



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

EMERGENCY SERVICES FOUNDATION AFTERNOON TEA

Thursday 28 May 2026

Acknowledgments

The Honourable Vicki Ward MP, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries

Ryan Batchelor MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services

Tim Wiebusch ESM, Emergency Management Commissioner

Joshua Fischer, Acting Commissioner, Fire Rescue Victoria

Robyn Hunter, Chair and **Siusan MacKenzie**, Chief Executive Officer, Emergency Services Foundation

Senior representatives, staff and volunteers from Victoria's emergency services agencies, not-for-profit organizations and government departments

Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Eastern Kulin Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

Before commencing as Governor, my involvement with emergency services was – like most Victorians – limited to the studious checking of the VicEmergency app, particularly while on holidays during the high-risk weather season.

One of the great privileges of this role has been getting a firsthand insight into the contributions of this important sector to our State.

From visiting the State Control Centre, to attending emergency services roundtables in regional Victoria and visiting the bases themselves, there have been two things that have stood out to me.

The first is the great depth of expertise we have in this State when it comes to preparing for, managing the impact of, and recovering from emergencies.

Perhaps this is due to the many years of experience Victorians have in facing such threats.

We have confronted them for as long as our State has existed.

But we know Victorians are facing these threats even more frequently in this century.

During the most recent high-risk weather season, and despite the large scale of the fires and unexpected flooding, the dedicated efforts of our brave emergency services workers ensured that the worst impacts were minimised.

I can see there is continual effort to better understand these such threats.

That is why emergency services counterparts visit Victoria from overseas.

And it is also why the community's trust in our emergency service organisations is so strong.

The second thing that stands out to me is the incredible level of commitment of our volunteer force, which I suspect is unlike anywhere else in the world.

It is a selflessness beyond measure that sees people put themselves at risk in order to protect others, even if they do not know them personally – and often while neglecting their own needs.

There was no more poignant example of this than when I visited the CFA Shed in Harcourt following the recent devastating bushfires.

So much of the township had been preserved because of the efforts of those firefighters.

And yet some members of the brigade had lost their own homes while fighting to save the properties of their neighbours.

We rightfully recognise and admire our emergency services workers.

But we must also acknowledge that resilience and courage are not infinite resources, nor does the price paid fall on the workers alone.

The weight they carry through their service is heavy but it is also shared by their loved ones who support them.

As Victorians, we must ensure these efforts are never taken for granted – and we must do what we can to ease the burden it brings.

Just as our emergency services workers strive to protect life and limb, we must do our part in support of their wellbeing.

As Patron, I commend the work of the Emergency Services Foundation to lead in this space.

For those who have not been involved with this sector – or are close to someone who is – they may be unfamiliar with just how much it demands of our emergency services workers and their families.

Regardless, you can be assured the population both relies on, and holds admiration for, the critical work you do.

Today's event is a small token of appreciation from a grateful State, and an acknowledgment of the challenges you face and our commitment to supporting you and your families through them.

In that spirit, I invite you to enjoy the hospitality of Government House.

Thank you.

I now invite Minister Ward to address us.