

NATIONAL EMERGENCY

RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services



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Spring 2011 • National Emergency Response

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FRONTCOVER

Enjoy Part I of Martin Boyle's Search and Rescue in Antarctica series where he explains the Australian Antarctic Division's deployment of field camps and establishment of summer bases to collect data from the world's most desolate continent.

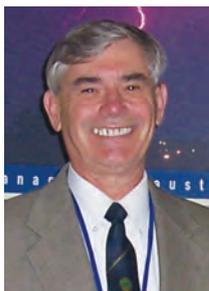
Photo: Martin Boyle.



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Bob Maul, FAIES

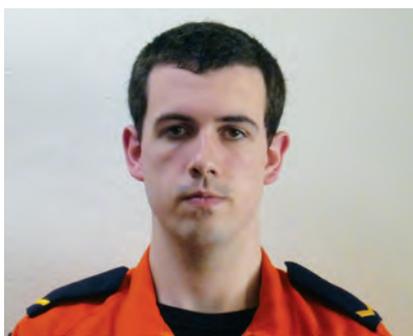
General Secretary/Registrar

AIES is pleased to announce the following emergency service people became members of the Institute between June and August 2011.

John Edge	SES	SA
Ian Earle	Police	VIC
Shane Bolton	St John Ambulance	SA
Sean Curtin	Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority	VIC
Timothy Greagsby	UK Ambulance	SA
Andrew Murray	Risk Mgt Services	QLD
James Riddock	SES	NSW
Curtis Salter	SES	TAS
David Howard	Royal Australian Navy	ACT
Bernadene Hansen	Lifesaving Victoria	VIC

PROFILE

Christopher Budd, MAIES



Christopher Budd is a new member of AIES – those with a keen eye will remember him among the new members names in the last issue of *National Emergency Response*.

Christopher joined Strathfield SES early in 2008, managing a few weeks training before the headquarters burnt down due to an electrical fault. Nonetheless, due to the hard work of the Rescue Officer and Training Coordinator, quality training was abundant despite less than suitable temporary accommodation. This enabled Christopher to earn his Certificate II in less than two years. Christopher was also part of the NSW SES contingent to Melbourne in March 2010 after Melbourne's large storm. Since then, Christopher transferred to Randwick SES in 2011 due to a new job and he recently went with a Randwick team to Taree to help during the floods.

By day, Christopher is predominantly a student. He graduated with a Bachelor

of Arts (with majors in Psychology and Linguistics) from Sydney University in 2009, then enrolled in the Double Masters of Policing, Intelligence, Counter-Terrorism and International Security Studies at Macquarie University, which he is currently completing while working to support himself. He is also interested in gaining employment directly related to his postgraduate degree.

He has many other interests, foremost of which is spending time with fiancé Bonnie. The couple plans to marry in January 2012. Other interests include target rifle shooting with Sporting Shooter Association of Australia, being involved with his local church and the Australian Army Cadets where he is Training Officer for Sydney High School Cadet Unit.

EDITOR'S REPORT

Kristi High

I am particularly proud of this edition of *National Emergency Response* because it truly represents a members' publication. We received excellent submissions this past quarter from members of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services – both editorial and pictorial. Thank you to our cover story author and photographer Martin Boyle from the Australian Antarctica Division. I'm sure you will all thoroughly enjoy Part I of Martin's detailed description

of Search and Rescue in the world's most desolate continent. Martin also provided the beautiful photos for this feature. Having already had a sneak peek at parts two and three, I can assure you they will be worth the wait with breathtaking images accompanying Martin's candid take on the team's work in challenging conditions. Thank you also to Christopher Budd who joined the AIES earlier this year for his academic essay on the NSW Police and its associated recruitment challenges. Bill Hoyles is back again this edition with

a chatty diary-like inclusion of his recent trip to northern Queensland, United Voice (QLD) has sparked discussion around ambulance ramping and I was thrilled to receive some excellent photographers from firefighter Joel Mackay. This journal receives excellent support too from emergency services agencies and organisations and once again I acknowledge the contribution they make to the content and imagery of this journal. Please keep those submissions coming in.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Alan Marshall, FAIES

National President

FIRES, FLOODS, ISSUES

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission report (July 2010) and the interim report of the Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response (July 2011) have each highlighted issues of planning, warnings, communication, training, command and control and interoperability of emergency service agencies. The Queensland flood reports are still pending, but are expected to have similar issues. Do we need a stronger municipal or council driven emergency structure or an over-riding state level central coordinating emergency service?

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM - COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING

In situations where people knew each other, collaborated, and practised together in emergency and exercises, the management teams worked. A scenario where faces are known and their capabilities are made aware of.

Experience, research and recent large scale emergencies have continued to identify that primary influences on definitions, operations, and effectiveness of the emergency management team (EMT) are largely dependent upon the Incident Controller and Emergency Response Coordinator's perspective, experience and knowledge of emergency management systems. A number of experienced EMT personnel are needed over an extended time frame in a large scale emergency but they will only be effective if they are trained to a high standard with experience at an operational level. The function of an EMT is to support the Incident Controller in determining and implementing appropriate incident management strategies for the duration of the emergency event.

The process is a collaborative decision-making process with the primary intent of purpose and effort working together using a problem solving approach from an agenda or known effect. It uses available information, resources, planning and logistics with the selection of priorities communicated to all who should be involved. It keeps focus

at an operational level on the emergency preparedness and training, and team dynamics continually exercise the plans, not just a reaction to one larger disaster.

WORKING TOGETHER

Recent reports and the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission have identified many concerns related to operational matters such as control, interoperability and interagency standards, leading to the focus on operational capability, systems and procedures. The theme of Working Together Better, the title of the Emergency Management Conference held in Melbourne in July, suggested working together better needed to be community focused and confidence driven. There were opportunities for all delegates and service representative to mingle and discuss issues including an interoperability model with interstate and overseas presenters. In the discussion session, many questions were around a central coordinated emergency service and the interoperability framework. Interoperability suggests that it is coordinated decision making between agencies and jurisdiction in proper and coherent governance. It's working together better - input, process, and output.

CENTRAL COORDINATED EMERGENCY SERVICE - INTEROPERABILITY

There may be a considered advantage in a state level, central coordinated emergency service, as mentioned in the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission and the interim Victorian Flood report. What does the interoperability model suggest? Interoperability planning requires accounting for emergency management and incident response contingencies and challenges. Interoperability plans should include considerations of governance, standard operating procedures, technology, training and exercises, used within the context of the stress and chaos of a major effort. The area where a central coordinated emergency service may be considered in the interoperability model is communications. Communication



interoperability allows emergency management and response personnel, along with the affiliated organisation, to communicate within and across agencies and jurisdictions via voice, data, or video in real time, when needed and authorised.

A state level central coordination emergency service may develop a seamless communication interface to aid multi-agency coordination, which may provide a common national framework. The use of a computer based common state level mapping system with updates linked into a social network may be included. It may consider empowering users to make decisions through context-based alerting. Social networks are providing information hours ahead of emergency service official reports. The interoperability model provides a framework for governance, planning and application; the large scale emergencies have issues of coordination.

