

50 years of educa

A 50th Anniversary retrospective on the Aust

I have been fortunate to have seen so many changes over the years in EMA. Let me share with you some of the more light hearted ones, and what it was like in 1971 when I started at the Civil Defence School.

Staff

At the time the School came under the Commonwealth Department of Interior. The staff consisted of a Commandant, who had his own personal secretary, six instructors, a Registrar with four support staff and nine outdoor staff. The House was managed by a matron who lived permanently on the site. She had six or seven staff to manage including cooks and kitchen staff. We also had a bar person and three night watchman who each did an eight hour rotating shift.

It was the days of no females outside and no males employed inside the House, except perhaps a cook and an assistant. The males were in one staff room and the females in the other. Smoking was permitted in staff rooms and often one could hardly see the end of the room through the smokehaze.

A couple of days after I started, I was called into the Registrar's office to place my right hand on the Bible and

swear the oath of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. I swore to be an honest and fervent public servant. This was a must in those days.

The buildings and grounds

Entry to the school was via the Mount Road front entrance. No gates were attached, just a centre island light box containing yellow perspex which was lit up at night. The bridge and road were built in 1919 for the owner of the Macedon Golf House at a cost of approximately £2000. A gatehouse building was down the left hand side of the main driveway and had previously been converted. It was now being used for training in radioactivity response.

As one proceeded up the hill to the roundabout, which still remains, there was a grand front entrance to the Civil Defence School. This was a large double storey light grey coloured stucco concrete and timber building with an iron roof. A large veranda extended from the dining room across to the front left hand side of the building. This was built in 1919 as a golf guesthouse by a Melbourne bookmaker.

A couple of windows peeked up from the ground level on the left hand side. This was the bar area. A flagpole stood proudly in the garden on the north side of the roundabout. The flag was raised each morning and taken down at the end of the day by the nightwatchman. One could lose count of how many rooms this building had. I can remember six months after commencing, finding, what looked like a broom cupboard. It actually contained a vertical ladder which went to the highest point of the roof space. Students had found this before me and the remnants of late night parties in the attic were visible.

All main passages within the front of the main building had the usual run of good quality Commonwealth carpet with dark stained timber floors to the side. Red fire buckets filled with sand were at the end of each passage with the word FIRE in large white letters. Staff and students were always reminded, 'don't put your butts in the sand buckets'. Original brass ship lanterns were mounted on the walls at the end of each main passage. The nightwatchmen were required to polish and light these lanterns on a weekly basis and paint the fire buckets yearly. These lanterns are now displayed in the Brass Lantern Bar in the current accommodation building.

A brave few travelled to work via Waterfall's Road, this being just a gravel track at the time. Vegetables used in the kitchen were grown by the garden staff on the land opposite.

The Commonwealth budget was very tight even in those days. Sometimes we machined up the oregon from old unused beds to obtain timber to make new furniture.



The gatehouse

Education and training

Australian Civil Defence School by John Ramsdale

I did the carpentry, joinery and maintenance repair work as well as a variety of hands-on tasks. It was considered easier and cheaper to fix Civil Defence vehicles in-house rather than go to commercial operators. We had our own fire truck, a converted Army Blitz. The hose reel was on a pull-out hose reel cart. It was referred to as one of the 'little horses'.

Each Monday at 13:00hrs a fire drill was run for the students by staff members. One Friday near Christmas we had a special staff training session. We pulled out the hose reel to a simulated fire.



Some previous staff waiting for a rescue exercise to start

Someone had not tied the other end of the brass hose coupling to the cart and, as a result, it flew in the

air and cracked me across the face and broke my nose. It was back to work again on the Monday.

Practical training

In 1971 we had facilities like a radioactive compound where low doses of compound were stored in a small solid concrete shed, to the north west corner of the current car park. This was used for students to familiarise themselves with apparatus equipment training.

Practical rescue training for students was conducted on the 'Rescue Range' located on the grassed area opposite the current car park. It had

50 Years of Education and Training at EMA

Education and Training at EMA has come a long way in 50 years. In the early days the focus was on skills based training, mainly for the emergency services. This training is now undertaken by the States and Territories and the Institute concentrates on education for the broad range of people involved in emergency management. The Institutes current curriculum profile includes a range of competency based programs, a Graduate Certificate, and an Advanced Diploma in Emergency Management. Whilst the quality of EMA education has always been of the highest standard, external auditing of our learning and assessment system against the Australian Quality Training Framework Standards for Registered Training Organisations ensures that Qualifications and Statements of Attainment gained at EMA are now recognised under the national training framework.

EMA is committed to continuous improvement of its programs and services. Training needs are identified in consultation with the States and Territories with the aim of contributing to capacity/capability in emergency management. Identified training needs are assessed against national competency standards from the Public Safety and other Training Packages. This approach maximises participants' pathways for career and study progression.

Competency based curriculum is developed to meet training needs that do not align with current national competency standards. Curriculum is accredited through the Victorian Qualifications Authority and is nationally recognised. For details of the range of competency based programs and accredited courses offered by the Institute see the current hand book at www.ema.gov.au

Education and training programs are delivered either at the Institute in Mt. Macedon or by extension in the States and Territories. All programs are multi-agency and residential programs include participants from all states and territories, providing valuable networking opportunities.

Research and Innovation

The Institute keeps abreast of current international research and conducts occasional national workshops to explore emerging issues in emergency management. This approach has led to the development of a number of the Institutes accredited programs, recent examples are Emergency Management for Local Government, Business Continuity Management and Risk Based Land Use Planning.

