Mayor, Amber Kearns.

SWORD Logistics Annual Family BBQ & Awards Day

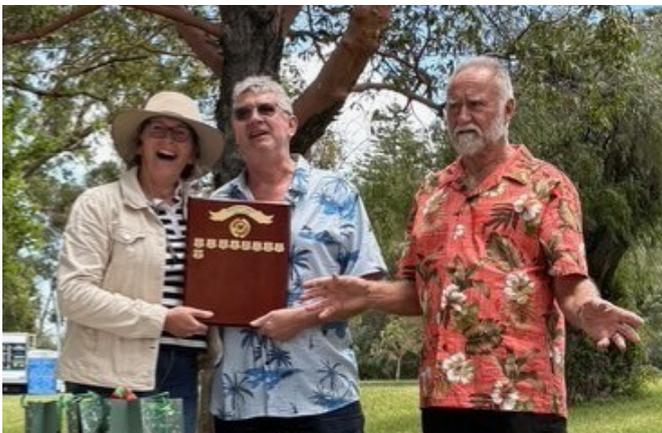
SWORD Logistics wrapped up 2025 with another fantastic Family BBQ and Awards Day on 23 November, bringing volunteers, families, and supporters together for a relaxed afternoon of great food and well-deserved recognition.

The Social Club once again delivered an amazing spread, with fresh salads, prawns, ice cream, and a team of expert grill-masters keeping everyone well fed. It was a wonderful day that highlighted the strong camaraderie within the unit.

2025 Award Recipients

This year's awards celebrated outstanding contributions across the unit:

- **Oops Award:** Michelle Gardiner & Geoff Askew
- **Best New Member:** Peter May
- **Member of the Year:** Susan Moir
- **DFES Logistics Manager Award (Best Behind the Scenes):** Robert Bates



OOPs Award Recipients Michelle Gardiner & Geoff Askew with Unit Manager Ron Davy. We wonder what they did!

High Threat Period Activity

With the High Threat Period (HTP) commencing in November and running through to April 2026, the SWORD Logistics team has already been exceptionally busy. December and January saw volunteers supporting numerous incidents and deployments, including:

- Wiluna Storm – equipment drop-off
- Bullsbrook Fire – gazebo, furniture, water, and foam resupply
- Pearce Airbase – LAT resupply
- Moondyne Fire – fuel and equipment
- Bindoon Fire – generator set to the ICC
- Warradarge/Eneabba Fire – equipment drop-off
- Mueha Fire – gazebos and chairs for the Salvation Army
- Boddington Fire – multiple equipment deliveries and resupplies
- Rockingham and Kalamunda Fires – water and foam

Most recently, SES and DFES teams were deployed to Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun, providing tent accommodation to firefighters responding to major bushfire activity in the region. With a large fire emerging at Lake King, part of the equipment was redirected to support efforts there.

Looking Ahead

The unit restarted activities on 3 February with a combined BBQ and games night, bringing members together to kick off another year of service, teamwork, and operational readiness.

Submitted by: **Ziggy Belczowski**

SESVA Management Committee, South Coastal Rep

Pingelly SES – End of Year Gathering

2025 wrapped up a busy and productive year for many SES units, including Pingelly SES.

Our final training session for the year was held on 12 December 2025, with members making sure the unit was fully prepared for any activations over the Christmas period.

The evening concluded with a relaxed and well-received BBQ, bringing volunteers together to celebrate the year's achievements. The camaraderie continued well into the night, with plenty of discussion about plans and activities for 2026.

The Unit got off to an active start operationally, and formal training has recommenced.

Submitted by: **Sarge Bottacin,**

SESVA Management Committee, Upper Great Southern Rep



TRAINING MATTERS

David MacLean, A/District Officer, Training Development Support & Compliance for SES and Marine Rescue, has submitted an update for SES volunteers:



Done:

The final touches have been made on the **Roof Safety System Builder course** and currency. There is a bit of a “Gap” to be completed in this year’s currency training, which might add an extra hour or so, but hopefully it is valuable time being introduced to the new techniques and equipment made available to keep our volunteers safe. The Roof Safety System Builder course now addresses anchors.

The **Land Search Team Leader course** is now sitting with Training Product Publication, after some polishing on “Lost Person Behaviour”, updated scenarios and reviewing the “Appreciation” element. We have also boosted the reference to AIIMS / Hierarchy of Control structures. A more efficient and relevant version of the LSTL course is anticipated to show up in eAcademy by the time this newsletter is published.

On advice from SESVA, we will **not** be introducing a Storm and Water Damage Operations Team Leader course.

In Progress:

SES Local Manager is being worked on to attempt to resolve the issue with links. DFES have had an issue with the links to some of our forms as well as capturing the restructuring how we manage documents, which is still being resolved. Once that is sorted, SES Local Manager will be updated to reflect.