The management task is to bring together in an integrated organised network, the resources of many agencies and individuals who can take appropriate and timely action to prevent or mitigate the emergency. It needs to be a community focused, all hazards all agencies approach, which is confidence driven. The contribution of individuals and communities towards their own safety before and during emergencies must still be enhanced by being prepared, by the use of early warning systems, effective community training and involvement programs, secure methods of communication, including social networks. ●



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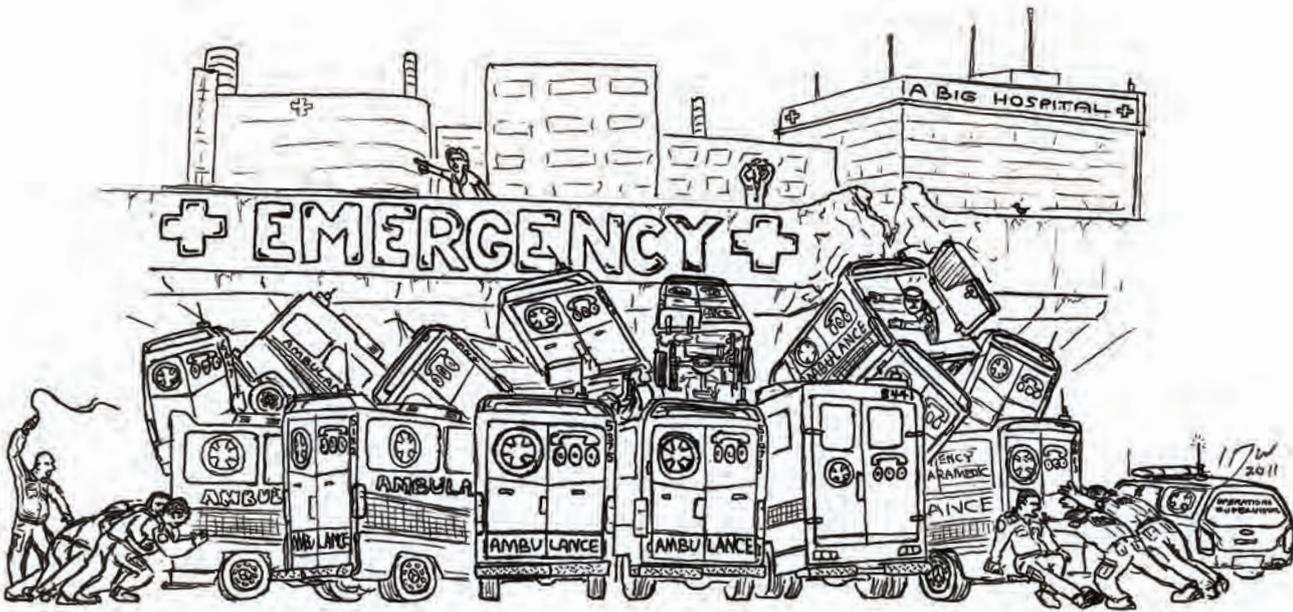
RAMPANT RAMPING

—verb (used with object)

1. to keep a Paramedic from completing his or her job; by means of ramping their ambulance or having it ramped whilst the patient awaits treatment within the hospital: *The Gold Coast Hospital will be on bypass until further notice as the emergency department has 21 ambulances already ramped.*

Jeanette Temperley

United Voice, Ambulance Section, Queensland



Ramping is certainly not a new phenomenon but in Queensland it has been only in the last five years that we have had to deal with this problem on a damaging scale.

Recently the problem has escalated to such a point that the lives of patients are being risked almost daily. As Public Health Services are pushed beyond their capacity, more and more ambulances are finding themselves unable to unload their patients at hospital emergency departments.

With overloaded hospitals unable to admit ambulated patients upon arrival, the duty of care rests with the paramedics that brought them there. Unable to leave the patients, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) regularly finds that its resources are becoming choked with backlog. We have had cases of up to two dozen ambulance vehicles and crew ramped at just one hospital. With this kind of build up the hospitals turn away approaching ambulances, forcing them to bypass to another hospital.

The trickle-down effect of this situation is crippling for QAS. Ambulances queued up at hospitals means there are fewer units available to respond, resulting in a lack of coverage and delays in attendance. Ambulances need to travel further to reach a hospital that will not turn them away and units responding to calls often need to travel further from their station when local units are ramped. All of this signifies compromised patient care.

In Queensland, ramping of ambulances has become a contemporary industrial issue because of the adverse effects it has on patient and paramedic safety.

Paramedic fatigue is exacerbated to dangerous levels as crews are split to monitor multiple patients and essential breaks from work are sacrificed to keep up with paramedic demand. Ambulance officers are unable to take the breaks that they need to continue to operate efficiently and are not able to finish the shift until released from the hospital.

The problem of ambulance ramping

is essentially due to a lack of available hospital beds and resources. However there is NO QUICK FIX. This is a complex problem that is mutually entrenched in the services of both hospital and ambulance. More funding might well be the solution to all of our problems but how the funds are to be allocated is more crucial.

We as a union have genuine concerns about the safety of our members and the community. Ramping can be prevented by adequately resourcing hospitals and the ambulance service. As a union we must expect that the ambulance service takes all necessary steps to address this unacceptable risk to staff and patients because it is only a matter of time before a paramedic or a patient is harmed because of ramping.

United Voice, the union for Ambulance Officers in Queensland is calling for a serious discussion involving all relevant government departments. The discussion needs to investigate where the system is failing and what can be done to address the failures. No more band-aid solutions. ●

ACTORS IN WAITING?

Time for a review of NSWPF recruiting policies

Christopher **Budd**, MAIES

*Bachelor of Arts graduate (Psychology and Linguistics), Sydney University (2009)
Currently undertaking a Double Masters of Policing, Intelligence, Counter-Terrorism and International Security Studies at Macquarie University*



The New South Wales Police Force (NSWPF) is one of the better-conducted domestic police forces in the world. This results from the effective management of the diverse and complex environment that faces police.¹ This, in turn, is made possible by the work of competent, qualified staff from Probationary Constable to Commissioner. But they can exist long-term only if a suitable candidature can be attracted to join the NSWPF.

Currently, this may not be occurring. There are several possible reasons; two of which are the cost of training and the untimeliness of career development.

Cost of training refers to the cost incurred by a policing student during the 29 weeks they are required to train at the Police Academy in Goulburn. There are two elements to this cost. Firstly, attendance cost, which consists mainly of course fees of \$15,800.² Other attendance costs are theoretically voluntary, such as keeping a vehicle (in order to visit home on weekends) and social activities with classmates. Assuming a trip to Sydney per fortnight and \$25/week in social activities, this an additional \$1,400, making a total attendance cost of \$17,200.

Secondly, maintenance costs. These are bills and other necessities such as mortgage payments, school fees, insurance payments, mobile phone bills and so on. Maintenance costs vary significantly person to person, making them hard to quantify. A single, childless person may have low maintenance costs whereas a person with dependants may have several thousand dollars.

These costs affect the candidature that can be attracted to the NSWPF. First, candidates must be prepared to pay \$17,200 in order to become a police officer. Positively, this ensures that the candidates attracted are highly motivated and committed to becoming a police officer. However, it is a substantial break from the norm for employment to have such a large cost. It discourages applications from a portion of the population that, although not having their hearts set on becoming a police officer, would nonetheless make excellent police officers, and compensate for their initially lower commitment with other skills and experience.

Second, candidates must be able to afford maintenance costs. Obviously, this is more difficult the higher the

maintenance costs are. Generally speaking, the two largest maintenance costs would be a mortgage and/or dependants. Although not an insurmountable barrier, the difficulty in affording a mortgage while being essentially unemployed considerably skews the pool of candidates to those without mortgages and dependants (which means, generally speaking, to younger candidates).

Third, notwithstanding the unique appeal of being an actual policeperson, many candidates will have education and experience that give them other options for employment, often in related, non-uniform roles, which the prospect of a salary can easily tempt them to opt for.

