

WICEN (Vic.) Inc.  
**Structure and Operation of WICEN**  
Instruction Material  
14-07-2011



## **Evolution of WICEN**

WICEN (Vic.) Inc is an Incorporated Association of trained radio amateurs which can be activated as part of the Victorian Emergency Response Plan (ERPlan) to provide radio communications assistance during an emergency.

### **- Origins**

WICEN had its origins in the ad-hoc networks formed by amateurs to assist the community. One of the early 'exercises' was the "Henly on the Yarra" regatta in 1920. During the 1939 "Black Friday" bushfires in South Australia and Victoria, radio amateurs using their own equipment and knowledge established an emergency communications network. In 1945 the Bushfires Emergency Network came into being in N.S.W. and following new P.M.G. regulations on portable and mobile operations the Wireless Institute of Australia Emergency Communications Network started in 1946, and was subsequently renamed the "Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network".

### **- 50's, 60's**

In the late fifties and early sixties amateur communications were superior, relatively speaking, to those of the civil authorities and much good work was done during bushfires and flood disaster situations. However, the introduction of FM communications and STD telephone dialling for emergency and other services caused a fall in the demand for WICEN and many authorities saw no future role for amateur radio.

### **- Cyclone Tracey**

However, events since then have disproved this view and have shown how organised amateur communications assistance still has a place in emergency plans. When Cyclone Tracey struck Darwin in December 1974 virtually the only communications for the city for many hours was via a radio amateur in the ruins and a fellow amateur in his home in Mooroolbark, just out of the City of Melbourne.

### **- Ash Wednesday**

The 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires in Victoria and South Australia, and the communications services provided by Amateurs during and after the fires pointed strongly to the need for a better strategic planning process to meet communications requirements encountered in civil emergency/disaster situations. This provided the trigger for WICEN in Victoria to become a permanent body rather than being formed only when a need arose.

### **- 1986 Emergency Management Act**

In 1986, the Victorian Emergency Management act was passed, leading to the establishment of the State Disaster Plan (DisPlan), now known as the Emergency Response Plan (ERPlan). The ERPlan is embodied in the Emergency Management Manual, Victoria (EMMV) which includes references to WICEN's role, contact information, and membership of the functional subcommittee for communications.

## **- 1989 Incorporation**

In 1989 the permanent WICEN body formed in the wake of Ash Wednesday became an Incorporated Association named "WICEN (Vic.) Inc."

## **- 1993 Floods in North Eastern Victoria**

In response to extensive flooding in North Eastern Victoria in 1993, WICEN deployed operators to Benalla to provide communications between parts of the town separated by the floodwaters, and transfer evacuee information back to WICEN Operators at the Red Cross in South Melbourne by dial-up telephone modem. When the flooding moved downstream to Shepparton, the WICEN Operators in Benalla (and volunteers from other agencies) were transported to Shepparton through the floodwaters in a column of Army Unimog all wheel drive trucks.

## **- 1994 Senate Disaster Management Report**

In 1994 the Senate Standing Committee on Industry, Science, Technology, Transport, Communications and Infrastructure conducted hearings, and produced a report entitled "Disaster Management". Testimony from Victorian WICEN members, and Victoria Police Inspector Mackey appearing as witnesses before the committee lead to the following text being included in the report:

"WICEN

WICEN is a volunteer group of radio amateurs with communications and information transfer skills and equipment. This organisation can be called upon by response and recovery agencies and the general community in times of emergency. WICEN's major role is the coordination of the response of the general amateur radio service in times of need.

Inspector Mackey of the Victoria Police acknowledged that WICEN performs a major role in the provision of back-up communication in the event of disasters in the state:

WICEN is our main back-up for communications within this State. If we were to lose telecommunications, our normal radio frequencies become overloaded. WICEN basically becomes our one and only back-up frequency until we perhaps get assistance from Defence, but still they would stay as our number one backup.

Despite WICEN's acknowledged expertise, it faces a number of major problems including a lack of regular contact with agencies which may wish to use its expertise during an emergency; incompatibility of communications and computer equipment between government agencies and a lack of sufficient finance to tender for redundant government computer equipment."

"Disaster Management" p 68

Senate Standing Committee on Industry, Science, Technology, Transport, Communications and Infrastructure  
ISBN 0 642 20377 6

## **- 1999/2000 Y2K Transition**

Prior to the Y2K Transition WICEN were approached by the Victoria Police, and given the task of creating a backup radio communications network in case normal Police communications failed. UHF and VHF repeaters were linked to provide communications between the Victoria Police Headquarters in the World Trade Centre, and each of the Regional and Divisional Headquarters.