A range of publications to support good practice in emergency management are developed in consultation with stakeholders.



Boiler room and hot house



Behind main building



Behind main building

simulated bombed buildings with brick rubble surrounding them. Outdoor staff were trained in rescue work and expected to take part in rescue demonstrations for the students. One of my favourites was the oxy lance, used to burn holes through solid concrete to reach a person trapped under rubble. When the oxygen was released through the preheated pipe, (which contained 14 black wires) a very large roar with sparks flying out would take place. On most occasions the students were not in their same viewing position at the end of the demonstration as they were when the demonstration started!

A hay shed was on the southern end of the range. The hay was used for smoke and heat test training. Another small tin fire training shed was located near where the cut

flowers are now grown. The hay was lit and instruction was given on how hay on fire in a shed could be put out with minimal water by persons if attacked soon enough. A staff member was required to keep low to the ground and enter the fire with a fire hose connected to a stirrup pump and bucket of water. Another staff member would man the stirrup pump by pumping like hell to keep the water pressure up. Only one bucket of water was used.

Further south were mud brick ovens, made by the students out of brick rubble and mud mortar. A clean rubbish bin was built in and used as an oven. A flue pipe was installed to make the fire draw properly. During the various Welfare Courses students were required to light up these ovens and cook a stew meal. On one occasion everyone

tried to light an oven that wouldn't light. Much later it was found a rabbit had become stuck in the flue downpipe. Once it was removed, the oven worked really well.

We all liked the night rescues as it meant a free meal, plenty of hype and some extra pay. In preparation for the rescue courses my colleague, Tom, and I were required to make patterns of full size people and sew up full size dummies. We packed them with saw dust and lead weights to get the average weight of a person. Tom left his industrial sewing machine on site at all times for this reason. These dummies were planted among the rescue building rubble heaps for the students to find. Many rescue techniques would be learnt by the students such as how to lash stretchers. They were trained in the different type of knots for different

applications. If you did not have enough stretchers to remove a person from the rubble you used a door for a stretcher. Students also learnt the different types of building floor collapses as well as different types of building shoring techniques.

In the early 70s we used the plumbers, fitters and electricians from Laverton Air Base as we were required to use only Commonwealth staff. Sometimes they would arrive on a cold winter Mt Macedon morning in a ute laden with pipes and an unlucky tradesperson riding in the back. One plumber was old Steve. He was a bald round-faced stocky guy who had a lot of time for everyone. He would never go into the building for hot water for

a cuppa. Instead he would always boil the billy outside on a metho burner. He insisted on drinking his tea outside the buildings.

The storeman was not available until approximately 09:00hrs each day. His first job was to wind and set the clocks in the training rooms and issue petrol for the vehicles. We had one of the old hand pump bowzers where he would pump the fuel up into the glass bowl and release the handle switch. All issues from the store were counted. Even screws, taken from their box, required the remainder written on the box for next time.

50 Years of History

On the 20th of October 2006, EMA Institute formally celebrates its 50 year anniversary. The school was officially opened on the 2nd of July 1956 by the Minister for the Interior. I am fortunate and proud to have been part of EMA for the past 35 years. I have witnessed a lot of changes during this time to make the present facility the cutting edge training facility it is today.

Skylab and the Institute

'SKYLAB', a scientific laboratory in space, was launched from Kennedy Space Center on 14 May 1973. In just over six years in orbit, it was visited for a total period of almost six months (171 days) by teams of three astronauts who, having completed their missions, returned to earth in the spacecraft which had carried them to 'SKYLAB'. It fell to earth on 12 July, 1979, creating a "debris footprint" over the Indian Ocean and remote areas of Western Australia, estimated by the American Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to be about 3000 kilometres long and 50 kilometres wide.

The majority of 'SKYLAB' pieces came down in the Indian Ocean, but heavy pieces fell between Esperance, from where the Emergency Management Australia Institute's mounted remnant was recovered, and Rawlinna, in Western Australia.

The 'SKYLAB' re-entry caused no injury, and no damage has been reported.

'SKYLAB' itself was 35 metres long and weighed more than 89 tonnes. It was designed to accommodate three men, and provided separate bedrooms, a shared kitchen and other facilities. It orbited approximately 430 km above the earth.

The component of 'SKYLAB' mounted at the Institute is a welded titanium sphere 615 mm in diameter, weighing some 55 kg. Twenty-two such spheres were contained in 'SKYLAB' to facilitate attitude control – each sphere contained nitrogen under pressure, and was plumbed to a common manifold connected to attitude thruster modules.

A substantial part of 'SKYLAB' activities related to studies of natural phenomena on earth and in the earth's atmosphere. This included studies of meteorological and vulcanological phenomena.

It is fitting that, in the unveiling of the 'SKYLAB' remnant at the Institute, the future of those who seek to develop an efficient national counter-disaster capability should be linked to those who sought to understand and explain the nature of the hazards which face mankind.

The 'SKYLAB' remnant mounted at the Institute was provided by courtesy of Mr P Arledge, Local Volunteer Emergency Service Controller at Esperance, WA, within whose region of responsibility a number of 'SKYLAB' remnants landed.

Reprinted from 25th anniversary commemorative booklet – Emergency Management Australia.



Skylab remnant at Emergency Management Australia Institute, Mt. Macedon, Australia