



WICEN NSW Newsletter



September 2022

Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting was held last Saturday 3rd September at ARNSW in Dural. There was a role up of 16 members at Dural and 10 members online. The President thanked the work carried out by the outgoing committee. The office bearers for the coming year are;

President	Lindsay Bolstad
Vice President	Neil Fallshaw
Secretary	Steve Diekman
Treasurer	Doug Rosser
Committee Members	Nic McLean Mark Halliwell Paul Britton Simon Brown

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to: Compton Allen, Barry White and Nic McLean.



Unfortunately Nic McLean and Paul Britton were unable to attend the meeting.

Coming Events

SEPEX 2022

WICEN NSW will be conducting a training exercise on Saturday 24th September over a number of locations with as many WICEN members as possible. It would be great to see some of our newer members participating. This will be similar to the exercise last February.

Some of the things to try out;

- Operate on HF as we have done previously.
- Simplex 2m "discovery" of who can talk to who "locally".
- Contacts on WICEN repeaters.
- Contacts by arrangement on non-WICEN repeaters to include those at a distance.
- A little bit of message passing.
- Winlink etc for those interested.
- Test out your gear prior to HCC.

Country members are encouraged to join in. If you would like to participate, please contact Mal Alexander at malcolm.alexander@vrarescue.org.

Hawkesbury Canoe Classic



The Hawkesbury Canoe Classic(HCC) is being held on the weekend of 29th-30th October after a 3 year break. Competitors paddle 111km, overnight down the Hawkesbury River from Windsor to Mooney Mooney to raise money for charity.

It is made possible by volunteers who put in hundreds of hours of time throughout the year, landowners who allow the use of their land for the weekend and the paddlers and their support crews.

This is an opportunity for newer members to get involved and be mentored by the more experienced members. If you would like to help out, please email mark.cheeseman@vrarescue.org.

WICEN NSW at NavShield 2022

Submitted by Richard Murnane, VK2SKY

The 2022 State Emergency Services Bush Search and Rescue Unit held its annual Navigation Shield event on the weekend of 15-17 July, at the Tarlo River National Park. This was a competitive bush navigation (rogaine) event, with participants and/or event support coming from multiple agencies, including NSW SES, NSW RFS, VRA Rescue NSW, St John Ambulance, NSW Ambulance Special Operations Team, Australian Defence Forces, Salvation Army Emergency Services, and others.



The roughly 100 square km event course included three checkpoints, and about three dozen “flags”, each worth a differing number of points. Teams could decide which flags they would visit, and in which order, to maximise their scores. Access to parts of the course was restricted due to recent rain and flood damage; this also made it impossible to get vehicles to the checkpoints to supply equipment and provisions.



WICEN NSW was invited to provide communications support for the event, and two operators, Simon (VK2TW) and Richard (VK2SKY), travelled from Sydney to take part. We arrived on Friday afternoon to assist with setting up “Tarlo Base”, the communications HQ for the weekend. As

well as operating the radios, we assisted in setting up the HF antennas, satellite communications, and helping in any other way we could.

Most communications were conducted using the Public Safety Network (PSN), assisted by a Cell on Wheels (CoW) provided by SES Operation Support Unit. The CoW provided good radio coverage over the entire course, but we also put Iridium satellite phones to good use, along with UHF CB, and HF (shortwave) communications to the course checkpoints. Mobile phone and internet coverage was very limited due to the remote location.



After a chilly Friday night (down to -6°C at one point), the event got off to a good start shortly after breakfast. Things went pretty smoothly throughout day one, with a few minor injuries, and a couple more requiring patient transfer to Goulburn Base Hospital. By mid-afternoon however, we were receiving forecasts of severe weather and high winds.

By the end of the first day, one team was overdue, which triggered a detailed SES procedure for organising the search and, potentially, rescue. The “bushranger” teams from each checkpoint were deployed, and the errant rogainers were found after about an hour. They were safe and well, and able to walk to a pickup point. It was good practice for running a real search and rescue operation, both for use radio operators and the teams out in the field in the cold and dark.

Meanwhile, some of the teams participating in the full two-day event camped out and prepared for the expected winds. Other teams continued picking up points throughout the night.

We had been promised severe weather, and we were not disappointed. Winds were 50-60kmh throughout the night, with gusts of up to 90kmh. Despite being tied down, two tents became airborne, and others sustained damage.

By the end of the event at midday on Sunday, all teams were accounted for. All that was left was to coordinate resources, to collect the flags and close

out the checkpoints and remove equipment from the park.

