



Contents

March 2022

2	Editor's Note	Himadri Chowdhury
3-6	A Lifetime of Fighting Emergencies	Rob Rogers
7-8	Beyond Project Management	Ibrahim Dani
9-10	Coco's Corner	Leo Coco
11-12	Chapter News	PMI Sydney
13	Volunteering Updates	Rory Wilson
14	Photo of the Month	Eric Liaw

Editor's Note

Himadri Chowdhury

The snow flurries drift in the wind, unable to decide whether to land or fly a little further. This morning in Montreal is white, a snow storm has hit, promising 15 cms of white powder on the city streets by sundown. It's best to keep your face down, avoiding the sting of the miniature snow bullets pelting your face.

There were not many people around, so it was a surprise to find a queue snaking around the block in the early hours of the morning. Upon closer examination, it was revealed that a new sneaker was being launched today, and the sneakerheads had lined up since late evening to lay their hands on the 350 pairs the store was getting.

A couple of blocks away, another crowd had gathered upon the pavement, braving the snow and winds. However, their identity was not hard to decipher given the distinctive flag and slogans to stop the war. As the day moves on, under the same snow thousands of kilometres away, the people they love and care about are waiting for these slogans to turn into reality.

There have been many disasters in the last one month – some natural, some precipitated by human decisions. The floods in Queensland and New South Wales impacted many of us – lives and livelihood lost, properties damaged, memories lost forever, entire way of life turned upside down in a couple of days. When you think about these with your project manager hat on, it goes on to show how deep an impact environmental factors would have in your planning processes.

As project management professionals, we plan for things to go wrong. But, is there a difference in how you plan if your job is making sure disasters are contained? Can you remain untouched by the despair around you during a major emergency? We asked NSW RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers these questions and more, and the resultant interview is our lead article this month.

We celebrated International Women's Day on March 8, and, in his new column Beyond Project Management, Ibrahim Dani pays a fitting tribute to the tremendous impact of a group of women to the world of computing. In Coco's Corner, Leo Coco, in his distinct worldview, has identified the five stages of post pandemic adjustment as we return to "normalcy".

You will also enjoy Rory Wilson talking about the Volunteers meet we had in March and Eric Liaw's photo of the Georges River after the floods. Apart from these, there is a regular section of news that we hope you will find interesting. Happy reading!

We would love for you to contribute to the future issues of our newsletter. Please connect with us at newsletter@pmisidney.org or marketing@pmisidney.org.

Best,
Himadri Sekhar Chowdhury
Editor, The Critical Path



A Lifetime of Fighting Emergencies

Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM

Introduction

The New South Wales (NSW) Rural Fire Services (RFS) Commissioner **Mr. Rob Rogers** talks to PMI Sydney Chapter Marketing Director **Himadri Sekhar Chowdhury** about his experiences fighting the biggest natural disasters in the state and how it has shaped him as a person. We touch upon how RFS is gearing up for the future and focusing on digital transformation projects. Commissioner Rogers also gives us some tips to plan better for the next emergency.

Q: How did you get interested in volunteering for the RFS and what has made you stay for 40 years?

A: It's quite interesting – I was 15 when I got involved. I was walking past a display the Brigade had going on in the local area. I stopped and talked to the young person manning it and it got me interested in what they do. Then I was invited to one of their meetings, and didn't look back.

Apart from making you a part of the community, RFS provides structure to young people, especially young men, who sometimes tend to do silly things otherwise. In my case and for some of my friends, it helped us stay on track and within a structure. Having a level of discipline in your life was something I found quite fulfilling. And I made lifelong friends in the service. Once you start with something like this, you can't really stop.

Yes, there were times when I wanted to quit. When we lose firefighters and community members – that is very difficult to deal with. You sit there and think how many times should I be doing it! Is this what I should keep doing every year? In my case, I am so invested in RFS and the plans for its future that I cannot just walk away. I choose to carry on as I need to ensure that our people have the best equipment and best training so that, at end of the day, they can all go home safely.