The network was activated and manned in the hours before the Y2K transition, and rosters were established to

continue to operate the network for a number of days after if necessary. In the event, the network and operators were stood-down soon after midnight.

WICEN's work on the Y2K network was however recognised by the awarding of a "Victorian Unit Meritorious Service Award". This was presented to WICEN by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services; Andre Haermeyer, and the award and citation are displayed in WICEN's Headquarters. The citation for the award reads:

"This award is presented to the Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network in recognition of the designing, installing and operating of a communications network to provide contingency communications for emergency response co-ordination leading up to the year 2000.

Year 2000 and the associated "Millennium Bug" posed very significant risks to the safety of persons in the State and the State's infrastructure and particularly to essential services.

Despite the short time frames, WICEN designed and installed a redundant communications system that will be an ongoing part of the State's emergency management infrastructure.

This award acknowledges WICEN's special contribution to the community for its involvement in the year 2000 and the associated 'Millennium Bug' risks.

[signed]

ANDRE HAERMEYER

Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Co-ordinator in Chief of Emergency Services

22 MAY 2000"

### **- 2003 High Country Fires**

The vast Alpine bushfires of 2003 saw WICEN Operators activated to operate State Mobile Radio (SMR) communications equipment for the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). Operators were deployed (some by air) to Incident Control Centres (ICCs) and Airbases (from which fire-fighting aircraft operate) in North East Victoria and Gippsland. Traffic handled included communications between sector commanders at the fire-front & the Incident Controllers at the ICCs, and "Flight Following" traffic at the Airbases. (Flight Following is the tracking of aircraft using regular location updates by radio).

### **- 2009 Black Saturday Fires**

On April 9th 2009, WICEN (Vic.) Inc. was activated as part of the State of Victoria's Emergency Response Plan (ERPlan) to assist with the Black Saturday Bushfires. Our initial task was to provide a link between the Alexandra Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) - and the Municipal offices in Kinglake. Kinglake being one of the towns largely destroyed by the fires.

By the time the Kinglake station closed, WICEN had been asked to provide operators for the radios in the Alexandra Incident Control Centre (ICC). The ICC radio equipment was provided by the firefighting agencies - the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

When permission was obtained to travel down the Maroondah Hwy from Alexandra to Mt Gordon West of Marysville, two WICEN members visited Mt Gordon to install a 2m store and forward voice repeater, and make temporary repairs to the permanent 6m repeater. Flowerdale was also visited by A WICEN operator based in Alexandra who assisted with the restoration of broadcast services to the town.

Until phone services to Narbethong were restored, WICEN was asked to provide links between Narbethong and the Alexandra MECC. 80m and the Mt Gordon 2m and 6m repeaters were utilised for these links. Two operators were deployed to Narbethong for three days to fulfil this role.

Because of the long travel times between Alexandra and the Eastern side of the Kilmore East, Murrindindi Complex North fire it was decided to base a team of firefighters at McAdams Hill near Matlock. As there was some uncertainty about the coverage and capacity of the State Mobile Radio (SMR) system used by the firefighters, and the Cellular Phone system, it was decided to deploy WICEN to McAdams Hill as well to provide backup links to Alexandra on 70cm using a repeater South of Lake Eildon, and 80m.

A request from the CFA lead to WICEN providing operators for the ICCs at Kangaroo Ground, Woori Yallock and Belgrave. Unlike Alexandra, shifts at these ICCs were twelve hours long. The number of operators per shift varied according to the expected fire activity, but was generally two operators for the day shift and one for the night.

WICEN was requested to provide an operator for the Wesburn Airbase. This role was to perform "Flight Following" in which the position of all the aircraft being operated out of the airbase is monitored by radio. One operator was provided each day for this task until the airbase closed.

When a firefighter "taskforce" was assembled and deployed to Kinglake West on a high fire danger day, WICEN operators went with it to operate radios for the task force commander. This was a single day deployment for two operators who handled communications regarding 37 individual fires in the course of the day.

Once WICEN was activated, a WICEN net has held on 3.6 MHz each day at 1000 and 2130 hours. This net served several purposes:

- WICEN members and the wider Amateur community were kept informed of the state of WICEN's activation
- Operators on deployment could utilise the net to keep WICEN Admin informed of their situation
- Operators returning from deployment were able to brief those about to be deployed
- WICEN Admin was able to publicise shifts needing to be filled and call for volunteers
- Amateurs in fire prone areas were able to check into the net to test their emergency comms.