Reviews are underway for a few NUCOMS, following up on some IIRs that have come through.

Bushfire Fundamentals has been rolled out as an online course replacing the Bushfire Safety Awareness. That has been available for a little while. We are still creating a drill for the use of the burnover blanket to add a bit of value to the pre-High Threat Period “warm up” training. 😊

Next:

WAERN, Advanced WAERN, Communication Field Equipment and **Field Radio Operator** are going to be next to feel our magic touch, bringing a bit of currency and relevance to a tired suite.

Flood Rescue Boat Operations will need an update to include reference to the new AMSA requirements. This will address updated SMS, Trainer/Assessor mandates and revising the timetable.

PATs getting formed:

While all that is going through the planning phase, we are also shaping up to review the whole SES Training Program and **interested potential PAT (Project Advisory Team) members are encouraged to contact me**

(david.maclea@dfes.wa.gov.au / 0407 445 267) for the opportunity to help build a plan that directs future training.

I expect this will involve two days of discussions, activities and coffee over a weekend. (Currently planning around 02-03 May). There is scope for bringing in one or two Regional PAT members to Metro and we are happy to welcome others to “teams in” but they will need to supply their own coffee!





2026 WAFES CONFERENCE

Conference theme & keynote speakers announced

Work is already underway on the 2026 WAFES Conference – to be held on Friday 4 and Saturday 5 September at Crown Perth – with volunteers playing a key role in shaping the program.

Workshops have been held with volunteers, DFES staff and the Young People’s Advisory Council to help make sure the conference reflects the volunteers who will attend.

The 2026 theme, **Bright Futures, Stronger Services** celebrates the people who shape our sector today and those who will guide it tomorrow. It explores how embracing new ideas, bridging generational strengths and welcoming emerging volunteers, we can look to the future with a commitment to modern, innovative and connected emergency services.

Two keynote speakers will headline the conference.

Jessica Watson OAM brings a powerful story of resilience and determination, best known for becoming the youngest person to sail solo, non-stop and unassisted around the world. Her experiences continue to resonate well beyond that achievement.

Joining her is **Scott Millar**, a passionate speaker who works with organisations to better connect people of different ages and experiences. His insights will be particularly relevant for volunteers working in diverse, multi-generational teams.

More information about the keynote speakers is available on the [WAFES Conference website](#).

VESPIIA

FUTURE FRONTLINES | NATIONAL SURVEY

Women in service roles: have your say

Your experience matters. Collective data drives structural change.

Veterans, Emergency Services and Police Industry Institute Australia (VESPIIA) is conducting a national survey to better understand the lived experience of women across Defence, police, fire, ambulance, SES, corrections, and related frontline services.

For years, national inquiries and internal reviews have identified persistent gaps in how service systems support women. In areas such as equipment design, reproductive health, menopause, mental health, reporting processes, and career progression, women often experience service differently.

What we lack is consolidated, cross-sector data.

This survey focuses on women’s experiences in service environments. Responses from all genders are welcome where relevant, including LGBTIQ+ personnel and men. Broader perspectives help us understand how culture, leadership, and policy operate in practice.

[Complete the anonymous survey](#)

Anonymous | 15–20 minutes | You may skip any question



Wellbeing resource

Aftermath: Rebuilding strength, restoring hope

Supporting emergency services workers and their families post-disaster or critical event.



This guide is designed as a practical resource for first responders and their families to navigate the complex emotional, physical, and psychological challenges that often follow a disaster. While training equips you for the immediate response, the aftermath can bring experiences that are less predictable and deeply personal.

Fortem's goal is to help you:

- understand what happens after a disaster, why reactions vary and why they are normal
- recognise common responses, so you can identify what's typical and what might require extra care
- know when and how to seek support including professional help and community resources
- apply practical strategies for recovery and self-care to restore balance, maintain resilience, and protect your wellbeing over time.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel after a disaster. Every experience is unique, and recovery is not linear.

By using the tools and information provided, you can better support yourself, your colleagues, and your loved ones as you move forward.

Download a copy here: [Aftermath: Rebuilding strength, restoring hope](#)

We're Looking for YOUR SES Unit's News!



SESVA wants to celebrate the dedication, hard work and achievements of our member SES Units and Volunteers.

The Newsletter has a wide circulation that includes SES volunteers, politicians, interested Local Government Councillors and CEOs, DFES staff, other Emergency Service Associations and various community organisations.

Send your articles and great images to:
sesva.office@ses-wa.asn.au



Mics & Sirens is the official podcast of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. The second season has just launched, taken listeners beyond Western Australia with exclusive access to international experts sharing the latest developments and innovations in fire and emergency services.

You can listen on [Spotify](#) or [Apple Podcasts](#), or watch on [YouTube](#).



