

Recovery management

This edition of the Journal is the first of a number, that will feature articles on recovery management.

A selection of papers from the Emergency Recovery Forum, held in Victoria during November 1997, appear in this edition. The Spring 1998 edition will include a number of papers on recovery issues from the Port Arthur shootings. These papers were presented at the Australian Association of Social Workers Conference, held in Canberra in September 1997. Finally, the Summer 1998 edition will include a selection of papers presented in a session on recovery management in Australia, to be held as part of the Disaster Research Committee of the International Sociological Association Conference, Montreal, July 1998.

Emergency Recovery Forum

Two of the papers from the Victorian Emergency Recovery Forum provide perspectives on the recovery process following fires in the Dandenong Ranges, Victoria, in January 1997. These papers highlight the approach taken to recovery management at the local level featuring the work of:

- Lyn Hayes as a recovery manager with local government
- Helen Wositzky as a community development officer.

In the third paper from the forum, Syd Smale provides a history of the role of the Church in providing support services during and after disasters. This is coupled with reflections on the Church's role in the aftermath of the Dandenong Ranges fires, written by one of the convenors of the local outreach program, Peter Crawford.

While the background and approach of each of these people and the organisations they represent may differ, their papers provide a valuable insight into the importance of community involvement and leadership during the recovery process.

In the fourth article from the forum, Rosemary White provides further insight into community involvement through discussion of her role as a community development officer in a community affected by an outbreak of anthrax.

Recovery Management

Given this context it is timely to reflect on the evolution of recovery management over the last decade and consider some important issues that need to be addressed as we approach the new millennium.

The Principles of Recovery Management were drafted in the late 1980s. They detail the fundamentals of recovery management and are featured in the Australian Emergency Manual (AEM)—Disaster Recovery.

Underpinning these principles is the concept that individuals and communities should be supported in the management of their own recovery. It is interesting to note the developing importance of this concept of individual and community empowerment in other areas of emergency management. A prime example of this is the very successful Community Fireguard strategy of the Victorian Country Fire Authority, which is also built on individual and community self reliance, supported by education and information.

After more than a decade, the Principles of Recovery Management continue to provide the cornerstone of recovery management in Australia. However, while the theory may remain intact, its application is continually being developed.

Risk Management

The relationship between recovery and a risk management framework for emergency management is currently being debated. While it would be simple to label recovery as 'just another treatment option', it is worth considering the length and complexity of the recovery process following a disaster.

As identified in the Principles, recovery begins as an event unfolds and continues almost indefinitely, as affected communities come to terms with individual and shared experiences. As I write this editorial, this week's newspapers (29th April) include a number of reports on the second anniversary of the Port Arthur shootings. What better reminder of the duration and complexity of the recovery process than such an event?

The challenge for recovery managers and practitioners remains how best to

tailor their activities to support such a community, from the frenetic activity of the event and the immediate aftermath, through the ongoing needs for many months and years to follow. Key considerations include:

- continuing privatisation of services
- more sophisticated assessment of need through development of vulnerability and resilience measures
- development of performance criteria to measure the success of recovery programs
- continued integration with other aspects of emergency management.

The risk management methodology needs to encompass these issues.

Australian Emergency Manual — Disaster Recovery

Disaster Recovery Coordinators from each State and Territory and EMA continue to work towards refining and updating recovery management strategy and service delivery. The AEM—Disaster Recovery is to be reviewed in the second half of 1998. Events such as the Port Arthur shootings, Thredbo Landslide and Katherine Floods have taken place since the original draft of the manual. No doubt the lessons from these and other events will enhance the revised manual.

National Studies Program

EMA's National Studies Program has also provided a significant opportunity to address specific issues in recovery management. Guidelines for the delivery of community and personal support services were developed during a workshop at AEMI, where practitioners with experience in a range of disasters pooled their knowledge of issues facing workers responsible for the delivery of these services. These guidelines will be published shortly. The process was funded under the National Studies Program.

A similar workshop on the delivery of psychological services in the disaster context is scheduled for March 1999.

Through activities such as these recovery management continues to fulfil its fundamental and indispensable role in emergency management.

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