

EMA's Graduate Certificate in Emergency Management

In November 2008, EMA held its last graduation for the currently accredited Graduate Certificate in Emergency Management. The Graduate Certificate was first offered in May 2004 and 68 students have graduated to date.

This qualification was specifically designed to provide training for people working in the emergency management sector who required professional development at postgraduate level. Students examined their management skills especially managing relationships within the multi-agency context; were engaged in debate in relation to emergency management theory and practice; contributed to and analysed innovation and change in emergency management; and contributed to the national emergency management research agenda from a practice base. The Certificate comprised of four modules: Current issues and trends in emergency management, Relationships management in an emergency management context, Research methods and a Research project.

Abstracts from the students' research projects will be included in the next editions of the AJEM.

Assessing the level of understanding of emergency management responsibilities and performance expectations of selected DHHS staff who are involved in emergency management

By Steve Smith, submitted June, 2006

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is an Agency of approximately 9,800 full time equivalent staff. It has a broad range of responsibilities under the Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan with these being implemented by various Divisions of the Department. The Department's emergency management responsibilities fall into two broad categories - as either lead agency, or as a support agency to another lead agency. The Department currently has 16 lead agency tasks and 11 support agency tasks.

DHHS has traditionally discharged its emergency management responsibilities within discrete

(specialist) operational areas and with any cross Divisional synergies arising from this process being as much coincidental, as they might be planned. There is also strong anecdotal evidence to suggest a poor level of awareness across the Department as to the context in which emergency management capability is generated and how the Department meets its various emergency management responsibilities. Factors that contribute to this are the relative size and structural complexity of the Department, continual staff movement and the traditional 'stove-pipes' in which emergency management responsibilities have been allocated and managed in the past.

This research project presents the findings from a survey of selected DHHS staff and provides an insight into their understanding of emergency management practices and related compliance issues. The benefit to be gained from this project is information that will inform processes to improve understanding of emergency management responsibilities, and in turn, improve emergency management capability within DHHS.

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Recruitment and retention of volunteers in a local SES unit

By Peter Willmott, submitted October, 2008

Volunteer emergency services place considerable effort into recruiting and retaining volunteers. Most State organisations have volunteer programs to assist local units to recruit and manage volunteers. The success of a local unit to recruit and retain volunteers lies as much in its abilities as in those of the organisation.

This research shows that most members join with a prior knowledge of the emergency services and leave due to increased work or family commitments, rather than disillusionment or interpersonal issues. Those who leave the district frequently continue to volunteer in their new location.

This study demonstrates that a volunteer's personal needs (self motivating factors) must be met at the local unit. The culture of the local unit needs to demonstrate that each volunteer is valued, ensure that everyone feels included in the life of the unit and provide opportunities for responsibility and personal development.

The successful unit demonstrates that it is focused on its role in the community and separates political issues with external groups or the greater organisation from unit life. The study shows that members are loyal to the unit first, and are prepared to overlook politics with the organisation, or substandard facilities and equipment provided by the organisation where there is a strong, positive unit culture.

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Effective local plans

By Kate Kosmala, submitted September, 2008

In Australia, State and Territory governments have responsibility for maintaining an environment that promotes community safety and prosperity. One way this is addressed is through a range of prevention, mitigation and preparedness activities for dealing with emergency situations. In general, all local governments have emergency management planning obligations and this work occurs in a context where limited resources and increasing public expectations mean that efficiencies are sought in all activities, including the maintenance of emergency plans. Despite the commonality of both obligations and resource constraints for maintaining local emergency plans there is limited guidance from the state level to clearly identify recommendations for content and document management of local emergency plans. This lack of guidance represents an opportunity for improvement and is the main theme of this report.

A number of research activities were undertaken with primary and secondary sources, including a literature review, analysis of local plans in Tasmania, workshops with local planners, and surveys of practices in other Australian jurisdictions related to standards for local emergency plans. This research showed that currently there is no accepted standard for content and document management of local emergency plans nationally.

In Tasmania at least this absence means plans are diverse in their presentation and quality, local resources are wasted, relationships can be unnecessarily tense, intelligence is lost and there is the potential for failures in engagement at the foundation layer of the emergency management system. A number of other Australian jurisdictions reported similar status and outcomes.

Development of standards for local plans is identified as one method to improve the efficiency of effort of local governments in emergency management and promote community resilience.

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How does the NSW Department of Water and Energy identify the emergency management roles, responsibilities, risks, functions and networks, and so attach priority and political significance to forming these functions

By Russell Wade, submitted December, 2008

This report provides an analysis of relevant aspects of the NSW Government's State Plan and the related planning framework, that influence the adoption of the planning framework within the Department of Water and Energy (the Department). The planning framework is taken to be the Department's 'raison d'être', without consideration of the core responsibilities that underpin the work of government agencies, particularly in the area of reduction of risk exposure.

The research addresses the question as to how does the Department identify the emergency management roles within the organisation, the emergency linkages to other organisations and the political significance of forming these functions. The research design took a two-pronged approach, namely to examine the deficiencies in the framework that underpins the current NSW State Plan and to balance risk relativities through a comprehensive and coherent approach to risk assessment. A review of the literature draws out the concepts of risk, perceptions and trends in emergency management; and the consequences of dismissing a holistic approach to emergency risk assessment.

The results include a conceptual model of a spatial spectrum of risk relativities, which depicts the risks relative to the NSW State Plan priorities that impact on the Department. A further landmark finding is that in a water and energy supply chain context with high political significance, existing emergency management roles, linkages and practices can also benefit from the application of emergent techniques in innovative organisational transformation. This report concludes that the research provides compelling evidence for identifying the functions, roles and significance of emergency management within the Department.

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Long term accommodation for evacuated residents of nursing homes

By Elaine Davey, submitted June, 2007

Rescue workers found a gruesome scene inside St Rita's Nursing Home. 'It's the worst thing I've ever seen, a 60-year-old rescuer said. The descriptions of what was inside the single storey football field size building horrified even the hardened disaster veterans'.

During and after Cyclone Katrina, there were many horror stories of nursing homes having no evacuation plans, or if they had them, they had either not been tested or they were not acted on.

What do we do in Australia? What plans are in place in our Nursing Homes and Aged Care Facilities?

During disasters, administrators of health care facilities are faced with decisions about how to operate and care for patients, including when and how to evacuate patients if the facility becomes unable to support adequate care, treatment, or services. Where do these residents go? Who is responsible? How is this organised?

Hospitals and Nursing homes are required to have plans in place, describing how they will operate during an emergency. However, there appears to be a lack of long term evacuation planning and long term re-location for Nursing Homes/Aged care Facilities.

Evacuation planning can be problematic. Many of the residents cannot walk, or they may need assistance to walk. Residents may have dementia and therefore require to be evacuated to a secure and safe place. This can limit the accommodation available.

How many Nursing homes in Australia have these plans in place? If Australia had a disaster of the same magnitude as Hurricane Katrina, would our Nursing homes have a better outcome than those in New Orleans? Is Australia prepared for disasters?

Do we in Australia have the answers to these questions?

This paper will open up discussion on long term relocation of residents from Aged Care Residents.

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