Starting with the 2130 net on March 27th, the WICEN HF nets were ported to Echolink on a one-way basis to make the information available internationally.

Extensive use of communications media other than radio was utilised by WICEN during the activation. WICEN's callout system uses mobile phone SMSs to broadcast urgent messages to members. Most operator deployments were arranged by mobile or PSTN phone, with the details being confirmed by Internet email.

Some statistics have been gathered regarding our bushfire activation:-

Activation Period: Monday February 9 to Monday March 9, 28 Days.  
Total Operators Deployed: 52 (includes field operators, admin and HF NCS)  
WICEN (Vic.) Inc. Members Deployed: 36  
Non WICEN (Vic.) Inc Operators Deployed: 16  
Interstate Operators Deployed: 4 (NSW - 2, ACT -2)  
Days of Service: 246  
HF Net sessions: 53  
HF Net Control Operators: 3  
Stations checking in to the HF nets: 80 (VK3 - 67, VK2 - 5, VK4 - 1, VK5 - 4, VK7 - 3)  
Total HF net check-ins: 617

In recognition of WICEN's service during the Black Saturday fires, the Wireless Institute of Australia presented Peter Weeks, VK3YZP (WICEN Commander in Alexandra) and Mark A. Dods, VK3XMU (Administration) with President's Commendations.

### **- 2010 Emergency Services Medal**

In the 2010 Australia Day Honours, Mark T. Dods, VK3ZR was posthumously awarded an Emergency Services Medal for his service to WICEN. Mark agreed to be nominated for the award to emphasise that service to the community through WICEN was as valued as service with other Emergency Services. The citation for the award reads:

"For over 20 years, Mr Dods has provided distinguished service to WICEN (Vic) Inc in a voluntary capacity in both administrative and operational roles, including included the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983, the north east Victorian floods of 1993, and 3 tours of duty during the Bogong fires of 2003. WICEN (Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network) is an organisation consisting mainly of Amateur Radio enthusiasts who provide communications to emergency response agencies in times of need. As well as participating in all WICEN (Vic) activities, Mr Dods has coordinated or had a major involvement in each step of its transition from an ad-hoc organisation to an incorporated body. He was a member of the committee that established WICEN (Vic) as a permanent organisation, and later coordinated its incorporation, becoming its first President. As President for 3 years and as a Member of the Committee of Management for another 6 years, Mr Dods provided stable, long-term leadership enabling the establishment of WICEN's structures, procedures and practices. His leadership during the preparations for the Year 2000 transition and during the transition itself led to the establishment of a permanent Victoria-wide backup radio network which still remains part of the Victorian Emergency Response Plan. Mr Dods has served WICEN (Vic) and the community of Victoria with distinction.

### **- The Future**

Because part of the role of the Emergency Services is to prepare for emergencies, any communications need they can foresee is resourced. WICEN gets activated to perform roles that were not foreseen. In the aftermath of each WICEN activation, the role we performed becomes one of the foreseeable roles, and so has resources allocated to it for the future. All this combined with constant improvements in the communications technology available to the Emergency Services means that we must expect that when we are activated it will be to do something we haven't done before. This makes it vital that we develop and practice our skills and techniques so we can meet future needs as well as we can.

## **WICEN's Role**

WICEN operators offer the emergency response agencies various communications modes, with a range of equipment, the trained disciplined manpower to operate the facilities, and if required, competent relief personnel for the agencies' own communications systems --- all at little or no cost to the agencies, the government or the general community.

The role of WICEN is to coordinate the response of the Amateur Radio Service in times of emergency. It is unlikely that WICEN will be able to meet all demands using only WICEN personnel.

WICEN provides the emergency service agencies and the local community in any particular area with two things.

- The local people have someone whom they can call on, to discuss local communications problems, as well as local "first in" contacts in times of need.
- The basic administration and operations infrastructure to enable an effective and efficient response to emergencies by the entire Amateur Service.

### **- Objective**

To make the resources of the Amateur Radio Service most effectively available to the community in times of disaster or sudden need.

### **- Goals**

1. To identify the potential services that WICEN can provide.
2. To provide, when called upon, those services in an efficient and effective manner.
3. To ensure those organisations that WICEN supports are able to effectively utilise WICEN services.
4. To respond as well as possible to requests for communications assistance from appropriate Authorities under the ERPlan.