Q: What would you consider to be the defining point in your career? Something that shaped you into becoming the person you are today.

A: I cannot pinpoint one particular incident. I had been a Brigade member and a Brigade Captain. I believe my experience of a Brigade Captain shaped my views on how you need to run the service. I was in mid coast in Taree and in Hunter valley. This experience of working outside Sydney shaped my perspective as the people volunteering in Sydney and regions have different



Rob Rogers AFSM
Commissioner, NSW
Rural Fire Service

objectives and different requirements.

Major fire seasons are defining points in your career. You remember them all, remember the people you worked with, the people that you lost. You take lessons from that and move forward. In terms of major fire seasons, the 2019-20 fire season was undoubtedly one of the biggest impacts for me. It was one of the biggest in terms of devastation of property, lives, livelihoods. It would have been same with every member of the RFS. A lot of volunteers put up their boots after that season, they could not continue with the emotional trauma it created.

Q: In your experience, what are the biggest issues being faced by the RFS today? What steps have you taken to resolve them?

A: We need best in class safety equipment and we are working with government to replace the current gear we have. We need to make the fire trucks safer – more suitable for our fire fighters.

As I mentioned before, post-traumatic stress (PTSD) has had quite a big impact on the staff and volunteers. Trying to get them to carry on has been a challenge. Quite a few people have decided to move on. We are getting new people and we are creating professional development programs for the new people we are hiring. Our academy in Dubbo has been created for the sole purpose.

However, there are still issues throughout the regional areas – people are leaving because they do not have family farms any more. Memberships to the local brigades are declining because people are simply not living there.

To answer the shortfall, we are focusing on increasing helicopter support – we are moving 3 helicopters from Sydney to the regional areas. We are mapping our requirements closely and partnering with Urban Fire Service to increase the footprint where we are unable to cope with the demand. We are also looking at technology – getting different trucks that would require less people to run.

We are looking at early warning indicators, trying to be better connected with people on social media, look at what people are sharing on social media and analyse how it can impact us. There is a huge power in cellphone and social media and some of the earliest reports of major fires come directly from the people.

We are at the cusp of digital intervention – at the forefront of a major change in how we are managing and responding to emergencies. We need to strategically be able to look at what is going on around us and change our policies to suit the changing environment.

Q: Do you believe the culture within RFS is the same as when you started? If not, how has it changed over the years?

A: When I joined, the RFS was a very typical Anglo-Saxon white male-dominated organisation. Typical of the culture of those times. It is changing now and it is becoming reflective of the society we are living in. We are getting people from different backgrounds and it is changing the culture in a big way. We are getting more women, people from different sexual backgrounds.

All these are changing RFS into a better place. However, I want to emphasise that the journey is not complete. We need to ensure a welcoming environment for everybody who wants to be involved. The way I look at it is the broader an organisation I can make, the wider the pool of people I can attract. There are still some parts of the organisation that we need to change and ensure they are welcoming. The values and culture of the RFS need to reflect the times we are in.

Q: Do you use a formal strategic planning process? How do you plan for strategically important projects at the RFS?

A: There are Organisational priorities and Commissioner priorities. There is also an Organisational Strategic Planning process. Our stakeholders are our volunteers and people in regions. We send people around and get the buy in from the boots on the ground. The priorities come through to the Executive group where the corporate plan is defined.

Q: What are the important strategic projects for the RFS in the next financial year?

A: I am keen to have a connectivity process with all our 1900 Fire Stations. The Mobile Data terminals in the trucks could be brought into the station and updated over the air. We also want to add better respiratory protection for the people on ground. There is another project to set up a benevolent fund to look after the firefighter families. We are working on a Fire Danger Rating Project, which is a national-level project. The current tech is from 1950s. We have come up with a better way of doing it using new technology and we will be changing how it's done through the state. All states and territories are helping and the project is being led by NSW RFS.

Q: How important are digital technologies and data-driven analytics for the future of the RFS?