These three effects have different consequences. The bias toward commitment from the \$17,200 fee ensures that a majority of candidates come with a deep desire to be a police officer. This includes candidates whose desire is not on par with their suitability. But, in a candidature weighted in favour of commitment, being less suitable and more motivated will allow you to prevail over the candidates who are more suitable and less motivated. Furthermore, requiring such a large cost means that those who are selected will, post-selection, undergo various cognitive biases that increase their (already high) levels of commitment. A likely consequence of this is candidates fixating on the goal of becoming a police officer. This will, initially, prevent unsuitable candidates from noticing their incompatibility and, subsequently, from withdrawing of their own volition.

Maintenance costs, on the other hand, select demographically against suitability. Those without mortgages and dependants are generally younger people. Younger people, through no fault of their own, generally have less maturity, skills and experience. A poignant example: One can be a sworn NSWPF officer before one

is entrusted with an unrestricted driver's licence. It is true that such generalisations mean nothing to individual young applicants; nevertheless, when the NSWPF have places they need to fill, they will fill them with the available applicants. If the available applicants are younger, it becomes increasingly immaterial whether they are suitable – as there are not other candidates to employ instead.

In addition, the inherent non-competitiveness of a job that costs money, does not pay and is not secure³ ensures that candidates with other employment options will investigate those options fully. Particularly, this includes those with a tertiary education, and/or relevant experience, whom the NSWPF has a vested interest in attracting.

Overall, then, the picture painted of the candidate pool for the NSWPF is not especially attractive. Generally speaking, a candidate will be immature, with no options other than, and a fixation upon, becoming a police officer. Needless to say, these are descriptors not usually associated with competent, qualified staff.

What then is the NSWPF doing wrong? A look at police forces the world over provides a damningly simple picture. Every police force in the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand pays their police a salary while they train and covers the costs of training, as does every state and territory policing body in Australia except the NSWPF. Clearly, the NSWPF needs to alter their policy. Undoubtedly this will be an expensive change. However, it should never have been the case in the first place. Whether the current situation is the result of previous commissioners' endeavours or previous governments' parsimony is irrelevant. It is a problem now, and this Commissioner along with this Government should act to rectify the situation.

Another reason candidates may not be attracted to join the NSWPF is the untimeliness of career development.

This refers to the length of time it takes a police officer to be able to gain rank in the NSWPF. This is important because the commissioned ranks (Inspector to Commissioner) fulfil a distinct role to the non-commissioned ranks (Probationary Constable – Senior Sergeant). Roughly speaking, the role of commissioned ranks is to plan and of non-commissioned Ranks is to act. Planning and acting involve different skills and abilities, resulting in some people being attracted to and/or suitable for one but not the other. This would suggest that there should be two recruitment streams, but that is not currently the case. As it stands, everyone must attend the Police Academy from which they graduate into an acting role. It is a minimum of nine years from graduation before a police officer can attain the rank of Inspector and become a planner.

Consequently, there are four barriers to attracting suitable personnel. First, this single stream process does not take into account the background of individual candidates or give any recognition of prior learning. If one has, for example, military experience, even as a Commissioned Officer, they will still be required to spend nine years as actors before being eligible to become a planner – despite having world-class training and experience in planning from the Australian Defence Force. Another example would be education. No special consideration or acceleration is available to those with a relevant tertiary education – such as the Bachelor of Policing at Charles Sturt University, the Masters of Policing, Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism at Macquarie University or a relevant PhD. Such candidates undoubtedly have other options (as mentioned above). Why then would they join the NSWPF when their education/experience is disregarded? Moreover, if they do join the NSWPF, why does the NSWPF waste them as actors for nine years when they could be trained specifically for planning?

Second, the obstinacy with which the current model of career progression is pursued leaves no room for the NSWPF to promote talented individuals ahead of schedule even if the NSWPF wants to. If there is a constable with abundant talent at planning, why waste the constable's and the NSWPF's time making him progress at the prescribed rate? It is of no benefit.

Third, those who desire to be planners due to their inherent inclination for such a position will be disinclined to join the NSWPF if they are required to spend nine

NSW Police on patrol at Bondi Beach, Sydney.



years performing a different role. The outcome is that the NSWPF will, over the long term, find itself with a smaller pool of commissioned rank candidates whose motivation for promotion is irrefragable.

Fourth, the nine year minimum for becoming a commissioned rank means that candidates for commissioned rank positions will have spent nine years gaining experience and training as actors, such that it will be difficult to adjust their thinking to that of a planner. This, in turn, will lower the quality of the planners as they go about their role with the mindset of an actor.

Again, what is the NSWPF doing wrong? In this case, the picture is not simple. There is great variance among police forces as to how they recruit their actors and planners. The NSWPF itself acknowledges the need for specific training and career progression in the form of the Accelerated Prosecutors Recruitment Program (APRP) whereby after graduation APRP candidates spend their probationary year gaining a mix of normal and specialised experience, after which they become Police Prosecutors (rather than needing the standard three years normal experience prior to enter a specialised position). In addition, the ADF has a split of roles (officers/planners with soldiers/actors). The ADF approach though is quite different – at the outset, candidates can apply for either role. If found suitable, they are trained specifically in the role they applied for and upon graduation from their respective courses enter the ADF doing what they applied, and were trained, to do: officers are not wasted as soldiers, and soldiers are not wasted as officers. Furthermore, if a soldier demonstrates talent at officer duties, they can be trained and promoted straight to officer level without needing to progress through each

rank (known as an in-service commission).

This leaves the NSWPF with two models it could base a new recruitment strategy upon. Similar to the APRP, upon graduation from the Academy candidates would spend a year as a Probationary Constable whilst undergoing specialised Commissioner Rank training, after which they are appointed as Deputy Inspectors (a newly minted, one star rank). Alternatively, the NSWPF could cut and paste the ADF model whereby some candidates are recruited specifically to become Commissioned Ranks, and they undergo longer and different initial training before graduating as Deputy Inspectors.

Overall, the NSWPF has a long-term obstacle in the form of the costs associated with police officer training. If the recruitment process is not changed, the NSWPF will find itself employing the best of an average bunch rather than selecting amongst the best of the best. This, in turn, will reduce the NSWPF's ability to perform its core functions. In addition, the NSWPF is currently underutilising its time and the talent of candidates, internal and external, by not introducing a scheme whereby personnel can be trained for work specifically as a commissioned rank. For the last 20 years NSW has had the best police in Australia, let us make sure it stays that way for the next 20 years. ●

See page 2 for a profile of Christopher Budd, MAIES.

(Endnotes)

- 1 "Police" will be used throughout this essay to mean "domestic police" – as opposed to policing bodies such as the Australian Federal Police, Federal Bureau of Investigation and so on.
- 2 This is calculated based on the information provided by the Charles Sturt University website - <http://www.csu.edu.au/study/arts-courses/policing/costs.htm>.
- 3 This is referring only to the 29 weeks in Goulburn



EARTH: FIRE & RAIN

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND DISASTER AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

The Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference will provide a forum to examine the issues surrounding natural and man-made hazards.

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Visit the conference website <http://anzdmc.com.au> for details of invited and confirmed speakers, and the list of themes for presentations.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information go to www.anzdmc.com.au or contact Joint Association Conference Coordinator Angela Stuart on 07 5502 2068 or email admin@anzdmc.com.au

This conference is a joint initiative of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services (Queensland Division), the Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association Inc and the Association for Sustainability in Business Inc.

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COAST GUARD FIRE READY

Coast Guard volunteers in Hastings are the first flotilla to acquire CFA firefighting skills.



