

# Attorney opens EMA's new offices

*Attorney-General Philip Ruddock officially opened the new head office of Emergency Management Australia on 22 June 2004*

EMA staff moved from their original Northbourne House premises in Dickson to the purpose-built complex located in the University of Canberra's new Innovation Centre in May this year.

EMA had occupied the former premises since 1974 when EMA was known as the Natural Disasters Organisation (NDO).

The new facility provides enhanced operational aspects to EMA's National Emergency Management Co-ordination Centre and a more appropriate working environment for Emergency Management Liaison Officers.

Local Ngunawal elders, Ruth and Don Bell, conducted a welcome to the country and congratulated EMA on naming one of the conference rooms The Ngunawal Room.

During the official opening, Mr Ruddock commended EMA's staff on their contribution, particularly in more recent times, in crises including bushfires, the aftermath of Bali, and help given to Australia's neighbours.

Mr Ruddock said, "You have a very important role as the lead Australian agency in responding to catastrophic events, be they natural disasters or terrorist attacks. Your work involves an extraordinary degree of co-ordination and co-operation at all levels of government to be prepared at all times for an emergency.

"EMA has met requests under very challenging environments. I'm impressed with the way EMA comes up with a range of creative ideas. You expand your vision in a way that acknowledges the role of others.



*Major-General (Ret) Alan Stretton*

"You have learnt the hard way, refining our national capacity across emergency and consequence management," said Mr Ruddock.

The inaugural Director General of the NDO, Major-General Alan Stretton AO CBE (Ret) participated in the opening. He entertained guests with anecdotes from Christmas 1974 and his experiences during the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy in Darwin, including the evacuation of 35,000 of its residents. EMA's main conference room was chosen by staff to be named after him.

General Stretton said, "When disaster occurs in Australia, this great nation seems to forget all the things that pull us apart. At the time of *Tracy* politics was thrown out the window, with all departments – commonwealth and state – working together to ensure the safety of the citizens of Darwin."

EMA's Director General, David Templeman, acknowledged the efforts of Human Resources Manager, Nardine Morish and her team, the Attorney-General's Department's Support Services Manager, Nan Lecompte, the

General Manager of AGD Information and Knowledge Services, Graham Fry, and HBO, the company responsible for the fit-out of the new premises.

Mr Templeman said, "HBO's development of a fit-out plan to suit staff needs and the requirements for a new National Emergency Management Co-ordination Centre, and to move everyone in such a short time period, was a remarkable achievement.

"Further, the provision of this facility for EMA is a clear reflection of the Government's strong support and recognition of the role played by EMA in national community safety and security. The Attorney's and Secretary's confidence in EMA's need for this new facility are also evident," said Mr Templeman.

Other official guests included the Attorney-General's wife, Mrs Heather Ruddock, Attorney-General's Department Secretary, Robert Cornall, Andrew Metcalfe and Miles Jordana from Prime Minister and Cabinet, AGD Deputy Secretary Ian Govey, and Protective Services Co-ordination Centre head Ed Tyrie.

# Research fellowship for safer sustainable communities

*One of Australia's most experienced emergency management executives has won a Churchill Fellowship to research safer sustainable communities in the UK and America*

Ms Jo Harrison-Ward is Executive Director of Emergency Management at Fire & Emergency Services Authority (FESA) in Western Australia. She is responsible for ensuring there is an effective emergency management structure for the broad range of natural and human caused emergencies faced in that State.

One of 83 Australian recipients of Churchill Fellowships in 2004, Ms Jo Harrison-Ward will study overseas for nine weeks later this year and receive around \$20,000 to assist with her research. She will study affiliated projects in community engagement, particularly those that benefit community disaster management.

Ms Harrison-Ward said, "I will be focussing on practices suitable for Western Australia's unique isolated and remote communities. Then I plan to prepare a program and model to distribute to more than a hundred local government councils across WA."

In congratulating Ms Harrison-Ward's study award, the Director General of Emergency Management Australia, David Templeman, said he was highly supportive of her interest in researching community engagement in relation to disaster management.

Mr Templeman said, "Effective community engagement is an issue constantly facing emergency managers who are endeavouring to ensure that messages on disaster management and mitigation are accepted and understood at the individual and household level as well as the wider community level.



*Jo Harrison-Ward's Churchill Fellowship will take her to several emergency management agencies in the UK and the USA*

"The importance of community engagement has been recently recognised by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and is a key theme on the national emergency management agenda."