### **- Capabilities**

The following is intended to give new members and users of WICEN a guide to its potential uses and limitations.

Applications typical for WICEN during emergencies are :-

1. Providing radio links for groups with no communications of their own, ranging from a link between two points, to providing a network of stations many kilometres from a control station.
2. Providing radio links between different services with no direct communications. eg. Community relief services and their respective HQ.
3. Providing links between services with no compatible radio frequencies.
4. Providing links for low priority traffic which does not justify diversion of a channel from other uses, eg. a link from evacuation centres to relief organisations.
5. Providing a message distribution network where no telephones are available so that disaster survivors can inform relatives.

### **- Equipment**

Most Amateur Radio Service equipment is now commercially made to a high standard and exceeds the capabilities of some equipment used by professional organisations. For example :- hand held radios operating on hundreds of channels or 100 Watt mobile high frequency transceivers.

## **- Bands**

The number of frequency bands allocated to the Amateur Service are second in number only to the Military Services, thus allowing great flexibility of operation.

## **- Activation**

As part of the Victorian Emergency Response Plan, WICEN is activated by the Victoria Police in response to a request for assistance from any ERPlan agency requiring our services. This will be done through a coordinator or his deputy.

When WICEN is activated at a regional level, the Region Coordinator will, as soon as possible, advise the State Coordinator. The coordinator accepting the request for activation is in full control and has full responsibility for WICEN's operation unless a higher ranking coordinator considers it necessary to assume control.

The coordinator in charge will ensure that the functions of Command, Control, and Liaison are performed, either by carrying them out himself or appointing suitable members to these functions for each shift.

It should be understood that WICEN cannot be activated by any amateur, and hence is not involved in personal emergencies, such as road accidents,

## **- Availability**

The greatest population of WICEN operators is in Melbourne, with most large country towns having some WICEN capability. For a major activation, WICEN operators would be transported to the scene.

There is no permanent stand-by system, but within 40km it is possible to establish communications within an hour. Within 3 hours WICEN should be able to provide twenty operators in the Melbourne area, with back-up operators available to reliably operate for many days.

## **- Operators**

Amateur Radio Operators must pass written examinations in Radio Regulations and Theory. Many WICEN operators are employed in the communications industry and can provide a high level of expertise.

## **The Structure of WICEN**

### **- Regions**

Until the latest revision of the Police regions, WICEN had adopted the same division of the state into Regions that the Victoria Police used. The Police now have only two divisions in Victoria, so WICEN has retained the previous region boundaries. This is likely to be reviewed shortly however. The members in each region normally elect a "Region Coordinator" (RCO) and "Deputy Region Coordinator" (DRCO), to act as that region's contact point for the other services, and to represent that region at Coordinators' Meetings. Some areas are amalgamated for administrative purposes.

## **- Coordinators' Meeting**

Coordinators' Meetings are held to ensure the WICEN Committee of Management is kept aware of the needs and capabilities of the Regions, and so that training, equipment, and operations can be coordinated in an appropriate and timely manner. The Coordinators' Meetings comprises the Region Coordinators of all the WICEN Regions, the elected officials, (State Coordinator, Deputy State Coordinator, Secretary, Treasurer, and Ordinary Member), Event Commanders and coordinators of project groups such as the Data Comms Group.

## **- Committee of Management**

The State Coordinator is assisted in his duties by the WICEN Committee of Management which deals with administrative matters, and the development of appropriate strategies with respect to logistical support for operations.

## **- State Coordinator**

In Victoria, the State WICEN Coordinator is elected by the WICEN membership at the Annual General Meeting, and is responsible for the maintenance of the WICEN organisation. This involves the promotion of an awareness of WICEN amongst amateur radio operators and liaison at state level with the Emergency Service Organisations such as Police, SES, DSE and CFA. The State Coordinator is also responsible for the conduct of training, exercises and information networks for WICEN members, as well as establishing communications networks upon the request of the disaster control authorities.

## **- National WICEN Coordinator**

A National WICEN Coordinator is appointed by the National Wireless Institute of Australia. The National WICEN Coordinator acts as a WICEN focal point of contact and coordination between the State Coordinators and national emergency management organisations such as Emergency Management Australia (EMA). The National WICEN Coordinator also coordinates any amateur communication facilities required on a national scale for disaster purposes. The National Coordinator also assists the State WICEN organisations in matters of common concern such as frequencies, procedures and training and liaises with the WIA Directors.

