



**WICEN (Vic.) Inc.**

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## **Improving the utilisation of Amateur Radio Service communications services for Victorian emergency response and recovery**

This paper presents suggestions of ways the Wireless Institute of Australia could improve the utilisation of Amateur Radio Service communications services for Victorian emergency response and recovery.

After the Victorian Ash Wednesday fires in 1983, WICEN in Victoria was established as a permanent body rather than as an ad-hoc network formed when required. Since then WICEN has worked to establish links with other emergency response and recovery agencies, and to maintain a body of trained and equipped operators. While there is always more work that can be done, WICEN has been successful in that WICEN (Vic.) Inc.:

- is a registered Emergency Response Plan agency, and listed in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria
- is a member of the Emergency Response Plan Communications Subcommittee
- is represented at more than 20 Regional and Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee meetings
- conducts an average of 14 training exercises around Victoria each year
- has had 5 major activations since 1983
- has received a number of grants from the Victorian government
- has received a State Government award for our services
- has had a Federal Emergency Services Medal awarded to a member for service with WICEN

It has however taken WICEN nearly thirty years to reach this point, and it is WICEN's view that the appearance on the Victorian emergency management scene of another organisation offering communications services from the Amateur Radio Service would adversely affect the likelihood of Amateur Radio Service operators being utilised in an emergency, by portraying the Amateur Radio Service as uncoordinated, and therefore unreliable.

WICEN does see a number of ways in which the WIA could enhance the participation of the Amateur Radio Service in Victorian emergency management operations however:

- Support the existing WICEN (Vic.) Inc. organisation to consolidate its links with Victorian agencies and Victorian sections of national agencies, rather than establishing a "competing" agency.
- Continue to provide nationally recognised training, and seek ways to make such training more widely available.
- Refer successful Victorian training candidates to WICEN (Vic.) Inc. for ongoing training, practice, and skill consolidation
- Liaise with national agencies
- Refer Victorian agencies and Victoria specific enquiries from national agencies to WICEN (Vic.) Inc.
- Provide a channel of communication for drawing on interstate resources during activations.
- Facilitate regular meetings of state Amateur Radio Service emergency communications group representatives for information exchange, perhaps at the WIA Annual Conference.

WICEN stands ready to assist the WIA to implement initiatives that will enhance the chances of Amateur Radio Service operators being utilised for emergency management in Victoria. To that end we are available to consult with the WIA and contribute our expertise accumulated over nearly thirty years of involvement in emergency management in Victoria.

Should the WIA wish to discuss these matters with WICEN, please contact the Secretary at the address at the head of this paper, by phone on 0409 214 834, or by email at [secretary@vic.wicen.org.au](mailto:secretary@vic.wicen.org.au).