A: It's a huge part of the organisation today. We alert people through an app. We have started installing the Mobile data terminals that I mentioned before for paging and dispatch. For simpler but better quality of intelligence we are using data-driven analytics to understand what social media data is being posted and how it is relevant for the RFS. If you go back in history, you will find that people have taken photos of impending emergencies and shared them on social media. Having the data in advance is incredibly powerful for us. This is especially helpful in cases where there are multiple fires and we need to prioritise. This needs access to data from all types of systems – like utility, traffic, etc. – pull all that up and analyse. We have partnered with a supplier for this. We are getting additional planes from Richmond that can scan the fires straightaway and send images to the mobile data terminals so that local people can see where the fire is and where it's moving. This will also be overtaken by satellites in the future. There are bigger changes coming – already some satellites are being used in the US to access and view real-time data for fires.

Q: How has One NSW RFS and helped volunteer firefighters?

A: It is a way to bring all of our people together. This has access to membership details, policies, documents – making it a one stop shop for people. We are also trying to see if we can do some of that on their phones. Like all new systems it has its upsides and downsides. We are looking at the feedback received and trying to improve the

experience.

Q: Are some of the processes and procedures being used today changing in the future?

A: The membership application process is changing from the local brigade or fire station. We now have membership application through an App. It automatically it links to CrimTrack, and can track the entire membership application journey. Everything is streamlined and changing for the better.

Q: How important is structured project management to the work you do?

A: Extremely important. We are spending millions of taxpayer dollars and we need to use a structured project management methodology to ensure we spend the money well. Our projects must include a clear scope, parameters, measure of success, objectives. We use the Prince2 methodology though we try to keep it streamlined and less documentation heavy.

Q: The understanding of Risk definitely plays an important part in what you do. How do you recognise and respond to risks?

A: For operational risks, we have a structured legislative risk process for a local government area as big as a three km polygon. We have planning process for Organisational risks, H&S risks, and so on that is inbuilt as part of the doctrine within RFS. H&S risks are the biggest and are refreshed yearly. The H&S representatives in local areas raise anything that is of any concern. The Crew Leaders – in charge of trucks – are responsible and accountable for the people under their care. There is also individual responsibility that is managed through the “I Am Safe” process. In case of incidents and accidents – ICAM investigations are conducted where we assess what happened and what can we do to ensure it does not repeat.

Q: How do you attract and retain volunteers – the most important human resource for the RFS?

A: We seem to attract a lot of members – we had a lot of new people who joined after the 2019-20 fire. Overall, we see members come in and leave at different stages of their lives. To keep our volunteers motivated, we have to ensure people in field have a say in what the organisation is doing and that they feel valued. We put a lot of emphasis on that and try and listen to our people and their concerns. Try to make their lives a little better.

Q: What do you expect the general public can do to help the RFS, and, in turn help themselves?

We are dealing with about 20K fires a year – all kinds of fire. We are very much focused on dealing with a major fire like 2019-20 again. We are getting ourselves ready for the next season with everything I mentioned before. For the general public, one of the useful things would be to download the Fires Near Me app and have a bushfire survival plan. Before you go on a holiday, make sure to have a plan in case something happens. This makes our job heaps better and heaps easier. Losing a home is much more than monetary value – it is a lifetime of memories. Pay some attention to it and make plans – you do not need a massive amount of preparation.

Beyond Project Management

Ibrahim Dani

Meet the great grandfather of your laptop and smartphone, and the 6 pioneering women who helped create it.

ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer), heralded as the “Giant Brain”, is considered to be the first large-scale computer to run at electronic speed without being slowed by any mechanical parts. In other words, it is the great grandfather of everything on your smartphones and laptops. It was built between 1943 and 1945 in the University of Pennsylvania and was first put to work on 10 December 1945.

