

# 2024 BSAR Annual Report

## Bush Search and Rescue Victoria

Monica Chapman and Rod Costigan, Conveners



The 2023/24 reporting year was a period of continuing demand for BSAR's services, pleasingly lower demand than the peaks of recent years but still historically high.

BSAR members contributed a total of 230 search and training days from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 including 80 search person-days and 150 training person-days. We had 299 members available for call out on 31 March 2024.

### Administration and Governance

- A Strategic Plan has been completed for 2023–2027. This identified three broad objectives and incorporated a new mission statement to include victims of crime in BSAR's scope.
- The Conveners compiled a record of existing documents of a policy intention with notes on their apparent origins and authority. The Committee has confirmed this document as the baseline of BSAR's policies and policy-like decisions. It is expected that, as future decisions and revisions are made, this document will evolve into an unambiguous, concise source of accepted policy.
- The BSAR Committee currently has approximately 55 positions occupied by approximately 40 individuals. In early 2023 the Committee appointed six members to join the Conveners on the Executive and voted to continue with this arrangement for 2024.

### Searches and Rescues

Bush Search and Rescue Victoria participated in the following five search and rescue operations from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024:

- 5 May 2023 – Search for overdue motorist in NE Victoria
- 4 July 2023 – Search for missing man near Kinglake
- 12 July 2023 – Search for missing man near Golden Beach
- 12–13 September 2023 – Search for missing man near Winton Wetlands
- 29 September–1 October 2023 – Search for missing man near Native Dog Flat.



*Searching near Native Dog Flat*

For more details see: [www.bsar.org/searches/](http://www.bsar.org/searches/)

## Training

### 5–6 August 2023 – Main Training

This year's main training weekend was planned as a snow-based programme on the Buffalo Plateau but was relocated to JB Plain to ensure snow cover. Despite the absence of continuous snow even at JB, the program was comfortably rejigged for the conditions and participants enjoyed a stimulating programme.



Training had a strong emphasis on hypothermia, but also included navigation exercises, search technique instruction and practice, and communications. Sunday was devoted to a mock search culminating in patient care and extraction.

Particular thanks to organisers Rodney Polkinghorne and Steve Denness, to ambo and paramedicine lecturer, Dylan Tweddle, to Simin Ngan and David Heng for designing and administering the GPS rogaine, to instructors Dom Bakker and Cam Plant, and to Steve Ellis and Joe Gray of PoSAR for their expert guidance and instruction.

### 22–23 July 2023 – Steep Snow and Ice Training Weekend



This year's Steep Snow and Ice training was held at JB Plain, with self-arrest practice at Little Mt Higginbotham. Training also included safe snow travel, avalanche rescue, including use of transceivers and probes, patient management and stretcher hauling. The training culminated in a search scenario utilising the skills practised during the weekend. It was a successful and enjoyable weekend for those who attended.

### 18 November 2023 – First Aid Training

Twenty members participated in a one-day first aid course in the meeting rooms at Westerfolds Park. Like most courses in the post-COVID age, this was just the culmination of many hours of online study required to complete the course. Eighteen members passed with two expected to pass after completing more work. All are to be congratulated for working on their first aid skills.

## Other BSAR Events

### 19 October 2023 – Members' Night

The 2023 Members' Night was held at the Elgin Hotel, Hawthorn. After dinner, BSAR member Peter Briggs delivered a spellbinding presentation on the research and expedition he led to discover the resting place of one of Australia's WWI submarines, the AE1, and its crew.



## Presentations

### 23 April 2023 – Emergency Services Expo 2023



BSAR joined over twenty emergency services at the 2023 Emergency Services Expo in Jamieson on Sunday 23rd April. Rick Mielnik, Rowan Jennion, Robert Bicknell and Kate Sanderson represented BSAR. They report finding it a rewarding experience, both as an opportunity to explain BSAR's role to the public and as an opportunity to meet and learn from members of other emergency service agencies. Thanks to all involved and also Roger Palmer for assistance with equipment.

**6 February 2024** - Ross McKinnon gave a BSAR presentation to **YHA Bushwalkers**.

**22 November, 2023** – Rod Costigan attended an **Emergency Services briefing** hosted by Water Police and Police Search and Rescue. Rod presented on BSAR's role in the emergency services landscape.

## Website

Peter Andrews, Ross McKinnon and the Conveners comprise the working party set up to undertake ongoing review of the website. Work continues to update and improve the website.

## Manuals

The BSAR Manual is long overdue for review. A review policy was approved and a working group established. The group has completed some initial work on the Manual's structure and the process of revision. Work on content will commence shortly.

## Equipment and Safety Clothing

The Victorian Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) provided BV with a two-thirds subsidy for the purchase of BSAR safety clothing for members and several items of equipment. Thanks to Duncan Brookes and Roger Palmer for managing this vital resource.

## Projects in Progress

### BSAR 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

BSAR reaches a milestone in 2024. It is 75 years since our inception in 1949. Planning is well underway to commemorate this history and achievement with an event in May for current members and all who have enjoyed a connection through the decades.



### National Medal

Considerable work has been put into preparing and submitting an application to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to approve BWV/BSAR as an organisation that can nominate qualifying members.

## Membership Systems

It was reported in the previous annual report that BSAR has begun transitioning to a new membership and event records system. The Membership Secretary, Chris Jarvis, continues the substantial project of adapting D4H with an MS Access utility to carry on the functions that are outside D4H capabilities.

## Summary

Operationally, while demand for BSAR's services has been lower than the peaks of recent years, we continue to be busy. We thank all BSAR volunteers including searchers, Committee, Executive, Membership Managers, Clothing and Equipment Officers, Police Liaison Officers, Field Organisers, Group Leaders, Peer Supporters, Club Delegates and others assisting in various ways for their ongoing contributions to Bush Search and Rescue Victoria.

We thank the broader Bushwalking Victoria community, the BV Board, Victoria Police Search and Rescue Squad and Emergency Management Victoria for their much-valued support.