



## Media Release

### HelpOUT launches in National Volunteer Week

HelpOUT - Turning potential risks into well-coordinated, rewarding opportunities that build resilience.

'It has been identified on many occasions that spontaneous emergency volunteering poses a problem to emergency services providers such as CFA and VICSES. We know that people just want to help but sometimes the timing is not right. The HelpOUT program means that there is avenue for people to offer their support to communities affected by emergencies without impacting on the emergency response. This is a great step forward, said Craig Lapsley, Emergency Management Commissioner.

Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Geelong celebrated National Volunteer Week by officially launching the pilot of Helpout emergency volunteering service in G21 region, which covers the City of Greater Geelong, Borough of Queenscliffe, Surf Coast Shire, Golden Plains Shire and Colac Otway Shire.

Supporters and partners attended from across the G21 region and Victoria-wide including representatives from emergency services, government, community services organisations and local community groups.

**Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT emergency volunteering service** operates year-round, registering offers of volunteer assistance, and linking them to organisations working in affected communities when help is needed.

Through HelpOUT, every day Victorians can register their interest in helping communities impacted by an emergency. HelpOUT then matches people with rewarding volunteering opportunities that support identified community needs, by partnering with the organisations working on the ground in affected communities.

After the Wye River and Separation Creek fires last December, Volunteering Victoria's HelpOUT team assisted by matching local volunteers to the Southern Otway Landcare Network. Volunteers collected habitat boxes made by school students in Melbourne's outer east, and deliver them to Wye River.

Currently more than 1,800 Victorian volunteers are registered on the HelpOUT database, ready, willing and able to be called upon if an emergency strikes. Organisations which support communities before during or after emergencies are encouraged to register with HelpOUT early, so they can easily request additional volunteers when needed.

Individuals wanting to register to volunteer in an emergency in the G21 region, or those wanting more information, are encouraged to visit [www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout](http://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout) to register their details. Registration only takes a few minutes and means that volunteers can be called upon to help with identified community needs when an emergency occurs.



Volunteering Victoria CEO, Sue Noble, encourages Victorians to consider how they might assist communities impacted by an emergency. *“The need for volunteers can continue for weeks or months after an emergency, and affected communities may need help in a wide variety of ways that might not be evident at first. By registering with HelpOUT, we are in the best place to be there for them when they need us,”* Ms Noble urged.

HelpOUT volunteers will not be involved in the emergency response, but can be called on to support in roles that do not require specialised emergency management training. Volunteering Victoria has worked closely with emergency services agencies, local governments and not-for-profit organisations in the G21 region to develop and implement HelpOUT.

HelpOUT is an adaptation of Volunteering Queensland’s world-class Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW) service. EV CREW’s success has been proven in Queensland through many major floods and cyclones since 2008, and is also being implemented in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Volunteering Victoria is delivering this HelpOUT pilot in partnership with Volunteering Geelong and Volunteering Queensland. HelpOUT was developed in response to the Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper (2012), which identified shortcomings in the management of spontaneous volunteers with serious implications for disaster readiness and recovery in Victoria.

Volunteering Victoria acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments through the National Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme.

**Note to editors:**

**About Volunteering Victoria**

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering. Our vision is for resilient communities and empowered and active citizens through volunteering.

Through our dynamic and transformative leadership, we work to promote and build a vibrant, prosperous and strong volunteering community that is inclusive, respected and sustainable.

Volunteering Victoria is a member-based organisation, supported by a dedicated and highly professional team of staff and volunteers. From broad sectors such as social services, health, sport, culture, emergency services and local government, our membership reflects the diversity of people and organisations that work with and support volunteers in our community.

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**Media enquiries:** Chrissy Paterson, Marketing & Business Development Manager  
03 8327 8511 / 0433 261 026 / [media@volunteeringvictoria.org.au](mailto:media@volunteeringvictoria.org.au)

**To register:** [www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout](http://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/helpout)