

Foreword

| Joe Buffone, Emergency Management Australia

Welcome to the October edition of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*. The journal is an important publication that shares insights, knowledge and experiences across the disaster management community. It provides the opportunity to publish contemporary ideas and stimulate debate that shapes disaster management policies and practices.



Our world is forever changing; the current geo-political environment, security and climate risks are rapidly changing. Australia lies in the most disaster-prone region in the world and continues to experience more frequent and severe weather conditions that increases the risk of heat, fire and extreme weather events.

The drier-than-average climate conditions experienced this winter suggest that the southern fire season is likely to commence earlier and be more active than normal. Fire and emergency services across the country are very active in their preparations for the onset of this season.

Our emergency services, emergency management agencies and leaders are well-trained, equipped and practiced to manage the current risks and shocks that face our communities.

The question we need to answer is: how well prepared we are for an existential risk? Are our collective capabilities agile and adaptive to cope with an event beyond our imagination and current experiences?

In a previous issue of AJEM, Mark Crosweller, Director General Emergency Management Australia, stated that 'we should approach the problem of catastrophic natural disasters differently by changing the way we think about them to better manage these events'.

Accepting the inevitability of a catastrophic event that results in consequences that are beyond our current arrangements, thinking and experiences is the beginning of new thinking.

Acknowledging that our existing capabilities such as people, resources, governance, systems and processes could be overwhelmed at all levels is the fundamental shift that enables our thinking and planning to translate into action.

It is pleasing to note that nationally, work is progressing on the implementation of the Capability Roadmap: Enhancing Emergency Management in Australia 2016. This will require a collaborative effort by the disaster management community.

FEMA's former head, Craig Fugate, recently reminded us that emergency services and governments cannot do it all on their own. To be more effective and reach those most vulnerable before, during and after a disaster, we must look to businesses, NGOs and philanthropic individuals for assistance.

Collectively, we must not lose sight of the first responders and the community and view them as a resource, not as victims or a problem.

In the recent flooding associated with Hurricane Harvey in the US, the scale of the disaster was unprecedented and overwhelming. As part of the response effort, FEMA sent out a call to action to the community to respond and assist in rescues. Communities responded from near and far, confirming that disaster response and recovery is a joint responsibility and involves everyone.

This issue of the AJEM focuses on the value of strong partnerships and an understanding of public policy to support action in disaster resilience. It is an area in which we are adept and where we must continue to adapt and evolve.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of the AJEM and I wish you and your colleagues a safe summer.

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