Physically, the ENIAC was “the most intricate and complex electronic device in the world” as described by the Popular Science Magazine in its April 1946 issue (https://books.google.com.au/books?id=niEDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA83&redir_esc=y#v=onepage). The first build contained 18,000 vacuum tubes, 500,000 soldered connections, 70,000 resistors and 10,000 capacitors. It weighed 30 tons, was about 2mX1mX30m in size, and occupied an area of 170 square meters. In 1995, in celebration of ENIAC’s 50th anniversary, the machine was recreated using modern integrated circuit technology. The recreated ENIAC could fit in the palm of your hand. Imagine what its size would be with today’s technology.

The 18,000 vacuum tubes mean there are 18,000 chances to fail. How do you keep so many vacuum tubes working simultaneously? As an effective risk management procedure, the engineers created strict circuit design guidelines to maximise their reliability. They also ran extensive tests on components and avoided pushing them to their limits, which included operating vacuum tubes well below their maximum voltages to prolong their life. The ENIAC worked smoothly until it was hit by a lightning strike in 1955 and put it out of action.

The other interesting fact about ENIAC is actually a tribute to women, in the spirit of the International Women Day. The first program ran by ENIAC was to produce ballistics trajectory tables for the US Army, and the team who was brought in specifically to write this program were all women. This fact was ignored during archiving the information about ENIAC, but Kathy Kleiman, a Computer Scientist and Researcher, decided to track down the women who appeared in some old photos depicting the ENIAC.



[Ibrahim Dani](#) is an accomplished business leader with extensive experience in managing programs and leading people. Ibrahim had a colourful career journey including speaking at PMI EMEA Congress and training aspiring Project Managers. He is an advocate for excellence, a trusted adviser, and a thought leader in project delivery and related human capital management.

When Kathy Kleiman went to the Computer History Museum in Boston to seek information about these women, she was told that the women in the photos were models to make the photos look better. She wasn't convinced and kept on digging information until she located the six women who programmed and wired the panels of ENIAC for the required calculations. As a result, the six women were inducted into the Women in Technology Hall of Fame in 1997

<https://www.witi.com/halloffame/298369/ENIAC-Programmers-Kathleen-/>.

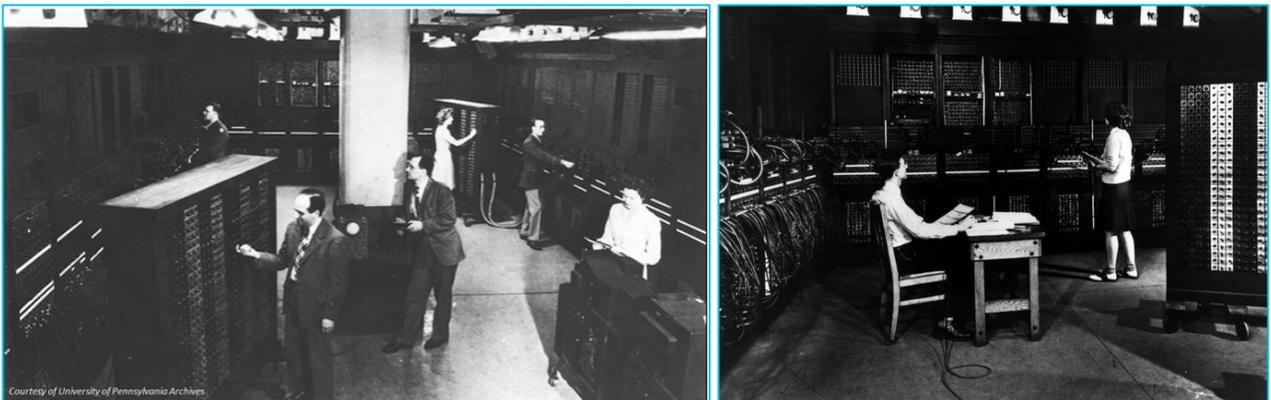
Kathy also produced a documentary (<https://vimeo.com/107667129>) about their story to show it in schools. The story inspired many girls to pursue their dreams in computer science and other STEM fields.