Coast Guard members in Hastings, Victoria, now have basic firefighting skills. Photo: Amy Schildberger.

The volunteers completed the Marine Fire Responder course in August, which enables Coast Guard members to respond to fires on water without the need for CFA firefighters to jump on board.

It's hoped the transfer of skills will reduce response times on the water while ensuring service delivery to the community remains at the highest standards.

CFA Coast Guard Liaison David Hatcher said Coast Guard is pleased to be supporting CFA with the requirement to fight fires on water.

"This training should be a requirement for all Coast Guard volunteers," he said.

"We are proud to say we are CFA members as well as Coast Guard members.

"Obviously, our number one priority is to save lives and now we have firefighting equipment and training to help us achieve this mission."

CFA Hastings volunteer Alex Satragno, who is currently providing the training to seven Coast Guard members, said he has been waiting eagerly to undertake this project.

"This is, so to speak, like giving birth to a firefighting water service," he said.

"Hastings Coast Guard receives around 100 call-outs per year – that's more than some of our CFA stations.

"I believe it is essential for all Coast Guard members to obtain their basic firefighting skills," Mr Satragno said.

The Coast Guard boat at Hastings, currently carrying fire extinguishers on board, will now have a permanent CFA pump installed.

CFA hopes all Victorian Volunteer Coast Guard flotillas will receive Marine Fire Responder training in the near future. ●



(L-R) Colin McKenzie, Peter Scully, Brian Howell, Kavin Windsor (front), Tony Hacking, CFA Instructor Alex Satragno, Noel Brown and David Hatcher. Photo: Keith Pakenham.

IN BRIEF

BRAVERY AWARD

The AIES would like to extend its congratulations to Mark Tregellas MAIES on his award of the Royal Humane Society Silver Clarke Medal for bravery on duty. In May, the Governor-General Quentin Bryce presented the medal to Mr Tregellas in Melbourne.



Mr Tregellas joined the AIES in 2010 and is a Leading Senior Constable in the Victorian Police force.

In July 2009, Sen-Constable Tregellas hauled a man, who had doused himself in petrol and was intent on self-harming, to safety.

AIES President Alan Marshall said, "It is very gratifying to see this honour being bestowed on a thoroughly deserving recipient.

"It underscores the contribution being made by dedicated people in fulfilling a usually unsung role in ensuring the wellbeing of the community."

AMBULANCE ACTIVE



Paramedics, and other professions associated to the ambulance industry, who are union members now have access to a unique social networking site.

Functioning in a similar way to Facebook, union members can sign up to www.ambulanceactive.com.au and stay in touch with fellow ambulance professionals by contributing to forums, posting photos and videos, writing articles and blogs, and generally staying in touch with their colleagues.

Similar sites are being used for professional groups all over the world to create proactive communities within specific industries.

If you are a member of an ambulance union, sign up to www.ambulanceactive.com.au and take part in discussions about what is really important to your industry like professional recognition, parity on wages and other HR and industrial issues.

EUREKA CLIMB



All Emergency Services personnel are invited to participate in Australia's tallest stair climb on Sunday 13 November 2011 at Eureka Tower, Southbank, Victoria.

As part of the Eureka Climb event, the Emergency Services Challenge will take place at 10.15am and participants are encouraged to wear their full kit to tackle the 1,642 steps to the finish line on level 88.

Entry fee is \$60 for individuals and \$220 for a team of four. Participants are asked to raise a minimum pledge of \$35 for disadvantaged young people at home and abroad, through the event's charity partners Whitelion and Interplast Australia and New Zealand. For further information and to register visit www.eurekaclimb.com.au

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CB LENGTH	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	



Sizing Chart: Adults = Mens

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COMMONWEALTH ANNOUNCES PROJECT FUNDING



The Commonwealth will invest \$3.6 million under the National Emergency Management Program this financial year to assist Australian communities better prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and emergencies.

Attorney-General Robert McClelland said the funding would support a range of national projects and strengthen the resilience of individuals, local communities, and businesses.

"There are some exciting projects this year targeting the younger members of our community as well projects directly assisting those people impacted by disasters," Mr McClelland said.

"Given the mass evacuations caused by last summer's floods and Cyclone Yasi in Queensland it is particularly timely that we will be funding projects to improve the flow of information about evacuees."

One million dollars will be invested to update the National Registration and Inquiry System, an Australia-wide electronic system designed to reunite disaster affected people and answer inquiries about their whereabouts.

A further \$250,000 will go towards the development of an electronic tracking system to provide more accurate

information about peoples' movements during a disaster, which will facilitate improved services at evacuation centres.

Other projects to be funded under the program this year include the development of a new fire danger rating system for Australia over the next five years to assist fire agencies better plan for and respond to fires.

"Working with communities before a disaster strikes ensures they will be in a better position to deal with the impacts of the disaster," Mr McClelland said.

"This announcement is part of the Commonwealth's \$38.8m investment in disaster mitigation and prevention initiatives this financial year.

"These initiatives are a product of the strong and cooperative partnerships between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, non-government organisations and the private sector and will enhance disaster resilience across Australia."

The Australian Emergency Management Forum (AEMVF) has received funding to upgrade its website. The new site will have improved functionality that will meet identified needs of site users and the AEMVF member organisations, scalability to support new and emerging resources and information management, and improved stability and ease of site content management.

Further information in relation to the projects and the National Emergency Management Program can be found at www.ema.gov.au

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments have endorsed a National Strategy for the Prevention of Bushfire Arson.

"Arson is a major threat to the Australian community, with up to half of the estimated 54,000 bushfires each year deliberately lit or started in suspicious circumstances," Attorney General Robert McClelland.

The strategy outlines four key principles – a national approach, information sharing, collaboration, and consistency and interoperability – and will include:

- A new public website or portal to provide ready access to community information on arson
- The creation of an intranet platform to provide investigators with a secure environment to exchange information
- The provision of advice on best practice arson prevention strategies and
- Support for a Wildfire Arson Investigation Management Course.

The strategy is a collaborative effort and is the first part of the National Work Plan to reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia.

"Arson, in all its forms, is estimated to cost the Australian community approximately \$1.6 billion per year," Mr McClelland said.

"However, it is the human toll that is most devastating. Bushfires are one of the leading causes of death from disaster and have accounted for more people injured than all other natural disasters combined." ●

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NOMINATE A LEADER TODAY

Nominations for the AIES National Medal for Excellence and associated awards are now open.

The AIES National Award Scheme recognises outstanding contributions that individuals make to the community through an emergency service or affiliated organisation.

The scheme consists of a number of awards given for individual contributions across a wide range of areas including leadership, management, operations, training, support and innovation.

AIES Vice-President John Rice said that due to the difference in each of the areas it was up to the person or organisation making the nomination to determine the required information.

"Due to the difference in each of these areas it is not possible to quantify the type of information required to support a nomination in each of the fields," he said.

"It is a matter for the person or organisation making the nomination

to determine what they consider to be appropriate supporting information.

"Nominations should include only sufficient information and any documentation considered necessary to support the nomination and provide evidence of why the contribution of the officer is considered to be outstanding and/or the significance to the community or the aims and/or functions of the particular emergency service."

The awards are open to AIES members and non members and nominations, which can be made by an individual or organisation, close on 31 December.

Members of emergency service or other organisations, retained or volunteer, are eligible to be nominated for an award.

Nomination forms are available on the AIES website and once completed can be sent to the Registrar of the division of



the Institute in which the nominee works or resides.

