

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The AJEM welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should refer to content published in the previous AJEM, focus on issues of emergency management and disaster resilience, and include contact details. Letters should be around 200 words. Longer letters may be published or edited at the editor's discretion.

I was dismayed to read in your October volume that Stuart Ellis, incoming CEO of AFAC, failed to offer unequivocal support for fuel reduction burning as a measure to mitigate bushfire damage.

Mr. Ellis says: "Prescribed burning is likely to reduce the intensity of bushfires" [my emphasis], and adds that [fuel reduction burning] will "provide little, if any, substantive mitigation" on a Code Red day.

Neither of these statements is correct.

Simple physics means that less fuel will always reduce bushfire intensity. But this is not just a matter of physics. The value of prescribed burning has been demonstrated in fire behaviour and combustion research since the 1960s and is supported by case studies, statistics, simulation studies and thousands of observations over many years. There can hardly be a firefighter in Australia who has not observed the decline in intensity that occurs when a fire crosses from 20-year old to one-year old fuels.

True, headfires may be impossible to control on a Code Red day (especially in heavy fuels). However, the presence in the landscape of fuel reduced areas makes fires on the days preceding a Code Red day easier and safer to control, meaning that there are fewer fires still live when

Disaster Day breaks, freeing up resources, and allowing time for fire leaders to regroup and for communities to prepare or evacuate. And even on a day when the headfire is unstoppable, useful work can be done on flank fires burning in light fuels, helping to secure the danger flank in the expectation of a wind change.

Fuel reduction cannot prevent bushfires. But it will mitigate (and in some cases prevent) bushfire damage. Under a properly designed fuel reduction burning program, 20% of the landscape will always be carrying fuels less than three-year old. Even under the conditions of Black Saturday, effective suppression is possible on tail and flank fires in 0, 1 and 2 year-old fuels.

The failure of Australian land and fire management authorities to deal responsibly with bushfire fuels in the expectation of a bushfire is a great national tragedy. Heavy, long-unburnt forest fuels mean that bushfires can become unstoppable even under relatively moderate fire dangers, let alone Code Red. This is an issue to which I would hope AFAC would assign their highest priority.

Yours sincerely,

**Roger Underwood**

The Bushfire Front Inc  
Perth, Western Australia

## Graduate Certificate Emergency Management Post Graduate Program



**The certificate will be coordinated by the Centre for Disaster Studies and will involve staff Planning, Human Geography, Psychology and Tropical Medicine.**

**This course will provide a qualification for emergency managers who already work within the profession and for graduates from a range of backgrounds who are entering or intending to enter the profession.**

**Graduating students will have a clearer conceptual understanding of the complexity and systemic nature of the issues encountered in emergency management. This will enable a more confident, problem solving, approach to the practice of emergency management which will complement their existing skills.**

**For the past 12 years the Centre for Disaster Studies at James Cook University has been involved in contributing to research and teaching of social aspects of emergency management.**

### Course overview

The Graduate Certificate in Emergency Management provides professional training in the social and psychological context, policy, legislation and governance of emergency management. It will emphasise both professional and community needs.

This course is aimed at graduates from a variety of disciplines who are entering the emergency management profession, emergency management professionals with extensive experience who wish to enhance their qualifications and professionals who want to include emergency management in their portfolio.

Some of these entrants might not possess an undergraduate degree, but most will come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Subjects will be oriented to that diversity.

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM  
GRADUATE CERTIFICATION  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
Year 2013

Code: 106111

Mid-year entry: Yes

Mode: PT/Block Mode/Flexible Delivery

Credit Points: 12

### Entry Requirements

Completion of an undergraduate course at this or another University or appropriate qualifications and experience.

Students of non English speaking backgrounds must have an adequate English language capacity assessed under the Australian International English Language Testing System. An IELTS score of 6.0 with no component lower than 5.5 is required

Interview (by invitation) for applicants with other than first degree entry requirement.

### Course Structure

Subjects will be in block mode or flexible delivery/limited attendance. The expected time to complete the certificate is one year to enable part time attendance.

- Disasters, Communities and Planning
- Governance, Policy, Service Delivery and Philosophy of Emergency Management
- Psychology of Disasters
- Special Topic

The Graduate Certificate in Emergency Management will comprise a total of 12 credit points.

**For more information please contact Dr Alison Cottrell SEES on 07 4781 4653 or by email at [alison.cottrell@jcu.edu.au](mailto:alison.cottrell@jcu.edu.au)**