



Responding to Communication Requirements During Emergencies

Rob Howes | Representing the Communications Support Unit (CSU) of the WA State Emergency Service (SES), a division of the Western Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).

I like to say that without communications, all I control is my desk, and that is not a very lethal weapon."

*Gen. T.S. Power,
US Strategic Air Command,
May 1959*



SES CSU



COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT UNIT



The CSU is a specialist *State Emergency Service* Unit that provides radio and datacomms support to the Department of Fire & Emergency Services (DFES), the Western Australian Police (WAPOL), and Department of Wildlife (DBCA) at emergency incidents.



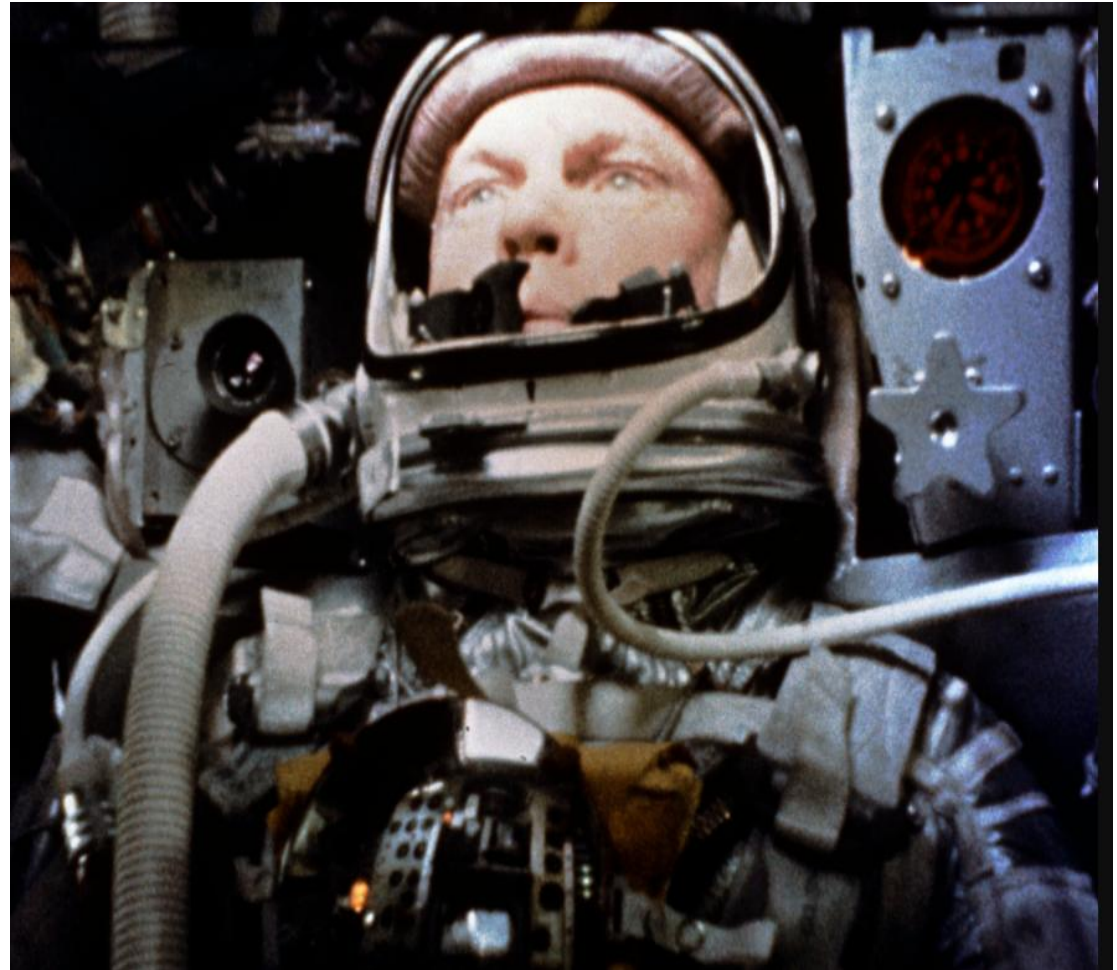
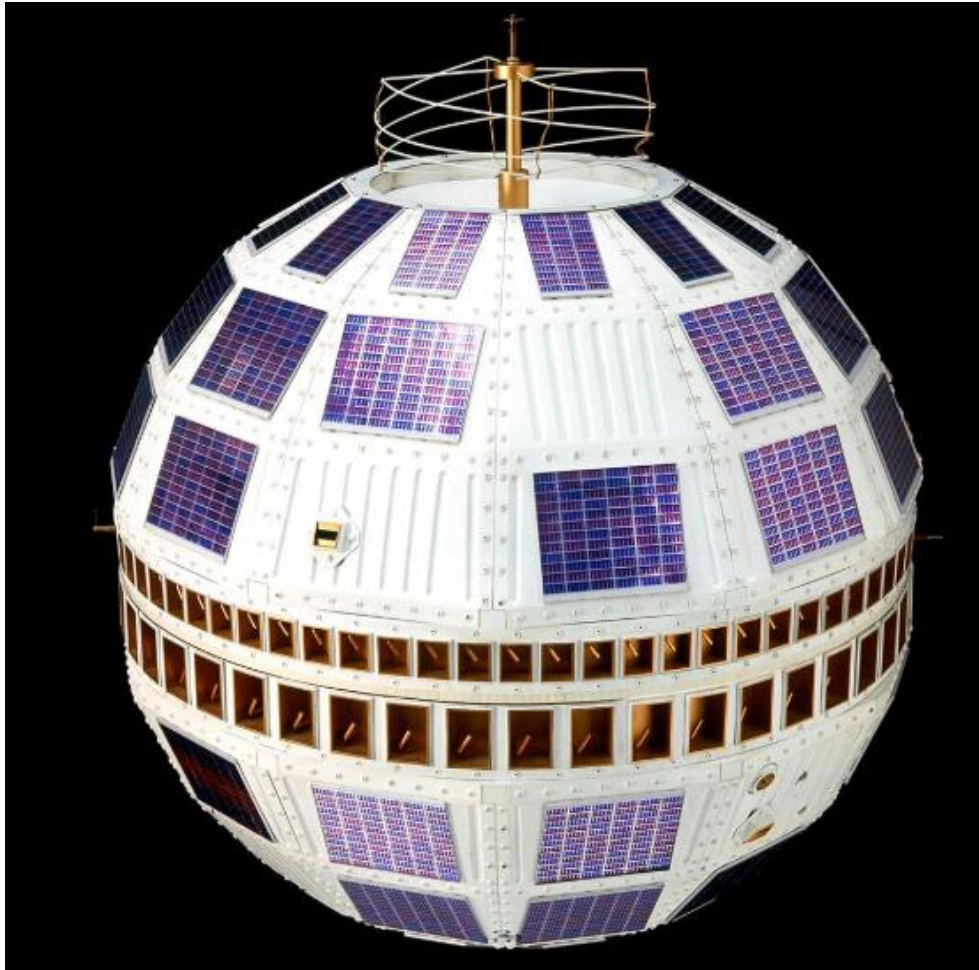
As part of the *State Emergency Service* we respond to natural hazards including Bushfires, Storms, Floods, Cyclones, and Earthquakes, as-well as supporting WAPOL in ground and air searches.