Nominations will be assessed at division level before forwarding to the General Registrar for reference to the AIES General Council Awards Committee for final review and approval.

The awards will be announced at the AIES Annual General Meeting in April.

Visit www.aies.net.au for a nomination form and more information. ●



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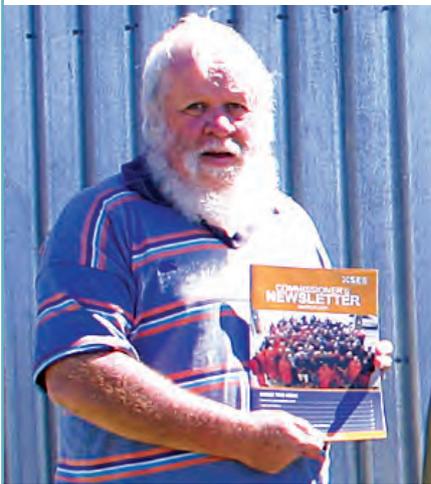


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Destruction at Mission Beach.

POST FLOOD POSTCARDS



Follow SES volunteer Bill Hoyles' seven week driving holiday in May and June from Sydney to Cooktown, across to Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria and then back down through inland Queensland and on to Sydney where he documented his eye witness account of the Queensland floods, three months on.

Bill Hoyles

Deputy Local Controller Canada Bay SES

With three months long service leave and the opportunity to take a long road trip, my wife and I chose to northern Queensland. Knowing that several Canada Bay SES Volunteers had been operational in Cardwell after Cyclone Yasi, we thought it would be interesting to see how the town was faring three months down the track.

Our first contact with the aftermath of Yasi came in Townsville when we drove to the top of Castle Hill – but we were not able to do the summit radar track walk due to cyclone damage. Further north, after driving through Ingham we started to notice the odd tree fallen, and

the occasional bent and twisted sign. The closer that we came to Cardwell, the worse the damage became. The roads were bumpy but clear of debris, however many advertising and road signs were flattened or missing. We expected standing trees to be stripped bare of leaves – but in fact there was significant regrowth on most trunks and branches. Nature was certainly recovering more quickly than humans.

On arrival at Cardwell we saw that repairs to properties were still a work in progress. Many houses were still tarped, and others were obviously damaged beyond repair. The local Anglican Church

was flattened and the debris tarped, while the Country Women's Association hall was roofless.

We decided to get information and assist the local economy with a purchase of barramundi and chips at the local fish shop. I asked the owner if she knew where local SES Controller, Carolyn, lived. After I had assured her that we didn't have an emergency she said, "Yes love, go down this road [next to the chippie] and it's the last house on the left. She's only young, about 26, and took over from her dad."

We couldn't find Carolyn at home but by chance did meet up with her mother,

an SES and RFS Volunteer who was visiting her daughter from Ingham. She told us Carolyn was on school crossing duty down the road. I gave mum a copy of the NSW SES Commissioners Newsletter, which featured Carolyn and the Cardwell SES unit, to pass on along with our best wishes and went in search of a postbox.

By chance we spotted a young woman in a bright orange school crossing supervisor's uniform – so stopped for a chat. Sure enough it was Carolyn and she was surprised to know her unit had been the subject of such glowing reports.

We had planned to stay overnight at Cardwell but accommodation was at a premium with many damaged and others full, I suspect from an influx of trade's people. At the Cardwell fish shop I chatted to a man waiting for his crab salad sandwich. He was a building consultant from Newcastle who was advising on repairs valued at \$650,000 to one house. When I expressed surprise that it was worth repairing at that cost he said the house was valued at two million dollars.

What was also noticeable in Cardwell was the number of houses with For Sale signs. Some of the most badly damaged properties had been re-designated development opportunities. So, if you have an interest in swelling the ranks of Cardwell SES Unit and want the sun, sea and best barramundi and chips in Cardwell - then now may be the time for that sea change.

After Cardwell, we went on to visit Tully and then stayed a couple of nights at Mission Beach. The first thing we noticed about North Mission Beach is how many businesses remain closed with cyclone damage. Arriving at the local Rainforest Motel we were offered a choice of a room with TV reception or a quieter room without TV reception because "Yasi removed our large aerial". Then there was an apology for only having net curtains on the rooms because "the insurance for real curtains hasn't come through yet". Dining out was limited to fish and chips or one restaurant but after all that this community had endured, we were not worried.

A stroll around town and a chat to locals at the motel and visitor's information centre revealed a surprising

level of positivity and optimism. Asked about the clean up and I was told that there were volunteers in town from other parts of Queensland, NSW and New Zealand. The last were particularly memorable for one local - as they had travelled up from the Brisbane floods, helped in Mission Beach after Yasi, and then headed back for the earthquake in Christchurch.

There were still plenty of damaged roofs and some destroyed buildings and road signs but the roads were mostly clear and in reasonable condition.

Being a rainforest area there were many warning signs for the Southern Cassowary and I wondered how they had survived Yasi's destructive force. My concern was partly answered when we passed one strolling alongside the road.

Yasi was an ill wind but did allow for the production of new merchandise. Yes, like true tourists we bought our Cyclone Yasi t-shirts at the local Rainforest Information Centre and received a free Cyclone Yasi sticker for supporting local industry.

On our return journey we travelled down from Toowoomba through the Lockyer Valley and stopped to visit Grantham.

At first sight, Grantham was much like many other sleepy towns that you drive through on the way to somewhere else.

But the difference was the impact of the floods still evident five months later – clear indications of the devastation that the torrent of water caused. On arrival a Welcome to Grantham sign greets tourists, encouraging them to shop locally. Shortly after the sign, two new houses are under construction, followed by two more that lie empty, damaged and destroyed. Further along, garage doors stand twisted out of shape by flood damage, and a shed is leaning askew. Entering the town's main drag we passed a large house on the right hand painted with danger, unstable, do not enter signs, and then there was the hotel on the left - unusable and barricaded with wire fencing. There was a temporary demountable next to it and the garage was due to reopen the next day. Opposite the garage one building expressed the town's thanks to all that helped in their hour of need.

With the river all but dry, it was hard to imagine that it could overflow its banks and cause so much damage until we saw massive trees upstream that had been uprooted by the deluge. On a brighter note, the cabbages are now flourishing in Grantham's fields bigger and better than ever.

Bill also re-visited, with his wife, Lismore SES Regional Headquarters, where he was deployed as an SES volunteer in January. ●



The Country Women's Association hall in Cardwell remains damaged.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

IN ANTARCTICA

Part 1





Martin Boyle, MAIES, Certified Emergency Manager

*Australian Antarctic Division
Field Support Coordinator*

Antarctica is the coldest, highest, windiest, driest and most desolate continent on earth. It is a vast, sparsely populated white sheet that is drier than any desert. For many people the stereotypical image of Antarctica is a land of penguins, seals and icebergs. Did I hear you say what about polar bears? It's a common misconception, but they are only found in the northern hemisphere.

It has only been 100 years since the South Pole was reached by Amundsen and Scott. Australia has been operating in the Antarctic since its first national expedition in 1911 led by Douglas Mawson. In fact, this year is the centenary of Australian Antarctic operations. However, most of the Antarctic continent still remains unexplored. It's such a remote and dangerous place that Shackleton's advert for the 1914 Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition said "*Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful.*" I'd like to think that some things have changed since then like the bit about small wages, doubtful safe return and equal opportunity. The rest is still as true now as it was then.

I have seen some of the best and worst that Antarctica has to offer. It is an amazing environment that can be deceptively

benign but, make no mistake, it will eat you up and spit you out given half the chance. This series of articles will introduce you to life and survival in the Antarctic. Covering topics such as the environment, logistics, training systems, incident management, emergency response, and what happens when it all turns to custard.