A major function of Ms Harrison-Ward's work with FESA involves ensuring there are plans, structures and arrangements in place to bring together government, voluntary, and private organisations in a co-ordinated way to deal with all phases of an emergency —mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Her ongoing investigation into emergency management and community engagement prompted an application for a Churchill

Fellowship to further her research work and see it turned into real solutions for communities.

Ms Harrison-Ward said, "In any crisis the community looks to emergency services' organisations for direction, but there are never enough people to do the job. This is even more so in rural and remote communities where isolation and limited population becomes a factor. Often they want to take responsibility and ownership of their own emergency plans but they don't have the techniques or tools to do this.

"Our fundamental challenge when trying to build safer sustainable communities, is how we effectively develop the conditions to create

a movement for change and for community leadership in emergency management activities to emerge.

“Engagement is based on community support so we need to develop ways that enable people to champion the cause with our support. The key to engaging the community is ultimately to strongly support community driven action that includes developing long-term commitment to community partnerships rather than taking a dictatorial approach,” said Ms Harrison-Ward.

Acting FESA Chief Executive Officer, Bill Forbes, said that the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA was extremely proud of Ms Harrison-Ward’s

selection as a 2004 Churchill Fellow.

“This honour is a well deserved recognition of Jo’s outstanding contribution to the safety of Western Australians in the area of emergency management.

“In particular, much of her energies have been directed at further developing the preparedness and sustainability of people in remote and isolated communities during natural disasters like cyclones and floods.

“A valued and highly respected member of the FESA executive team, Jo is also a keen advocate of ‘best practice’. I am sure she will return home from her overseas study trip armed with a wealth of

experience and information that will prove of great benefit to both FESA and the wider community of this vast State,” said Mr Forbes.

Among the several agencies she plans to visit is the Federal Emergency Management Agency in Washington, which has extensive disaster and counter terrorism knowledge, and the Effective Interventions Unit at Edinburgh in the UK.

“I would like to look at their programs, assess them and use that information to formulate a holistic approach using the techniques and tools from other organisations around the world. This is the kind of information that Local Government and communities can use,” said Ms Harrison-Ward.

# Pacific prepares for the second world conference on disaster reduction

The South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) is the Pacific regional representative on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Taskforce. In that capacity it is co-ordinating the Pacific preparations for the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in Kobe, Japan 18–22 January 2005.

The co-ordination process, funded by AusAID, EMA and NZAID, has involved the following activities.

## A review of the 1994 Yokohama strategy and plan of action

The State Members of the United Nations and other States held the first World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, Japan in May 1994. Held in partnership with non-government organisations and with the participation of international organisations, the scientific community, business, industry, and the media, it deliberated the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR).



The outcome of the conference was an agreed Plan of Action specifically designed to address activities at community and national levels, at regional and subregional levels, and at international levels, particularly through bilateral arrangements and multilateral co-operation.

A review of the progress made by the Pacific Island countries as well as Australia and New Zealand has been completed and will contribute to the discussions at the Kobe conference.

## Pacific regional stakeholders workshop

A regional workshop, conducted in Fiji 28–30 June 2004, was attended by delegates from 15 Pacific Island countries including Australia and New Zealand and a number of international and regional organisations including the donor community.

The workshop participants considered the initial outcomes from the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action review process and addressed the five thematic areas agreed for discussions in Kobe. These are:

1. Governance: institutional and policy frameworks for risk reduction;
2. Risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning;
3. Knowledge management and education: building a culture of resilient communities;
4. Reducing the underlying risk factors; and
5. Preparedness for effective response.

After due consideration it was decided that for application in the Pacific region the

following amendments would be recommended to the global thematic areas:

- Thematic area two—Hazard identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning.
- Thematic area four—Development of risk reduction tools.

## Draft Pacific regional position paper for the second world conference on disaster reduction

This document was developed at the regional stakeholder's workshop and includes a draft *Pacific Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2005–2015*.

The draft plan has addressed the five thematic areas identified for discussions in Kobe with key objectives, suggested actions, and expected outcomes for national governments to use as a planning framework to build capacity to ensure safer and more resilient Pacific Island communities.

The draft action plan is available at the Community Risk Updates page of the SOPAC website [www.sopac.org](http://www.sopac.org).

Following the Kobe Conference the *Pacific Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction* will be updated and promoted for adoption throughout the region.

## Alan Mearns

Manager  
SOPAC Community Risk  
Programme