Watch Kathy Kleiman telling 'The Secret History of The ENIAC Women' at this TED talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zevt2blQyVs>



The official photo of the ENIAC Programmer Team (left) and a team photo (right) by one of the team members clearly showing the diversity of the ENIAC team



The Computer History Museum claimed that the women in these photos are “models”

Coco's Corner

Leo Coco

The Five Stages of Post Pandemic Adjustment



During the pandemic, we must admit that a lot has been lost – whether it be income, or routine, or structure. People have had degrees postponed, lost free time to home-schooling, and lost their plans for travelling. People’s friend groups shifted – those you would usually see weekly suddenly dropped out of contact. Even our hobbies and interests changed.

At work, businesses have had to pursue new goals, and lean into hybrid and remote working models. Workers were not just working from home – but also often had to do new types of work. It’s been an enormous time of change.

And now we’re all going back to “normal”.

Here are the five stages of post-pandemic adjustment you should be aware of:

FIRST STAGE – TREPIDATION

When you first realise that we will all start trickling back into the office and school, there’s a strange sense of anxiety. As much as we may want to leave behind the isolation and return to what you thought was normal, you suddenly realise that – somewhere during this crisis – your idea of normal shifted. And what used to be normal is now a little strange.



Project Management Authority, Trainer, Entrepreneur and Speaker, there are many facets to [Leo Coco](#), our PMISC Director. He has seen it all – from fast-paced corporate environments, to public enterprises touching millions. Decades of experience have given him an almost uncanny ability to home in on the latest trends in the market and predict changes that are coming. In this column, Leo gives our readers a ringside view of how the world of Project Management is changing around us.

SECOND STAGE – PREPARATION

If you've been remote in the Sydney lockdown, odds are that your workbag has been in your closet for a long time. You begin getting out the old work outfits, start making plans with friends and family for the day when you can see each other again and even start planning your holidays. As an employer, the transition back to work needs careful thought and planning.

THIRD STAGE – ELATION

The joy of seeing the sights of the city again. You even enjoy the bustle of the train station. You look forward to going out, having friends over, and dropping your kids off at school for the whole day now! One of the things we look forward to regaining is our anchors. The things which mark the passage of time – birthday celebrations, and weddings. Even little things like coming home from work act to anchor us into the flow of life and stop the days from feeling like a blur.

FOURTH STAGE – LAMENTATION

At some point, the loss sets in. Going back to work means no more midday baths or long breakfasts, no more pants-less zoom calls. But you also discover that some things don't come back, like your favourite stores which have closed down, and you will never get back those lockdown birthdays. For many people, their lives return to normal, but the world around them appears to get more and more chaotic. This disparity can cause grief.

FIFTH STAGE – ASSOCIATION

This may seem like an odd stage. But, in fact, people never really settle into changes until they connect to others. Adjustment comes when we settle into a supportive network and feel like part of a community again. When I went back to work, it all felt a little strange. This was compounded by the masks and the empty offices. The minute it started to click into place was the minute my coworkers started to come back to the office. This is the crucial challenge of our time: creating connected communities in workplaces (and everywhere) that can help anchor people through change.

HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN EASE THE TRANSITION

In order to reduce employee turnover and disruptions when transitioning back to the office after these extended lockdowns, businesses and employers need to be proactive. Remember, your employees didn't just work from home for a couple of months – they lived through a pandemic and global crisis. Their lives have been impacted in countless ways. Data shows a disconnect between employers and employees, with employers often overestimating how well their people are coping.

Ideas for organisations might include:

- Flexible hours and arrangements – Microsoft comments that “a thoughtful approach to hybrid work will be critical” to retain workers moving forward.
- Creating spaces in the office that can be kept quiet
- Debriefing the last year or two as a team
- Having some fun together as a workplace

Chapter News - March 2022

Online Seminar: Disciplined Agile's Value Stream Management & Minimum Business Increment (MBI)

In this presentation Joshua Barnes dives into Disciplined Agile with focus on the Minimum Business Increment (MBI), an idealised value stream. The MBI is an essential addition to Disciplined Agile and can solve many problems in your organization.

Come and find out how it can unlock the flow of value in your organization.