The Salvation Army Emergency Services provided great hot food and drinks for everyone. Of particular note was Saturday night's dessert which despite the bitter cold, included ice cream (challenge accepted!), and Sunday delightful breakfast of French toast, with bacon and maple syrup ("Thank God for the Salvos" as they say!)

All in all, an event very well organised by the SES, and a great exercise of multi agency teamwork. We can hardly wait for NavShield 2023!

WICEN NSW attends Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai IMX 2022

Submitted by Mark Halliwell, VK2MOH

On Friday 19th August, two WICEN (NSW) ("WICEN") observers attended an Incident Management exercise (IMX) held at the RFS Control Centre, Hornsby. The exercise simulated an urban interface bushfire event burning under very high/severe fire conditions and was conducted to test Hornsby Shire Council's new Emergency Operations Centre.

The event involved about 50 people from agencies such as NSW Police, Rural Fire Service, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Marine Rescue, St John's Ambulance and NSW Health, as well as representatives from both Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Councils. The simulated bushfire, which started and was contained in the evening prior to the exercise, was located in Ku-ring-gai National Park near North Wahroonga and North Turramurra on the northern outskirts of Sydney. The exercise started about 10am when the previously contained fire escaped eastwards towards North Turramurra.

The setup at the RFS Control Centre included three distinct areas:

1. Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) - Here the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON, NSW Police) oversaw the whole event and coordinated the activities of external agencies through their respective Liaison Officers.
2. Incident Management Team (IMT) - The IMT monitored and directed on-the-ground resources such as fire crews & aviation assets etc. and fed updates to the EOC.
3. Activation Cell - The people in this group controlled the evolution of the exercise,

adding new details and situations as the day progressed. Changes in wind direction, updates on the status of Aged Care facilities impacted by the advancing fire and so on.

The course of the exercise saw the fire approach North Turramurra, leading to the issuing of evacuation orders and, for facilities unable to evacuate, instructions to carry out "Shelter in place" plans. Residents were encouraged to leave the area, to go and stay with friends or family outside the area. Police vehicles were dispatched to control traffic and keep people moving. Evacuation centres were opened to cater for those who couldn't leave the area. At one point, consideration was given to the need to shut down electrical supply to a significant part of the northern fringes of Sydney area as transmission lines were impacted by the fire.

As observers, it was interesting to see the interactions between the new LEOCON, who was keen to learn as much as he could about his new role, and the Liaison Officers from the various participating agencies. It was quite obvious that, in a real event, the situation could get very tense very quickly, and that exercises such as the IMX are absolutely essential in preparing for emergencies that are becoming more and more frequent.

From a WICEN perspective, it was interesting to see the communications team in operation and realise that, currently, WICEN has very few people who could contribute meaningfully for lack of specialised training. To be more effective in this area, additional training is needed. Looking at the wider aspects of the exercise, it is also worth considering how WICEN could assist with communications away from the front line. For example, if electricity supply to the area had been interrupted, how would the two councils have coped? Do they have backup radio communications to cater for such situations? Could WICEN assist councils in the preparation of radio links in advance of emergency conditions?

Training

Once a WICEN member has attained the Rescue Safety Induction and the Rescue Operator Induction competencies, the next level of training is the Rescue Operator Fundamentals (ROF). These are required for a WICEN member to be designated operational.

The ROF course covers the following three areas;

- Maintaining safety at an incident scene.
- Operating communications systems and equipment.
- Preparing, maintaining and testing response equipment.



One of the training days at Dural.

WICEN Container Storage at Dural

WICEN, with very generous support from ARNSW, is moving forward with the installation of a second storage container. The concrete slab has been poured and retaining rocks installed.



It will also provide a space the parking for our trailers. This project would not have proceeded without the assistance of ARNSW, not only with their approval to share facilities on the site, but their financial assistance with the site works.

The new container will accommodate further storage, a small work bench area and a secure cupboard for WICEN administrative records.

VRA P25 Digital Repeater Operational

VRA Rescue NSW has, with help from WICEN NSW, put a P25 repeater in service at the Chatswood Vodafone site. The repeater operates on a licensed UHF commercial frequency. The site will provide communications between VRA crews if ever they are passing through or deployed to assist in the Sydney metropolitan area.



Also, the repeater will be available to WICEN for training and event use. Thanks to Nic McLean for the install and Steve Diekman (VRA ICT member) for securing funding from VRA for the site.

If anyone would like an item published in the Newsletter please email wicen.media@vrarescue.org.