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The journal endeavours to provide an information sharing forum for all those involved in emergency management. Contributions relating to Australian and International emergency activities, articles identifying and discussing issues, policies, planning or procedural concerns, research reports and any other information relevant to the emergency and disaster management community are welcome.

The aim of this publication is the exchange of information and views across the Australian emergency management community, therefore, the views expressed in this journal should not be taken to be the views of Emergency Management Australia.

This journal incorporates a review process. Three levels of review—refereeing, editorial board review and editing—are conducted. Material submitted for publication should be on disk and reach the Editor by the following dates: Summer – October 15th; Autumn – January 15th; Winter – April 15th; Spring – July 15th. The editorial committee reserves the right to determine the suitability of all material submitted and where necessary to edit submissions.

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Editorial

Ecological emergencies in Australia: issues and challenges for environmental and emergency management agencies

Environmental change, and many emergencies and hazards often have their roots in basic features of the Australian environment—droughts, flooding rains and wildfires—and a failure of humans to recognise and accommodate these features. Climatic variability, especially in precipitation, is one enormously important feature. The legacy of the evolutionary history of the Australian continent is another feature, since Australia is the only rich country considered 'mega-diverse' in biological diversity. Another feature is a European history of extraordinarily poor environment management. Of note is the impact of humans on ecosystems and their biota, and on important biophysical and ecological processes—the foundations of natural systems. In the absence of management reform, as environmental change continues we can expect these features to manifest and produce more ecological surprises and situations that threaten the persistence of key ecological systems. At threat is the remaining natural heritage of Australia, as well as human life and property.

This expectation, not to mention the increase in the number and significance of ecological impacts and crises during the past two decades, raises many questions: What are the relationships and connections between environmental/ecological management and emergency management in Australia? Can these connections be employed to improve environmental management, especially the management of ecological emergencies? Can emergency management operations be improved to avoid unnecessary impacts on the natural environment? How can greater interaction and cooperation be fostered between these two fields?

The five papers relating to this topic are presented to consider some of these questions in more detail from a range of

ecological perspectives. The term 'environmental emergencies' (and environmental risk) has been avoided as this is generally taken to refer primarily to pollution episodes (e.g. chemical or oil spills, fires at factories) and mostly to situations where *humans* or their property are the primary concerns. For the purposes of this forum 'ecological emergencies' are defined as sudden-onset events where the subject is non-human, such as biological diversity, an ecosystem, a species, or a river system. In an ecological emergency, humans or human property may also be threatened, but the threat may be only to non-human entities.

The papers represent one of the outcomes of a national workshop: *Planning for Ecological Emergencies* that was held at the Australian Emergency Management Institute, Mt Macedon, Victoria during 9–11 September 1998. We are very grateful to the Institute for their support to conduct this meeting.

By Stephen Dovers, Tony Norton and John Handmer

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Apology

I wish to point out that the lead article in the last issue of the journal by Roger Douglas of the School of Law and Legal Studies at Latrobe University on 'Administrative Law and Response to Emergencies' did not contain the required references. This was an oversight in the transferring of material to the desktop publishing stage. To be able to access the complete and correct article we have modified the electronic copy of the journal and it can be located at www.ema.gov.au/pcations.htm

I wish to apologise for any inconvenience and embarrassment caused through this error.