Speaker:

Joshua Barnes, Founder of Process Mentors, Inc., a PMI Authorized Training Partner, and the First PMI Consulting Partner. Joshua is Head of Business Agility Practice and a Value Stream Consultant supporting commercial, non-profit, and government agencies. Has coached hundreds of teams and trained thousands of people, ranging from Executive Leadership through to agile team members.

ProjectBites

We are looking for feedback on *ProjectBites*. This is a platform hosting bite-sized video clips created by PM professionals around the world. You will find informative videos that inspire, motivate, and educate PM professionals. ProjectBites has 70+ speakers and 50+ hours of PDU qualified content. <http://www.projectbites.com/>
If you are interested in knowing more about ProjectBites, please email newsletter@pmisydney.org

Speaking at PMI Sydney

Are you ready to inspire others? Tell us what you're passionate about. PMI Sydney Chapter is looking for volunteers to be speakers in 2022 events and participate in panel discussion. Please contact Mulalo Mudau at membership@pmisydney.org and Omer Iqbal at events@pmisydney.org to take part in 2022 events and panel discussions.

The Melbourne PMI Conference



The PMI Melbourne Chapter is calling for abstracts, seeking sponsors and have opened award nominations for the PMI Melbourne 2022 Conference on 16th May 2022. They are also offering a virtual ticketing option for members that cannot make it over to Melbourne. All information is available on the website: <https://melbourne.pmi.org.au/Conference/>

The Conference theme this year is REbuild | REconnect – “More than ever we are being called to REBUILD our resilience, and in response we have created impressive and wide-spread innovation. This conference will RECONNECT project management professionals by exploring and expanding on the approaches which have already been developed, and looking towards key learnings to help us continue to adapt and grow in the future.”

Project Management Survey

Ashok Rehan is a Doctor of Philosophy student at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). Ashok is undertaking a research study investigating how enhanced leadership practices and communication processes could lead to superior project success in the Australian Building and Construction Sector. Ashok is looking to collect responses via an online survey to from project professionals working in the construction sector and would appreciate feedback from PMI Sydney Chapter members.

<https://surveys.usq.edu.au/index.php/269244?lang=en> – Self-Assessment Questionnaire (for Project Managers/Leaders)

<https://surveys.usq.edu.au/index.php/597833?lang=en> – Questionnaire - Identified Success factors in the Australian Building Construction Sector (for Project Manager/Leaders)

<https://surveys.usq.edu.au/index.php/872343?lang=en> – Observers- Assessment Questionnaire (for Project Stakeholders)

Please note that PMI and PMI Sydney Chapter are not in any way associated with this survey.

Contributions Wanted for the Newsletter

The PMI Sydney Chapter Newsletter Editorial Team is requesting your contributions for our monthly newsletter, The Critical Path. News, Views, Opinion Pieces, or Articles, all are welcome. We would also be happy to hear about the content you'd like to see in the newsletter.

Please reach out to marketing@pmisidney.org with your contributions or suggestions.

PMI Sydney: Volunteering Updates

PMI Sydney Chapter Volunteers Event – Rory Wilson

In early March 2022, PMI Sydney Chapter welcomed YeYoon Kim from PMI Singapore to Sydney. Along with meeting the PMI Board of Directors, YeYoon made a request to meet as many of the PMI Sydney Chapter volunteers as possible.

Despite heavy rain, flooding and transport disruptions across the city of Sydney on the day, a number of volunteers and the Board of Directors attended a volunteers dinner event at Cliftons, 60 Margaret Street, Sydney on the 3rd of March. The in-person group was also joined by a number of attendees virtually via video conference.

In addition to dinner and drinks for all, each volunteer was provided a token of appreciation from YeYoon for their contribution to the Chapter. If you are interested in volunteering with PMI Sydney, you can take a look at available opportunities here:

<https://pmsydney.org/get-involved/volunteer>



Photo of the Month

Eric Liaw



About the image

A view of the George's River in Sydney's southern suburbs. The water level has increased, and the water is muddy because of run off after weeks of heavy rain. No water sports and fishing for some time!