

## Media release

Embargoed: 12 May 2015

### Geelong secures 20 expert spontaneous volunteer managers and \$250K to support disaster recovery in G21

In an Australian first, Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Geelong today introduced 20 expertly trained Managers of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEVs) who will provide key support in coordinating spontaneous volunteers assisting with relief and recovery in the region following a natural disaster.

“Victoria has been devoid of effective coordinated systems and networks to recruit and manage spontaneous volunteers who want to assist with relief and recovery and, until now, we as a State have failed to call on the expertise of our volunteer managers – the very people who understand volunteering and can ensure any effort by spontaneous volunteers supports and assists communities in their time of need,” said Sue Noble, CEO, Volunteering Victoria.

“These 20 volunteer managers in the G21 Region now have specialist expertise in managing not just volunteers, but disaster relief and recovery situations and the people who spontaneously put their hand up to help. These managers are from the Geelong region – and this is critical because we know that in any relief and recovery efforts, communities and people who know them, must be the ones to call the shots on what support they need, and how and when they are assisted,” she said.

Ms Noble said the first 20 specialised MSEVs, and the prospect of piloting new IT infrastructure to support proper administration and deployment of spontaneous emergency volunteers, was in direct response to the *Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper*. This document identified deep flaws in the management of spontaneous volunteers in recovery and relief – this had serious implications for disaster readiness and recovery in Victoria.

The MSEVs, recruited from across the region, have gone through extensive training to supplement their existing expertise in volunteer management. Training included dealing with communities in crisis, the motivations of people who spontaneously volunteer, Victoria’s emergency management systems and structures, and understanding the impact on the built and natural environment of different types of natural disasters. They continue to access training, specialised updates and resources online.

They are now also part of the City of Greater Geelong’s disaster response plan, which has been bolstered by the announcement that Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Geelong (supported by Volunteering Queensland) have secured Federal-State funding of \$250,000 for a new Spontaneous Emergency Volunteer (SEV) pilot of a new system to recruit and deploy SEVs during time of natural disaster.

The system will be a key tool for the 20 MSEVs and critical in large scale responses to disasters when thousands of people come forward offering assistance which is not always what communities require for recovery.

Victoria currently has no coordinated system or process for the management of volunteer response to the recovery and rebuilding of communities affected by natural disaster. Geelong will be the pilot region for the establishment of the cloud-based system, currently in place in Queensland.

“We, and our partners, are thrilled to be working together to make the Geelong region one of the best equipped to deal with an influx of spontaneous volunteers in the aftermath of an emergency. We are looking forward to further discussions in adapting and rolling out this new project in other regions across the State,” said Ms Noble.

The \$250,000 of funds for the pilot SEV system means the implementation of a mechanism for thousands of volunteers to be mobilised to assist with relief and recovery from any disaster, and a way people who want to assist can offer their time and skills through a centralised coordinated process.

“We are hopeful that the Geelong pilot of the new system, supported by Natural Resilience funds, will clearly demonstrate the value of a system that deploys IT as an effective tool enabling the building and strengthening of relationships, networks and processes that support the deployment and management of spontaneous emergency volunteers in times usually associated with high need, and high stress, in affected communities.

Others involved in the Geelong SEV pilot project include the City of Greater Geelong, Australian Red Cross, the CFA and the SES.

The funding is provided under the combined Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme, and supports the first year of the three year pilot project which totals \$686,000 in the first year and \$1.3 M over the three years. The total amounts include other financial and in-kind support, with the additional funds and resourcing provided by the organisations and the G21 region.

Read the [Premier of Victoria’s media release](#) of all Victorian funded projects, and see [the list of all projects](#).

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**\*Launch event: 3pm – 4.30pm, The Carousel, 1 Eastern Beach Rd, Geelong**

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