

# Foreword

**By Mark Croweller AFSM, Director-General, Emergency Management Australia, Attorney-General's Department and former ACT Emergency Services Commissioner.**



**Taking on a national emergency management role in the middle of a hot summer may not be the best time to accept such a challenge. Certainly I had a busy January as bushfires in Tasmania caused mass evacuations by sea and Queensland communities braced for the impact of approaching flood waters. But just as we cannot predict the where and when of the next disaster, we also can't control when opportunities will present themselves. It is certainly an honour to have been appointed Director General of Emergency Management Australia (EMA), the publisher of this journal.**

I have spent the past six months familiarising myself with my portfolio – a process that has seen me develop a greater understanding of the work underway to address the threats posed not only by floods and fires – but bombs and bullets. I am continually impressed by the professionalism and dedication shown by our national security teams who, by the nature of their work, need to work 'behind the scenes' to prevent Australia being touched by terrorism.

In collaboration with my Division I have completed a business planning process that provides strategic pathways to improve the performance of EMA over the coming years. A key focus will be improving how we communicate and collaborate with our stakeholders. I also want to bolster EMA's reputation as a sought-after and valued partner in the emergency management sector to work closely with the States and Territories to support nationally-agreed policy. Recent reports by the Climate Commission continue to point more urgently to the impact that climate change is having on the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, highlighting the need for a more disaster resilient Australia. The implementation of the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* is a national priority which requires a sustained commitment by all levels of government, business and the community. I congratulate all who have been involved in the implementation of this strategy so far.

Natural disasters are also affecting neighbouring countries in the region and Australia is demonstrating international leadership by hosting a workshop in Darwin later this year. All East Asian Nations are invited and we hope to create a collaborative environment where knowledge can be shared and plans made to help each other respond to disasters.

I am pleased to see a mention of the visit to Australia by Bob Jensen from the US Department of Homeland Security in this edition. It was a pleasure to join Bob at a number of events around the country and the Fulbright Commission certainly got their money's worth from his packed schedule! Bob left us with some valuable lessons on the importance of the public information response to a crisis. I share Bob's view that a critical part of any response to an emergency is getting the right information to people affected by a disaster so they can act to help themselves.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Journal.

Mark Croweller AFSM  
Director-General  
Emergency Management Australia