

Chaplains are committed to a code of conduct and will:

- Provide ecumenical non sectarian personal support for all people whether they belong to a faith community or not.
- Recognise differing faith communities as an integral part of Australian society and respect each faith on its own terms.
- Work cooperatively with members of each faith community to provide personal support and pastoral care.
- Refer people to the care of their own faith community.

Clergy will be available as a resource to underpin community recovery and personal care for the long term and can provide leadership and direction when it is scarce.

### ● Outreach Visiting

VCC visiting teams are mobilised by MEM through the Regional and Area Coordinators. They sometimes form part of a multi-agency team and in large scale events be provided with capacity back up from other agencies.

- Visitors provide information, identify needs and report their findings so that appropriate measures can be taken.
- Information and referrals are collated at a recovery centre where it is passed on to relevant agencies and recognised specialised services.
- An important aspect of a visiting programme is the opportunity it provides for people to receive early personal support through telling their story to someone who can listen with empathy and provide a trained response.
- As the recovery phase always extends beyond the initial impact and response period. The VCC can be available for engagement after other resources have left an impacted community. Teams may therefore be involved during and after an event for short or longer periods of time according to need.

### Contact The VCC

**VECN** [VICTORIAN EMERGENCY CHAPLAINCY NETWORK]

The State Coordinator: Level 4 /366 Little Collins Street Melbourne 3000

Office: 9650 4511 Coordination Centre: 9654 1736 [emergencies@vcc.org.au](mailto:emergencies@vcc.org.au)



The Victorian Council of Churches

***Emergencies Ministry***

## Faith Communities & the State Emergency Plan

A State wide volunteer force of trained outreach and personal support workers is drawn from the faith based congregations located in every place.

Faith leaders are a readily available, experienced and trained personal support resource. They provide significant capacity back up to existing response and recovery arrangements for they live in the communities they serve, are well known and experienced in helping people through the crises of their lives. Clergy possess unique skills and their presence during crisis events, at disaster sites and emergency relief centres, provides critical early intervention and ongoing non sectarian support for all.

### The Faith Community - A significant & practical resource

The faith community is arguably the most widely distributed and largest community group of our society and responds voluntarily to meet human need in emergencies. The staff and volunteers of most community organisations and emergency agencies have connections with the faith community which creates a strong interlocking network of interdependence.

**Research shows that whether or not people have a link with a specific faith community, or do not profess faith, most still look for and welcome the particular support that clergy provide.**

## History

The VCC has acted as the lead agency for outreach and personal support in a number of significant events including the 1998 Gippsland floods, 2003 Gippsland fires, 2007 Upper Murray drought outreach and the 2009 Alpine Shire fires. VECN chaplains and personal support workers were deployed throughout the State during the events of Black Saturday 2009 and the Victorian floods of 2011.

## The Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) Role & Function

The Departments of Health and Human Services have contracted The Victorian Council of Churches to be the coordinating agency for on site chaplaincy, personal support and psychological first aid and to engage in outreach activities

The Victorian Emergency Chaplaincy Network (VECN) provides ecumenical trained volunteers. Clergy, faith community leaders and personal support personnel drawn from many faith communities and traditions to act alongside emergency response personnel from the earliest stages of an emergency event.

## The Victorian Emergency Management Manual

### The VCC Role

1. Provide personal support and pastoral services at emergency recovery centres.
2. Support outreach activities with trained outreach and visitation workers.
3. Provide personal support and other information to people and communities affected by emergencies.
4. Conduct services of worship and assist in the organisation of public memorials and gatherings to support the recovery of affected communities.
5. Provide Community Chaplains for early psychological first aid interventions.
6. Act as the coordinating agency for the Victorian Chaplains network in emergency.
7. Provide an advisory and training resource for community recovery and development.

# The VCC & Local Government

*The VCC - A crucial component of every LGA Emergency Response and Recovery Plan*

## VCC Personnel Provide:

### ● Local People

VCC Teams reside in the community. They are backed up by adjoining LGA & Regional groups and are administered by trained local VCC Coordinators and can be deployed quickly .

### ● Personal Support for Relief & Emergency Centres

VCC volunteers can make a real difference by spending time with individuals with a view to providing:

- Practical assistance
- Emotional comfort.
- A link back to family, friends and existing supports.
- Information – about the event, and where to seek help.
- Someone to listen - opportunity to tell the story and so validate the experience of an event.
- Record observations to assist response and recovery agencies make an assessment of immediate needs.

### ● Chaplaincy

Clergy trained in psychological first aid and personal support provide a specialised response in emergency events as well as back up capacity for DHS personal support staff. Chaplaincy is concerned with delivering psychological first aid, personal support, and spiritual ministry to people impacted by an event.