Vale – Michael Wadley OAM



The State Emergency Service and broader emergency services community acknowledge the passing of Michael “Mike” Wadley OAM, a highly respected volunteer, leader and colleague whose service spanned more than three decades.

Mike joined the newly established Rockingham–Kwinana SES Unit in July 1978, becoming an integral part of its early development. His commitment, capability and leadership saw him appointed Local Manager in 1987, a role in which he guided, trained and mentored many volunteers who would go on to make significant contributions of their own.

During his time with the unit, Mike took part in numerous major operations, including supporting the Australian Army in the 1986 disarmament of a 250-pound unexploded bomb in Warnbro, the unit’s response to the May 1994 storms, and several large-scale search operations across Rockingham and Kwinana. In 1982, he also played a key role in leading the Rockingham–Kwinana team to victory in the annual SES Rescue Competition held in Nedlands.

In the early 2000s, Mike began contract work with the then Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA). His steady leadership and pragmatic approach saw him appointed to several regional and metropolitan positions, including District Manager for the Midwest–Gascoyne Region and later District Manager for Metro North. He also served in a number of temporary and specialist roles before his resignation in early 2014. Throughout his time with both FESA and DFES, Mike remained highly regarded by volunteers, staff, and colleagues across the state.

Mike’s long and dedicated service was recognised with several honours, including the National Medal with clasps and the DFES Long Service Medal acknowledging 35 years of commitment. His substantial contribution to emergency services and the Western Australian community was formally recognised in the 1999 Queen’s Birthday Honours, where he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

Mike Wadley OAM leaves behind a legacy of leadership, professionalism, and unwavering service. His impact on the SES and the emergency services community will be remembered by all who had the privilege of working alongside him.

The SES Volunteers Association on behalf of SES volunteers extend their deepest condolences to his family, friends and former colleagues.

Vale – Terry Swetman

Life Member, Karratha State Emergency Service



The SES Volunteers Association acknowledges the passing of Terry Swetman, a long-serving volunteer and Life Member of the Karratha SES Unit. Terry passed away on 6 February 2026 following a recent cancer diagnosis.

Terry was a respected member of the SES and a well-known figure within the Karratha community. As a local resident from childhood, he joined the Karratha SES in 1991, shortly after the establishment of the unit. Over the course of 30 years of dedicated service, he made significant contributions to emergency response, training, and community preparedness.

Service History and Contributions

Throughout his tenure with the SES, Terry held several key operational and leadership roles, including Rescue Officer, Deputy Manager – Rescue, Trainer/Assessor and Instructor.

Terry was recognised for his technical capability across multiple rescue disciplines. He was also highly regarded for his commitment to member development, providing mentorship to new volunteers and supporting the advancement of operational skills within the unit.

In recognition of his exemplary service, Terry was awarded Life Membership of the Karratha SES in 2014.

Operational Deployment

Terry contributed his expertise to major emergency events across Western Australia, including Tropical Cyclone Vance, Tropical Cyclone Bobby and Tropical Cyclone George.

He supported operations with both rescue capability and medical knowledge. In addition, he represented Western Australia at the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) competition, where his team performed to a high standard.

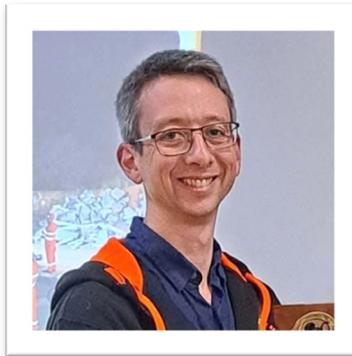
Legacy and Commemoration

Terry will be remembered as a committed volunteer, a strong advocate for emergency service personnel, and a valued contributor to the SES and the wider community. His professionalism, dedication, and mentorship leave a lasting legacy within the Karratha SES.

**The SES Volunteers Association extends its deepest condolences to Kath Swetman, their family,
and all who served alongside Terry.**

Vale – Marc Poupart

Life Member, Swan State Emergency Service



In Honour of Marc Poupart – On behalf of Swan SES members past and present

The Swan SES community gathered recently to honour a man who made those around him better. Marc brought strength not through loudness, but through presence. Whether coordinating complex operations or offering quiet encouragement, he had a way of steadying those around him and leaving a lasting impression.

Marc lived his values with quiet consistency—integrity, humility, professionalism, and calm strength. Softly spoken yet deeply respected, he earned trust through clarity, fairness, and the steadiness of his character.

Marc joined Swan SES on 26 November 2014. In 2017, he became Operations Section Leader, a role he carried with composed authority. Under his leadership, the operations room ran with precision. When pressure increased, he brought order; when complexity grew, he found clarity. He didn't simply uphold standards—he quietly raised them.