ANTARCTICA

If you thought Australia was a big place, think again. Antarctica is one and a half times its size. That's equivalent to 20 times the size of the United Kingdom. The Australian Antarctic Territory covers an area of six million square kilometres or 42 percent of the continent. That's a big area to manage in anyone's book. The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) maintains four, year round, stations at Casey, Davis, Mawson and on sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island.

Aurora Australis in the sea ice.



Each station environment is vastly different. Casey is mainly snow and ice, Davis is an ice free area with lots of fjords, Mawson is mountainous and glaciated, and Macquarie Island is a wet and windy wildlife paradise. They are also a long way from each other and home.

I can't stress how remote it is. In summer it can take more than two weeks to get assistance to any of our stations from Australia. In winter, it is just about impossible to access the continent except in the most dire circumstances due to the extreme weather and impenetrable sea ice. For six months of the year, wintering expeditioners are cut off from the outside world with only each other to rely on for survival.

There are 29 national programs with stations and bases dotted around the Antarctic continent. Overall there are about 4,000 people on the ice during summer and only 500 during winter. There are more people in one square kilometre in Singapore than in the whole of Antarctica.

On Australian stations during summer there can be up to 100 expeditioners at both Casey and Davis, and 35 at Mawson. This shrinks dramatically to about 20 people on each station during the winter months.

What are we doing there? In addition to collecting scientific data, the Australian program has been active in exploring the interior of Antarctica. We have deployed deep field camps, undertaken traverses and established summer bases in some of the most inhospitable and remote terrain on the planet.



Marty Benavente explaining ice anchors during SAR training at Casey.

The Antarctic environment is one of breathtaking beauty. It can lull expeditioners into a false sense of security but conditions can change from sunny blue skies to whiteout and blizzard within 20 minutes. If you get caught out in the field the only thing to do is go to ground and follow the training and advice you've been given. There are a myriad of field hazards that can bring you undone. Crevasses or slots, wind scour, ice cliffs, sastrugi, sea ice, poor horizon and surface definition, extreme cold, and low visibility to name a few. Add those to the usual station hazards, which is similar to a mining camp and you have a very interesting place to work.

Stations are home to most expeditioners. They are very social places where everyone pulls together to get the job done.

Although at times it can be like living in a fish bowl where everybody knows everything that is going on. Most of our Australian stations are inside the Antarctic circle except Casey, which falls just outside at 66 degrees south. In summer, temperatures can rise to zero degrees Centigrade and above. When there is no wind and the sun is out, shorts and t-shirts are the order of the day for sitting outside the main accommodation block, the Red Shed. Saying that, in winter temperatures can dip to minus 41 degrees Centigrade and winds in excess of 250 km/h have been recorded.

Each station gets one major resupply and refuel per year depending on environmental conditions. At the time of writing the fast ice at Mawson is preventing the ship getting into the harbour. This means we will have to do a cargo fly off instead of using jet barges and postponing refuelling until next season. This is all part of the ever prevalent A-factor which is like Murphy's law, except that in Antarctic circles Murphy is considered an optimist.

PRE-DEPARTURE AND DEPLOYMENT

The AAD headquarters is based in Hobart, Tasmania. This is the most southerly state in Australia and base for many Antarctic expeditions. All logistical and program support is managed from here. This is the starting point for all Australian expeditioners. Depending on their job and duration of their deployment they will do trades training, specialist field training including search and rescue (SAR), and attend pre-departure briefings.



Field travel training with quads and polar pyramid.



Casey Station.



Bivvying overnight during survival training at Davis.

It's very hard to simulate Antarctic conditions in a temperate environment so the majority of field and SAR training is done on station.

We send about 500 people south every season. Some stay for only as short as a week while others who are wintering are there for as long as 18 months. It takes all kinds of people to make the program work. Stations are a bit like small towns and need all the usual trades support like builders, electricians, plumbers and diesel mechanics. Then there is operations support for field training, aviation, communications, and met. Management functions are carried out by the station leader, deputy station leader and/or operations coordinator. Research scientists come from across Australia and overseas to be part of the program. There's also a doctor and most importantly a chef that round out the station population.

So how do you get to Antarctica? The majority of expeditioners go by ship. We use the icebreaker RSV Aurora Australis, or the AA as it's commonly known, to deploy summer and winter personnel to all of our stations during the summer months. In fact, I'm sitting here writing this article in the middle of the Southern Ocean while the AA pitches and rolls on the way to Mawson. Some expeditioners are lucky enough to fly down and dodge the two week journey by ship. It's an amazing sight watching an Airbus 319 landing on a blue ice runway. Wilkins runway is a three hour Hagglands trip 70km from Casey and situated on the plateau at 700m. It's operational for around eight to 10 weeks during the summer depending on weather conditions. To open up the Airlink we rely on the A319 and US LC130 logistical

support to deliver essential personnel early in the season from Hobart to the US station at McMurdo and onto Casey. The ski equipped Hercules can land at the Casey skiway just up the hill from the station with minimal preparation.

For ship-to-shore fly-offs, intra-continental transfers and program support we use helicopters such as the AS350 Squirrel and S76, and C212 fixed wing aircraft. On occasion we also have Twin Otters, and DC3T Basler fixed wing aircraft supporting our operations.

FIELD TRAINING

The level of training that expeditioners receive depends on the length of time they are deployed for and their role on station. Prior to arriving on station most expeditioners would have undergone pre-departure and possibly shipboard training if they were on the AA. Shipboard training covers some basic topics like map and compass, GPS, sea ice, first aid, rope work and technical SAR training.

It's not until they get to station that the real work begins. The training system is based on three levels: survival, field travel and specialist. We run a competency based training system designed to build an understanding of risks and common field skills while recognising that time is our key limiting factor. We aim to ensure that all expeditioners can perform the basic skills with an understanding that it may not be possible to reach a high standard of competency. Field Training Officers (FTOs) deliver these courses and are a one stop shop for everything field safety related.



Produced by the Australian Antarctic Data Centre
Map Catalogue No. 12004
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Busy day at Wilkins Ice Runway, evacuating Chinese expeditioner.

There are generally six FTOs per summer season spread across the three stations from a variety of backgrounds such as mountain guiding, outdoor education, police and emergency services, and military.

Survival training is a 24 hour course that teaches expeditioners they can survive a night in the field in an emergency situation. It involves practicing basic navigation, understanding the local weather and hazards, VHF radio and comms procedures, personal equipment and preparation, walking on snow & ice, and emergency shelters. Everyone sleeps in a nylon bivvy sack, which is like sleeping in a big chip packet. You get varying degrees of sleep due to the shower of ice during the night when you turn over where your breath has frozen to the top of the bivvy. Nylon is a good cheap alternative to a breathable fabric bivvy. Because the environment is so dry, moisture is generally not a problem. We've had real success with this training and it has saved lives on many occasions.

The next level of training introduces field travel skills over two to three days. This can be done using any method of transport such as on foot, ski, or hagglands but quads are most commonly used. Advanced navigation, trip planning, basic mountaineering, field hut use, HF radio, sea ice travel, and vehicle recovery techniques are all taught in this course. Other specialist skills like using snowmobiles and small vehicle roped glacier travel are covered on a needs basis.