We deploy Statewide, Emergency Communication Systems for Incident Management, using HF, VHF, UHF and Satellite Systems



The Year Was 1962



The Year Was 1962



The Year Was 1962



Communications support for incidents, Radio Operators and Mapping Resources for searches





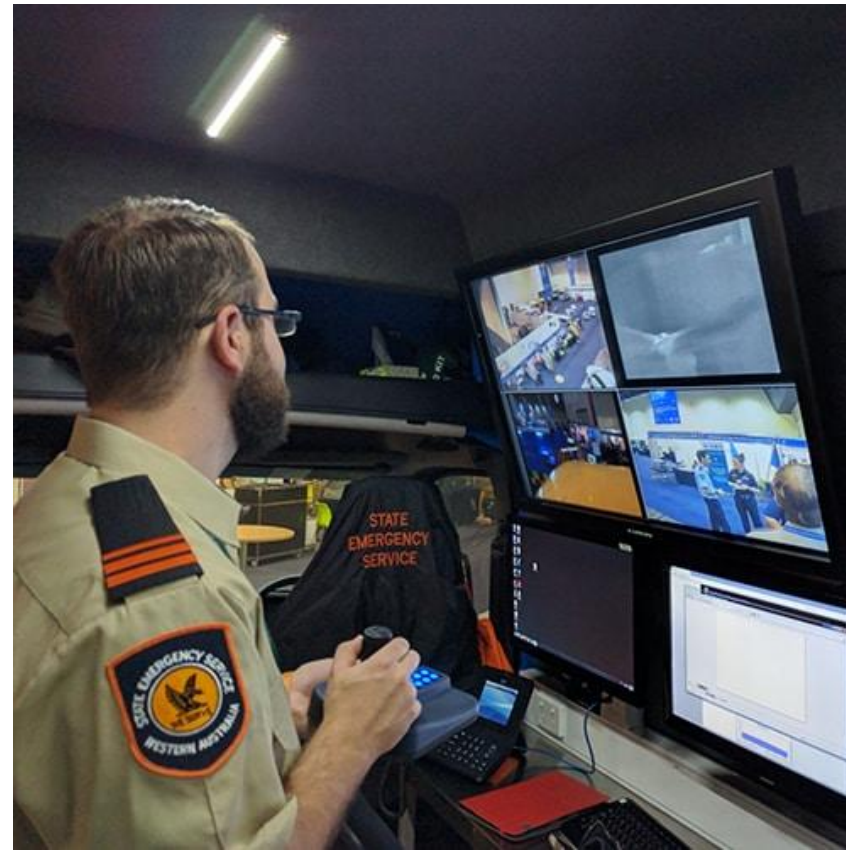


COMMUNICATION SUPPORT UNIT

COMMUNICATION SUPPORT UNIT




All CSU members are volunteers who provide 24/7 support to communities across Western Australia in times of need.



2016 Waroona - Yarloop Bushfire

In January 2016, a bushfire started in the Lane Poole Reserve forest in the Darling Scarp before reaching the Swan Coastal Plain and continued westwards until it reached the Indian Ocean.

The fire burnt close to the community of Waroona and then through the historical town of Yarloop, destroying it, before continuing southwards towards the outskirts of the town of Harvey and westwards to Preston Beach.

A photograph showing the aftermath of a bushfire. In the foreground, a charred and mangled car is visible. The ground is covered in ash and debris, including twisted metal and charred wood. In the background, several tall, brick chimneys stand as the only remaining structures of buildings that have been destroyed. The trees are mostly bare and blackened, and the sky is a hazy, greyish-blue. The overall scene is one of total devastation.

170,000 acres of land was burnt, two people died and a total 181 buildings were destroyed



The CSU volunteers provided 16 emergency repeater sites and over 1200 man hours of support for this one event, over 10 days.

Members are upskilled through regular training programs and exercises.

Skills include, radio operation, navigational, equipment operation, driving skills (both on-road and off-road), priority driving, and equipment maintenance



So, what has changed?



TIMOTHY DEAR
PHOTOGRAPHER

Technology!



Technology!