In 2021, during Tropical Cyclone Seroja, Marc deployed to support communities facing severe devastation. He carried with him the same calm focus he showed at home: committed to the task, to his team, and to the people affected. Service, for Marc, was never about recognition but about responsibility. In 2025, he was honoured with his 10 Years of Service Award and Life Membership—a testament to both his contribution and the character behind it.

Marc's most profound influence was found in the people he supported. He made time for quiet, thoughtful conversations, especially with new members. He listened intently, offered encouragement that built confidence, and helped others see their own potential. Often, his silence—a pause, a nod, a moment of reflection—spoke more loudly than words.

His analytical, slightly quirky touch also left its mark. His annual reports, filled with thoughtful data and clever diagrams, became something the unit genuinely looked forward to, fostering pride and friendly rivalry.

Marc was more than respected—he was relied upon. He gave generously, carried responsibility with humility, and made those around him feel safe and supported.

His greatest pride, however, was his family. The uniform was part of his story, but home with Sim was the heart of it. He spoke about his children with immense pride, and his kindness, courage, and strength will continue to live on in them.

Though this loss is immeasurable, the Swan SES community stands with Marc's family. They are not alone. They are part of an orange family that will walk beside them in the days, months, and years ahead.

Marc made his community better.

Now it is up to all who knew him to honour that legacy by continuing the standard he set.

**The SES Volunteers Association extends its deepest condolences to Kath Swetman, their family,
and all who served alongside Terry.**



State Emergency Service Volunteer Advisory Committee COMMUNIQUE

FEBRUARY 2026

The State Emergency Service (SES) Volunteer Advisory Committee (the Committee) met on Thursday, 5 February 2026 for its first meeting of the year.

VOLUNTEER FUEL CARD SCHEME

The Committee continued discussions regarding the Volunteer Fuel Card Scheme (the Scheme). While recognising the ongoing benefits of this State Government initiative, the Committee considered several options to modify the current distribution model, including moving to an allocation system based on member numbers, rather than providing a fixed \$1000 annually to each brigade, group, or unit (BGU).

The Scheme has not seen any monetary increases since 2017, despite rising fuel costs. The Committee also agrees that the fuel card scheme directly assists to retain volunteers. The Committee aims to present a recommendation to the Minister to advocate a change to the current distribution model to make the Scheme a fairer and more equitable provision for all volunteers.

SES VEHICLES AND BOATS

The Committee will be reaching out to SES volunteers to gather their feedback and opinions about the current arrangements for the SES vehicles and boats, including personal protective clothing (PPC) during specific response operations. Led by the SES Volunteer Association, a survey is being developed to ask SES volunteers for their views and evidence on:

- Fit-for-purpose fleet based on operational roles and response locations,
- Current PPC arrangements and allocations, and
- Broader strategic considerations relating to vehicles, boats and PPC.

The Committee will support the Association with this piece of work and anticipate a range of views from SES volunteers around the State.

DFES YOUNG PEOPLES ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Committee encourages all young people of the SES to consider putting their hand up to be considered for the Commissioner's Young People Advisory Council. The Council has been operating for two years and offers young volunteers an opportunity to contribute to discussions on issues affecting young people in the emergency services. Follow this link to learn more about the Council or put forward a nomination.

<https://www.volunteerhub.dfes.wa.gov.au/home/collaborate/young-peoples-advisory-council>

For more information, feedback, or comments on any of these topics, please contact your nearest Committee member. Member details are available on the [SES Volunteer Advisory Committee](#) page on the Volunteer Hub.

The Committee will next meet in **May 2026**.

UPCOMING EVENTS & IMPORTANT DATES

Mon 23 Mar	Nominations close WAFES Awards	Wed 10 Jun	Thank a First Responder Day
Thu 26 Mar	SESVA Management Committee mtg	Thu 23 July	SESVA Management Committee mtg
Fri 10 Apr	Youth Week	Thu 30 July	VAC Meeting
Thu 07 May	VAC Meeting	18—21 Aug	AFAC2026 in Melbourne
Fri 08 May	AFAC National Memorial Service	04—05 Sep	WAFES Conference & Awards
18—24 May	National Volunteer Week	Thu 24 Sept	SESVA Management Committee mtg
Wed 20 May	WOW Day	Thu 26 Nov	SESVA Management Committee mtg
Thu 28 May	SESVA Management Committee mtg	Sat 05 Dec	International Volunteer Day

WOW DAY

Encourage your local school, workplace, Shire or community group to mark the date and show their support for your SES volunteers on **Wear Orange Wednesday!**



SES SAR T-Shirts— available now!

Over 250 T-Shirts were ordered and distributed in early January... **we have a few extras remaining!** If you'd like one – please contact Linda with your size to check availability.

E: Sesva.office@ses-wa.asn.au

M: 0499 619 287.

\$25 + postage.



DFES
Department of Fire &
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The SES Volunteers Association of WA Inc.

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USEFUL LINKS

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