## **WICEN Operations**

### **- Security**

Commonly used scanning receivers that cover all of the frequencies that are readily available mean that plain language transmissions by radio cannot be considered secure. Some degree of privacy can be provided using Single Side Band on VHF or using Morse Code. The use of data modes will further reduce the possibility of unauthorised listening. Where total security is required the message would have to be encrypted or scrambled by the originator before transmission.

### **- Compensation & Liability**

As a recognised agency of the ERPlan all members of WICEN are covered for compensation and liability by the State of Victoria under the Emergency Management Act 1986. Nearly all radio and associated equipment is privately owned by individual members, and if accidental damage were to occur in the course of providing emergency communications then this equipment would also be covered by the act. This coverage applies to official WICEN exercises as well as activations, and has been tested on numerous occasions.



## **- Identification**

All registered WICEN operators are issued with Photo ID. cards. There is also a standard WICEN uniform which members can purchase. WICEN insignia for these uniforms is also available.

## **- Regulations**

The regulations quoted below are taken from the document:

*Radiocommunications Licence Conditions (Amateur Licence)  
Determination No. 1 of 1997*

*as amended*

*made under paragraph 107 (1) (f) and subsection 179 (1) of the Radiocommunications Act 1992*

*This compilation was prepared on 22 December 2010 taking into account amendments up to  
Radiocommunications Licence Conditions (Amateur Licence) Amendment Determination 2010 (No. 1)*

Extracts from this document relating to emergency communications are:

Part 2, Section 5, Subsection 1 which addresses the issue of third party traffic:

*(1) The licensee must not solicit a message that is to be transmitted on behalf of a third party unless the message relates to a disaster.*

The word 'disaster' is not defined, but the document "Outcomes of the Review of Amateur Service Regulation May 2004" contains the following discussion:

### **10. Amateur communications during disasters**

*The discussion paper stated that in the event of a natural disaster, amateur operators have four options:*

- operation as per normal under the Amateur Determination;*
- operation in amateur bands using high power authorised by a special condition on the amateur licence;*
- operation outside of amateur bands authorised by a scientific licence; or*
- operation using a third party authorisation with, for example, ambulance, fire or police emergency services.*

*The ACA proposed to make no changes to current regulatory arrangements for amateur communications during a natural disaster.*

*During the public consultation process, it was requested that these options should apply to all disasters, not just natural disasters. It was also asked whether it could be permitted to encode transmissions for operations and training with emergency services (see outcome in section 2).*

*The ACA will apply the above options to all disasters rather than just natural disasters. The ACA will not make any other changes to current regulatory arrangements for amateur communications during disasters, with the exception of the outcomes in sections 2 and 9 of this document.*

Part 2, Section 8, Subsection 2A which addresses the issue of station identification:

*(2A) If a network of amateur operators is participating in emergency services operations or related training exercises, for transmissions relating to those operations or exercises, the licensee must ensure that arrangements are in place for at least 1 station in the network to transmit the call signs of the stations*

*participating in the network:*

*(a) at the beginning and end of a transmission or series of transmissions; and*

*(b) for a transmission or series of transmissions that lasts for more than 30 minutes — at least once during each period of 30 minutes; and*

*(c) by voice (using the English language), by visual image or by an internationally recognised code.*

Part 2, Section 8, Subsection 3A addresses the issue of encoded transmissions:

*(3A) The licensee must not operate an amateur station to transmit signals that are encoded for the purpose of obscuring the meaning of the signals, except for:*

*(a) signals exchanged between an amateur station and a space station in the amateur satellite service for the purpose of controlling the operation of the space station; and*

*(b) signals exchanged between an amateur station and an unattended amateur station for the purpose of controlling the operation of the unattended amateur station; and*

*(c) intercommunications when participating in emergency services operations or related training exercises.*

## **- Training & Exercises**

When the emergency Services call on WICEN to provide assistance, they seldom fail to be impressed by the services that can be offered by this well trained and disciplined group of Amateur Radio Operators.

From the Amateur's viewpoint, participation in WICEN training and exercises is preparation for the time when that amateur can offer a unique service to the public during a time of need, and hence put something back into the hobby which is capable of offering so much in return. It must be remembered however, that the Emergency Services which will call on amateurs for assistance are professionals involved in the preservation of life and property, and hence assistance which is uncoordinated or untrained is not acceptable.