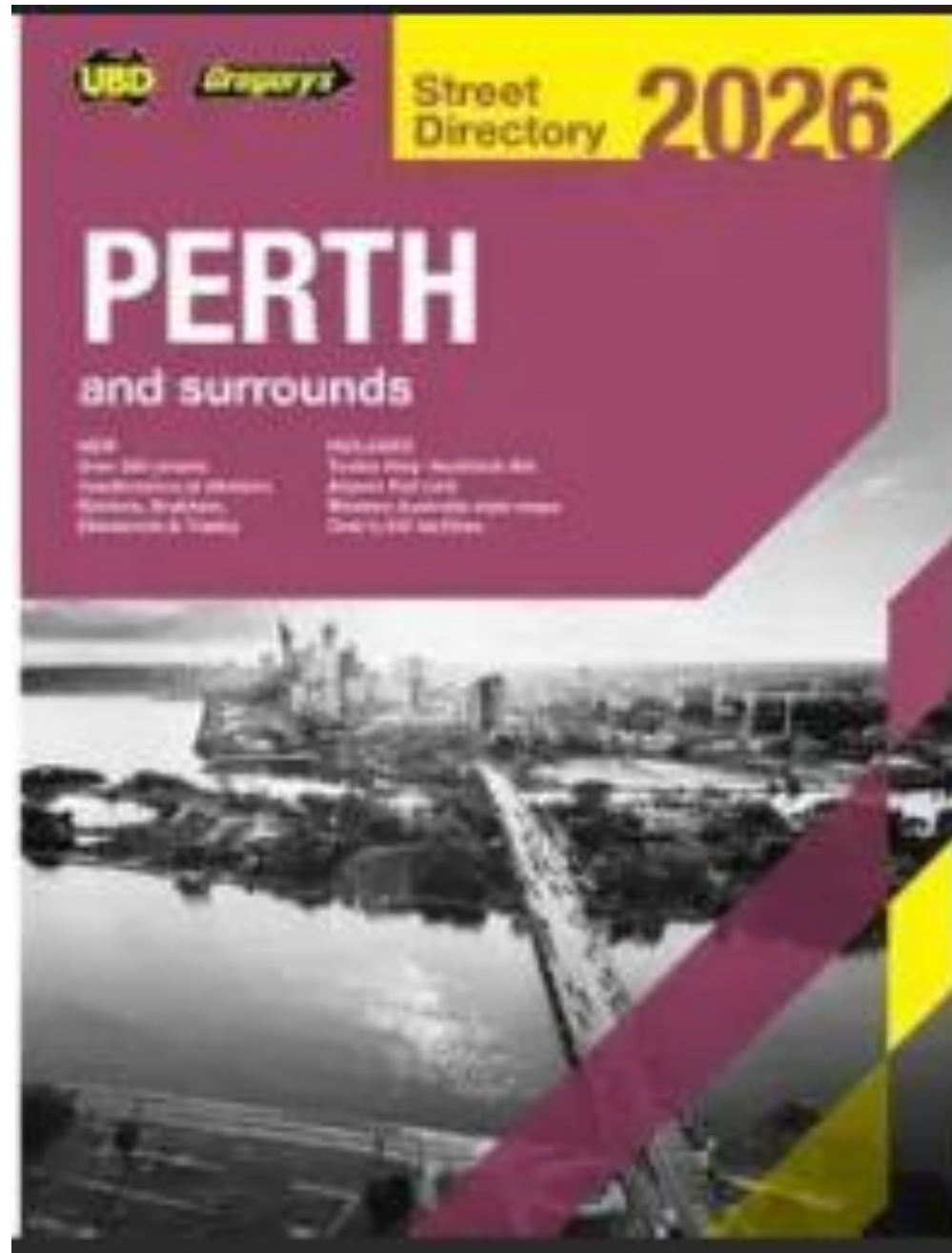
Technology!



Equipment Size!



Technology!



SpaceX's Starlink dodged 300,000 satellite collisions in 2025



Challenges?

