



Disaster Relief and Community Recovery Working Group (DR&CR WG)

Convenor Rev David Jackson
Members Rev Don Dowling
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Australian Volunteer Emergency Chaplaincy Alliance (AVECA) WA Report – March 2019

5-8 September 2018 Stephen Robinson visited WA which coincided with the annual meeting of the Working Group and the Synod of WA.

A comprehensive itinerary was developed for Stephen involving visits to Stephanie Williams, the Senior Project Officer Emergency Services Unit and Department of Communities.

The other significant visit was to the Ecumenical Affairs Officer Conservation Council Western Australia (CCWA), Simone Micke. That proved especially beneficial which gave rise to an ecumenical based training 2-4 April this year in Perth. 51 ministry agents were trained representing a number of churches in WA. 15 Uniting Church ministry agents were trained in that group. As a result of that training the WA Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network was established under the auspices of the CCWA. A further training is being planned for later this year to ensure a good pool of trained Disaster Recovery Chaplains in the event of a disaster or emergency and to build community capacity in WA for such future events and to train other Ministry Agents who showed interest but for who the April dates did not suite.

You will be aware that last year there were three particularly tragic events where men murdered their own families. Osmington in South West Western Australia (SWWA), Ellenbrook in Perth Metro and the last event was in Bedford an inner-city suburb of Perth.

Peer Support response was offered to the Margret River congregation after the Osmington tragedy. As a result of the response the congregation organised a workshop for the community, they called Creative Mindfulness Workshops for Calmness (CMWC), cantering and peace. (14-15 Sep 18).

Creative sculptural art pieces of weaving and clay to honour and share with the Margaret River community were made and then gifted to various places around the community including at Osmington.

In reply to the intervention the Margaret River congregation wrote that the CMWCCs were worthwhile, helpful and healing.

\$1000 was provided by the Synod of Western Australia Disaster Recovery Fund.

Peer Support was also offered to the Noranda Uniting Church in Australia minister where the Bedford murders occurred.

A number of Bushfire events have occurred over summer that have threatened homes and lives. Fortunately, minimal damage was reported in these events.



I was invited to be a part of the review of the National Disaster Recovery Officer in Jan this year. I strongly recommended the continuation of this position particularly focusing on the training of Ministry Agents in the Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy.

During the year a national body was formally established under the auspices of the National Council of Churches called The Australian Emergency Volunteer Chaplaincy Alliance (AVECA). The Uniting Church in WA has a representation on that body through the convenor of the Disaster Relief & Community Recovery (DR&CR) Working Group. One of their major activities was to bring Dr Naomi Paget to Australia to conduct two national workshops. Naomi is an internationally recognised specialist in the area of Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy. One workshop was held in Melbourne and the other in Sydney.

The convenor of the DR&CR Working Group also attended the annual Uniting Church Australia Disaster Recovery Coordinators meeting held in Sydney. This significant meeting allows all the Uniting Church Australia Synod representatives to report on their individual state's activities and to network on developments in the area of Disaster Recovery to ensure best practice across the nation.

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