Accordingly the WICEN organisation provides the necessary liaison and training so that the assistance that is given is a reliable communications facility capable of working in conjunction with the emergency services.

WICEN conducts regular training exercises, usually held in conjunction with car rallies, fun runs or other community events. These provide participants with practice in the techniques of message handling and station establishment. WICEN members should participate in at least two exercises per year, preferably with one of extended duration.

WICEN participates in real time exercises rather than having people train from their own shacks for some very simple reasons.

1. In an activation very few will be lucky enough to be able to operate from their shacks. The only way that you can be absolutely sure you can operate portable is to do it, hence our request for two activities per year.

2. In an activation you will work in unfamiliar places, with unfamiliar people, and handle traffic, the content of which you may not understand. The same thing happens with our exercises.

3. Real time exercises are more interesting to the operators than sending "play" messages from the shack and are generally enjoyable in their own right. If you doubt this why not ask some of the many who do 7 or 8 exercises a year.

4. Many new or prospective amateurs get involved with WICEN because they get the chance to operate different radios on a variety of antennas with different classes of licence holders. That means they learn faster and have a good time doing it.

Applications for official WICEN exercises should be made to the State Coordinator at least four weeks prior to the event. Remember that the compensation provisions of the Emergency Management Act only apply to "Official" training exercises and activations.

### **- Training Officers**

Each region has a Training Officer (may be the Region Coordinator) who ensures that all members have received the necessary training.

Training is delivered by WICEN members who have formal training qualifications. If a region has no suitably qualified members, then the Region Training Officer would arrange with the State Training Officer for a Trainer from another region to deliver the training.

The State Training Officer is responsible for ensuring training is conducted throughout Victoria. In addition, this person organises education aids and oversees the production of the training documentation.

### **- Frequencies & Repeaters (RCO)**

This is the area where WICEN seems to get most of the complaints from those not in WICEN. We appreciate the problems that Amateurs have when their usual call channel or sked is interrupted suddenly by a swarm of people sending messages all over the place. We try to obtain approval from repeater controllers (if we are using one) prior to the event. There is not much else we can do except apologise for any inconvenience caused.

If we are running an exercise we do not expect, or require, a totally clear frequency. If some one needs to use the repeater, just ask them to notify the controlling station that they want to put out a call for their friend and then, if possible, get them to QSY. But if that is not possible then ask them to exchange any appropriate information, leaving sufficient gaps to enable any emergency break ins.

### **- Funding**

WICEN charges a minimal membership fee, and neither asks for, nor receives direct financial aid from the WIA or ARV. While some of our equipment comes from submissions to Government, most of our funding comes by way of donations from those people who use our services on exercises. These organisations are very appreciative of our assistance as apart from our efficiency, often there is no other alternative to our communications systems.

### **- How monies are spent**

While a proportion of our income is spent on administration, a lot also goes into the purchase and maintenance of hardware. We now have a number of portable voice repeaters and digipeaters, two trailable antenna masts, and a communications caravan. When funds are available we also assist clubs with projects that have a WICEN use (e.g. a repeater in an area with little or no coverage, or repeater linking etc.). We always give hardware, not money. It is in WICEN's interests to assist in achieving an efficient state wide repeater network.

### **- What's in it for us?**

Apart from the occasional opportunity to purchase surplus communications equipment cheaply, there is really no advantage to belonging to WICEN except for the comradeship of fellow operators and the knowledge that our community is better off because of what we do.

### **- Benefits to Amateur Radio**

These are difficult to quantify. The that WICEN supports each year mean that quite a large number of the populace becomes aware of our hobby by direct exposure. Often the programs, results sheets, etc., refer to us and give a run down on our role. It is certainly true that if it was not for the disaster role played by amateurs, our hobby would not have the access to repeater sites or spectrum that we enjoy.

### **- WICEN/WIA relationship**

WICEN is linked to the Wireless Institute of Australia only as an "Affiliated Club". Although the majority of WICEN operators are also members of the Wireless Institute, WICEN as an emergency response agency can utilise any person qualified to undertake a useful role within the organisation.

### **- Relationship with ARV**

In its Rules of Association, WICEN is linked to the WIA Victorian Division, now trading as Amateur Radio Victoria (ARV). Five members of the Management Committee are elected from the ranks of WICEN members and five are appointed by ARV. Although the 5 elected Committee of Management members must be members of ARV, ARV membership is not a requirement of WICEN membership.