Each station must have a SAR team. This is led during the summer months by highly skilled FTOs. Other station personnel are then trained to make up first and second response teams. It would be fair to say that most of these expeditioners have never put



S76 with Australian flag at Wilkins Ice Runway.

a harness on, deployed a rope or in some cases, even seen snow and ice before. The FTOs give the team six days of intensive training then essentially turn them loose. A SAR team leader is chosen from the group for the winter months and it is their job to schedule continuation training and lead the team in any call out. It's a pretty big ask!

Our technical SAR training is based on the Search and Rescue Institute of New Zealand (SARINZ) model. SARINZ developed an Antarctic Search and Rescue Training manual and system as a joint initiative between the US Antarctic Program, Antarctica New Zealand and the Australian Antarctic Division. It is based on six key concepts: skills, knowledge and experience; train hard, rescue easy; systematic rigging; gear intensity; building understanding; and efficiency and teamwork. We break the training down into six functional systems: anchor;

pulley; lowering; belay; directional; and load. This helps the team to understand the components of the system and how they interconnect. This however is only part of the training that the SAR team receives.

The six day course covers advanced first aid, stretcher packaging and patient handling, rock, snow and ice anchors, glacier travel, vertical rescue, and culminates in a field Locate, Access, Stabilise and Transport (LAST) exercise. We're constrained to such a short time due to a number of conspiring factors such as work schedules, field projects, operational pressure, weather conditions, resupply, and winter crew changeovers. ● *In the Summer 2011/12 edition of National Emergency Response, Martin will delve into the emergency management framework in use across the Australian Antarctic Territory and look at how emergency response is managed.*

HONOUR FOR YOUNG VOLUNTEER

AIES (SA Division) hosted a dinner meeting on the 20 June at the South Australian Public Schools Club, which included a presentation to West Beach Surf Life Saving Club volunteer Steven Rypp.

The 22-year-old surf lifesaver was South Australia's finalist, and the national runner-up, in this year's Young Volunteer Award program.

President of the West Beach club Peter Zuill introduced Steven to the AIES members as having a huge impact on the organisation.

Joining as a nipper when he was 14 years old, Steven went on to become the youngest member on the club's Board of Directors.

Steven is also the Educational and Training Officer at the club. He is responsible for the education and training programs for the club's 350 members, from the under six year olds to the oldest Masters.

During the past season, Steven has performed almost double the amount of patrol hours than other club, all while completing a double degree at university in Business Management - Sports and Recreation Management and Tourism and Event Management.

His other involvement with young people includes delivering multi-task sports programs to primary school children, and teaching them to maintain active lives.



Steven Rypp with AIES (SA/NT/WA) President Barry Presgrave.

AIES SA Division President Barry Presgrave described Steven as a, "Most impressive young man with huge support from his proud parents, George and Kim and his other family members and friends."

Also at the dinner, Professor Graeme Hugo gave a thought provoking presentation on Demography and Liveability. ●

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VOLUNTEERING QUEENSLAND

Submission to Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry



During the summer of 2010-2011, Volunteering Queensland played an active role in assisting Queensland's flood and cyclone-affected communities. Given its first-hand experience in disaster response, Volunteering Queensland is keen to continue its contribution to improving and further developing Queensland's capacity to respond to natural disasters and also to improving the state's resilience capacity.

This submission in general focuses on the following two issues listed in the Commission of Inquiry's Terms of Reference:

1. Preparation and planning by federal, state and local governments, emergency services and the community
2. The response to the 2010/2011 flood events, particularly measures taken to inform the community and protect life, and private and public property.

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

Immediate feedback from partner agencies was that Volunteering Queensland did what it was asked to be prepared for - and more - despite the magnitude of the 2011 flood event. CREW was available immediately and the team was able to adapt to sometimes rapidly shifting circumstances. Importantly, Volunteering Queensland was able to act as the 'shock absorber' between the surge of offers and client user groups who were relieved of the stress of having to deal with the volume of spontaneous offers, while getting access to a diverse range of volunteer skills and experience.

The response also highlighted important lessons and a need for additional resources so that future responses can be more structured and some endemic issues around spontaneous volunteering can be mitigated to the extent possible.





Notably, Volunteering Queensland actually had to do things it was not resourced for – such as referring offers beyond volunteering and acting as a point of general information and comfort for callers. Some of these matters might necessarily be accommodated and accepted as endemic systemic issues – but have to be resourced nonetheless.

Offers were diverse, beyond those anticipated and sometimes simply not appropriate. While not all offers could be utilized, given client demands and the nature of natural disaster responses, Volunteering Queensland now seeks to improve how it follows up unused offers, provides feedback and manages the expectations of registrants. Overall, this was an event that tested the entire system. Not surprisingly, while Volunteering Queensland and CREW were available immediately and met the need of client groups to provide volunteers, there are issues about the extent to which

Volunteering Queensland needs to adapt systems to deal with a range of unexpected offers and demands. While remaining firmly focused on the most immediate and actual volunteer demands of client stakeholders, Volunteering Queensland does need to respond more promptly to volunteer offers that, while genuinely made, could not/ cannot be accommodated. The importance of this is to ensure that the public is not wrongly under an impression that Volunteering Queensland 'prevents' people from volunteering. Educating the public about this process is vital for sustainability of the process. Improvements in this area require a collaborative approach from all stakeholders involved in disaster response and recovery.

Spontaneous volunteering has endemic characteristics and not all expectations can be met in a disaster response, especially one as large as the recent events. There are huge expectations from both stakeholders and media that might not be realised in a major disaster – not least because offers don't always match user organisation demands, nor do all offers come at the time that suits client organisations. Disasters are naturally dangerous and there is an onus on coordinators of formal volunteering to provide a duty of care. There can be too many volunteers and dealing with spontaneous volunteers can incur a management demand that distracts key organisations from operational tasks.

Some of the issues described above can be illustrated by many examples. For instance, at one point Volunteering Queensland received a request from a client organisation asking for 30 volunteers. CREW contacted 300 people who registered on the CREW database in order to find those 30 volunteers. Only a week after registering on the database, a vast majority that were contacted were not prepared to volunteer. In most cases the explanation was that personal circumstances of those who registered changed; they had to go back to work, needed to help their family and friends or simply lost interest.

Volunteering Queensland is a referral agency, not a placement agency. It cannot - nor should not - guarantee placement. During times of disaster the task at hand needs to take priority over the desire to provide an opportunity for every offer of support. Between disaster events, Volunteering Queensland needs to manage expectations about its role and the endemic issues of spontaneous volunteering. Illustrative stories about the range of offers can help both stakeholders and the media.

It was Volunteering Queensland's own experience that there was significant disparity between the actual need for volunteers (based on the low demand by agencies) and the impression given in the media. It can be argued that in part this was due to a lack of clear explanation about how volunteering in disaster response actually works.

From Volunteering Queensland's experience, it is important to note the following key factors impacting on preparation and planning on all levels:

During disasters, there is high expectation amongst the general public to be involved in an emergency response. This is directly related to a range of factors. One of these factors is the lack of long term education of the general public about the disaster response and recovery process. Equally so, the need for pre-trained and well prepared volunteers is the preferred option.



Queensland Volunteering member working during the Queensland floods.

Volunteering Queensland recognises the critical importance of a co-ordinated communication strategy aimed at the general public. During disasters, there are too many messages from various angles, which contribute to confusion in relation to people wanting to volunteer. All agencies involved with volunteering should be clear in their communication about how the process works.

While the CREW service was made available immediately (given that it was operational for two years prior on a permanent basis), how it operated was not clear to many agencies. Better communication on its functioning could improve long term planning. A communication strategy should

be a joint effort by all stakeholders.