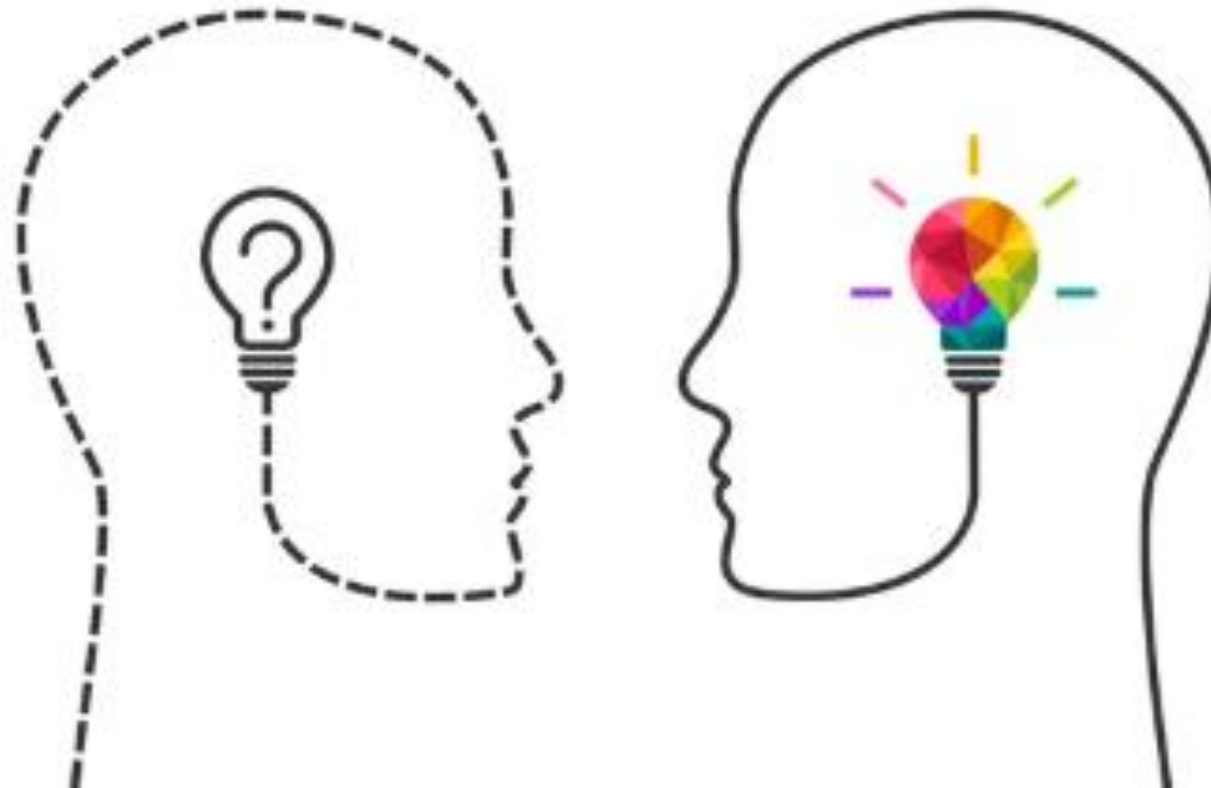


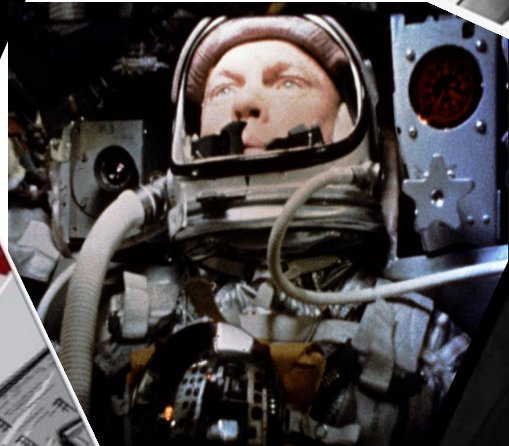
TIMOTHY DEAR
PHOTOGRAPHER

Busy People



Knowledge Transfer





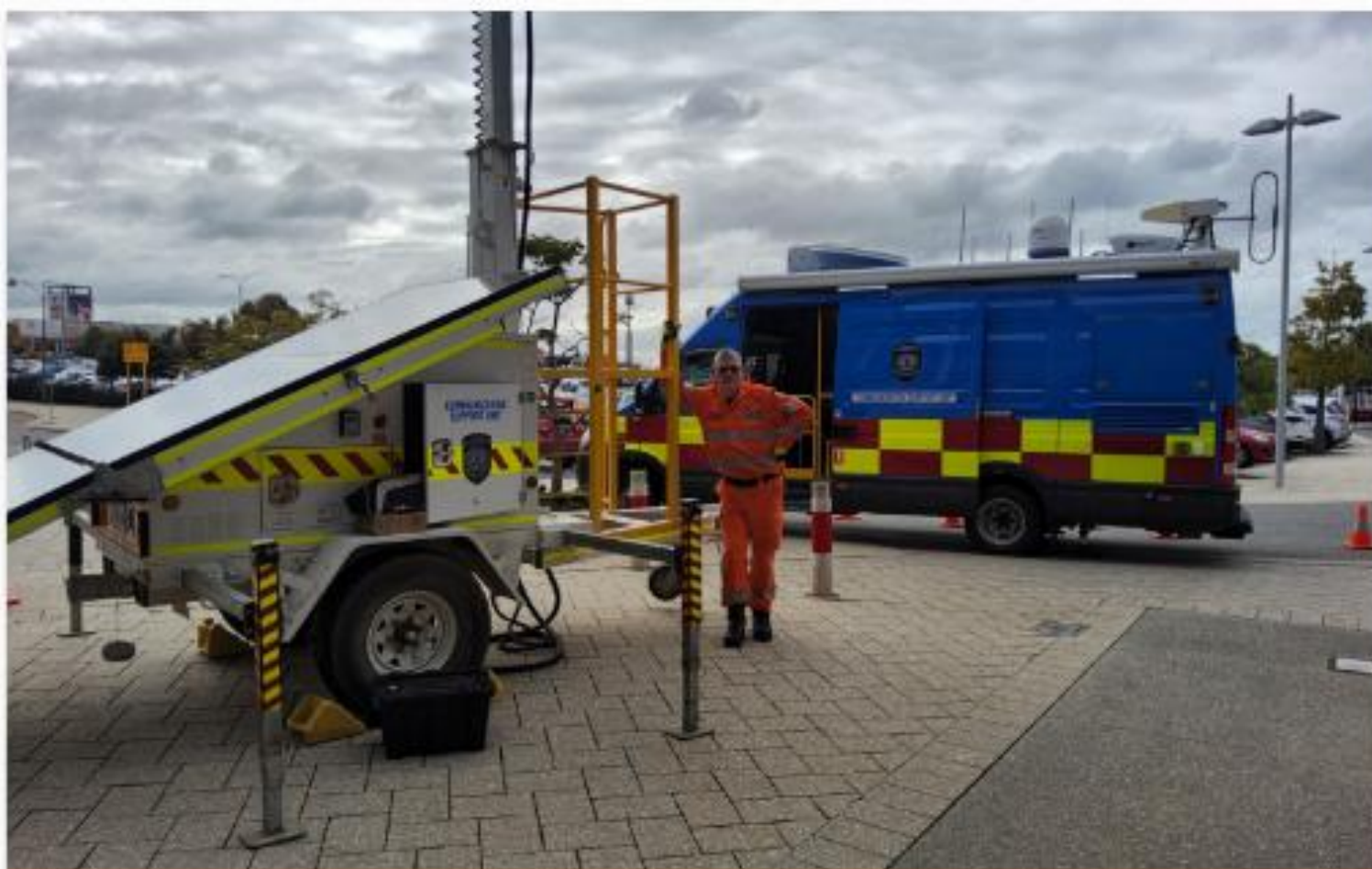
The Unit remains unique throughout the States and Territories of Australia, whether career or volunteer, and has always included innovative hard-working people serving their community.



Perth Sundowner: 13 August – Register Online <https://arcia.org.au>

“VOLUNTEERS don’t receive money for their work; not because they’re worthless but because they’re priceless.”

Lisa Bakota



**Want to do something different?
SES Comms Support Unit is looking
for new recruits**

