

Education and training for the emergency management profession

In September 1998 Emergency Management Australia (EMA) commissioned a report *The Role of the Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI) in Development and Delivery of Emergency Management Education and Training Post 2000*. One of the major recommendations of the Report was that AEMI (the education and training arm of EMA) should 'provide a leadership role for the professionalisation of the broad emergency management community'.

The Oxford Dictionary defines a professional as one who '...is skilled in the theoretic or scientific parts of a trade; who raises his trade to the dignity of a learned profession'. Webster's Dictionary describes a profession as 'a vocation requiring specialised training in a field of learning, art or science'.

The professionalisation urged by the Report, then, obviously referred to a perceived need for emergency managers to be exposed to further opportunities to increase their learning and training in their vocations.

This edition of the Australian Journal of Emergency Management contains some articles addressing this issue. The Spring edition will continue this theme.

In this issue, David Crew's article considers the perception of emergency management as a discrete profession, particularly in the US context, in light of the significant effort and resources that have been invested by FEMA in proliferating graduate and undergraduate EM education programs throughout the tertiary institutions of the USA.

Closer to home, Ian Manoch's article surveys the range of tertiary emergency management education in Australia. It drives home, in dramatic fashion, the fact that there has been a significant increase in the past few years in the number of organisations and agencies prepared to provide education and training for emergency managers. In 2000, AEMI conducted a Workshop for all Australian TAFE and University institutions which offer emergency management education and training. The resultant exchange of

information has resulted in a series of partnerships and networks which have strengthened the range of options available to emergency managers who seek to improve their professional standing.

Emergency management education and training is offered at various levels by a broad range of institutions in Australia, which bodes well for the resilience of the national emergency management sector. Emergency managers requiring operator level training receive it from State and Territory Emergency Service training institutions and TAFE colleges. Management level training is carried out by some of these organisations, together with AEMI. Higher level Professional Development programs are provided by a range of bodies including AEMI, while specific industry-based training for all levels is conducted by commercial industrial companies. Graduate Diplomas, Bachelor and Masters Degrees are offered by an increasing number of tertiary institutions. Specialist emergency management modules and units are also offered by a number of establishments in other degree programs (eg nursing, engineering).

The recent launch of the Public Safety Training Package means that emergency management competencies are now enshrined in the Australian Qualifications Framework. Articulation of competencies and qualifications achieved through training under this process into higher level qualifications is a strategy being diligently pursued by AEMI and other training and education bodies. Work has begun to consider the identification of other competencies in the

sector which will help inform and create other recognised training regimes for the profession.

The emergency management sector is embracing concepts such as Community Safety and Resilience and Emergency Risk Management. This, together with an increasing recognition of our part in a whole-of-Government approach to emergencies, means emergency managers (noting that emergency managers can be found in a whole range of professions, not just the traditional emergency services) must be given the opportunity to maintain their professionalism by adopting and applying the different range of skills demanded of them. AEMI, the State and Territory training bodies and the TAFEs and universities are responding to these requirements represented by our industry clients. In particular, a move towards the 'softer' sciences, an emphasis on skills that contribute to successful dealings with community-related issues are all receiving significant attention. Rather than competing with each other, the various education and training institutions are working in partnership to maximise the opportunities available to emergency managers to maintain the professionalism for which Australian emergency managers are recognised nationally and internationally.

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