While the recent events show that an unprecedented number of people can be recruited to help, it is important to note that when a clear point of contact exists, and with proper support, larger numbers could be expected in future disasters. This, in reality, places high expectations on all stakeholders to plan for a faster and more efficient way of utilising large numbers of volunteers. Failure to allow larger number of people to get involved in a co-ordinated way could hamper recovery efforts. Communities can respond well when called to action but they equally expect good organisation and co-ordination.

Feedback from many volunteers to Volunteering Queensland highlighted the importance of maintaining health and safety standards during volunteer deployment. There are recorded concerns in respect to health and safety measures for volunteers who in many cases were not given a sufficient level of co-ordination on the ground. As the peak body, Volunteering Queensland has urged all organisations that involve volunteers to observe national standards for volunteering which have been in existence for many years.

Over the years Volunteering Queensland has observed that a significant number of people who call offering to volunteer during natural disasters may in fact be under some degree of distress; triggered by media coverage and the entire atmosphere of a natural disaster. These individuals may not be directly affected by a flood or a cyclone per se but are, in fact, affected. Many of these people also call CREW and in fact are simply wanting to have someone to talk to. Further work needs to be done in order to assist these individuals, given that often these calls can number up to 30% of total calls taken.

It is critically important to avoid situations whereby lack of proper analysis and planning leads to a overcrowding of volunteers in one place. Volunteering Queensland has received feedback from many volunteers who felt like "seagulls fighting over a chip".

Recommendations for immediate consideration Reduce the element of "spontaneity" from the volunteering effort during natural disasters and increase long term involvement

Community Response to Extreme Weather (CREW) is a referral service between volunteers and natural disaster response agencies.

FUNCTIONS OF CREW INCLUDE:

- Registering individuals/organisations wishing to volunteer in emergency and disaster relief situations
- Maintaining an up-to-date database of people who are interested in emergency volunteering
- Promoting disaster relief organisations volunteer opportunities through our emergency volunteering portal, proactively contacting registered volunteers through phone and email
- Encouraging people to pre-register and train with disaster response agencies such as Australian Red Cross and Lifeline.
- Providing valuable data to help in disaster readiness forward planning - including information on location, types of volunteer services offered, availability, willingness to travel, special skills, donations and special services offered.

FAST CREW FACTS (SINCE JANUARY 2011):

- 51 agencies use CREW services
- 76,289 volunteer registrations
- 12,748 CREW volunteers sent to opportunities
- Volunteers have provided 33,600 hours of support to the CREW call centre

for people wanting to volunteer through a targeted education campaign.

Increase the degree of planning and preparation amongst all agencies expected to provide services during natural disasters, with a special focus on their ability to absorb larger number of volunteers who are prepared to volunteer on a short-term basis. The focus can be on examining new areas of work suitable for short term and temporary engagement by volunteers.

Conduct research (no such research has been done to date) that would lead to a better understanding of the needs of those people who call to volunteer but in fact are more likely masking their distress and are in fact seeking to talk to someone during natural disasters.

Better co-ordination of messages and communication issued to media. This should include regular joint media statements by all stakeholders involved in disaster recovery.

Investigate a more thorough role of the corporate sector in disaster recovery. To date, the corporate sector was not well integrated in the disaster response and the sustainability of future disaster response and recovery should include all parties through structured and firmly agreed roles.

Given the recent events and the incredibly rapid response from the general public wanting to volunteer, efforts should be made to engage the public in natural disaster resilience. Activities focused on building resilience offer long term opportunities for the general public, thus creating a sense of real engagement that adds value to the overall effort in managing natural disasters.

Consider national approach that would be built on lessons learnt from Volunteering Queensland's CREW service. This in particular is worthwhile considering given that thousands of call came from across Australia and indeed there were many people from other states asking for CREW to be made available in other states.

CONCLUSION

Volunteering Queensland has attempted to provide a level of information that is based on its own role and experience in recent natural disaster events. As a peak body in volunteering it also sought to bring a balance in thinking and understanding of volunteering as a whole, rather than just focusing on volunteering in natural disasters. Therefore, the emphasis on volunteering safety, co-ordination and management remain paramount and should be observed by all agencies involving volunteers. This submission attempted to highlight the complexity involved in managing unrealistic expectations of placing large numbers of volunteers in very limited time and space. However, ways forward are also outlined and are largely dependent on a collaborative approach. Volunteering Queensland is prepared to provide further information on specific aspects of the submission should that be required.

Volunteering Queensland is an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the improvement of volunteering in Queensland. It is the state's peak body in volunteering and a key partner to the Queensland Government in advancing volunteering in the state.

For more information go to www.volunteeringqld.org.au ●



That's the advice of Victoria's fire services, which launched the new public safety message at Coode Island on, 20 years to the day since the major chemical explosion that threatened the CBD and Melbourne's inner west with a toxic cloud for two days.

Victoria's Fire Commissioner Craig Lapsley said the Coode Island explosion is the chemical emergency that looms largest in the minds of Victorians.

"But the fact is, a chemical emergency can happen anywhere, anytime, as the result of a fire, explosion or a chemical spill at a fixed site, or from a road or train accident," Mr Lapsley said.

He said the new Shelter-in-Place approach is best practice in chemical emergency management.

"Significant research conducted by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the Country Fire Authority and ChemCentre has demonstrated that the best way to protect yourself in a chemical emergency is to shelter inside, shut all windows and doors and turn off any ventilation systems, and listen to emergency service broadcasts."

The Shelter-in-Place research project was funded \$240,000 over a two-year period by the Federal Government through the Victorian Emergency Management Grants program and administered by the Victorian Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner.

MFB Chief Executive Officer Nick Easy said evacuation was not the safest option when exposed to a short-term release of toxic chemicals.

"The fresh air inside a building can provide protection for several hours, therefore the shelter-in-place directive is the best response," he said.

"In an emergency, updates – through all the usual emergency services broadcasters – would be regular, and the public would be informed when it is safe to open windows and doors, or leave their home again.

"Communication with the community is paramount in any emergency and we will let the community know either directly through emergency workers knocking on doors or via the media of the status of a chemical incident."



MFB CEO Nick Easy speaking at the media launch of Shelter-in-Place at the Coode Island chemical storage site.

CFA Barwon South West Regional Commander John Mealia said Shelter-in-Place was an important option for residents living in areas serviced by CFA, including much of metropolitan Melbourne and many large regional centres.

"The enormous Trittech oil and lubricants fire at Dandenong South, which CFA responded to in May (2011), showed how large smoke plumes can have an impact on surrounding suburbs," Mr Mealia said.

"However, it's important the community does not confuse shelter-in-place during a chemical spill or a toxic smoke plume, with actions required when there is a threat of bushfire, such as leaving early or remaining in a well prepared property."

Coode Island was an island at the convergence of the Yarra and Maribymong Rivers, 4km west of central Melbourne, Australia. Created in 1986 when the Yarra River was straightened to construct a shipping canal, allowing access from the Port of Melbourne to Yaraville, the area was used to store petrochemicals from 1960. On 21 August 1991, an explosion created a toxic cloud over nearby suburbs, caused by the burning of 8.5 million litres of chemicals. ●



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 National Web Site: www.aies.net.au

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HOT FIRE

(L-R) Contract Firefighters for the Department of Defence, Team Leader Cameron Bakic and Firefighter Peter Fisher, take part in a Hot Fire Training session at the CFA training ground at Wangaratta, Victoria.

Cameron and Peter are practicing entry techniques for compartment firefighting. Their next move is to safely enter the compartment and effectively apply firefighting tactics to combat the dangers presented in compartment fires. ●

Photo: Joel Mackay



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