

ANGLICARE: The care that changes lives

By ANGLICARE Emergency Services

Whilst Anglicans have always been involved in helping in emergencies, there was no organised Anglican involvement until 1998. The responsibility to coordinate Anglican action in this field was given to ANGLICARE in Sydney and much has been done to establish it as a reliable contributor to the overall response and recovery effort in emergencies.

Who are we?

ANGLICARE is one of the nation's largest, most vigorous welfare agencies. Established in 1856, it is at the forefront of providing care to families in need. For nearly 150 years ANGLICARE has provided an extensive range of services for families and children. Today our services include foster care and adoption, including children with special needs, counselling and services for children and youth with disabilities, emergency relief, migrant services, op shops, chaplains in hospitals, prisons and juvenile institutions and aged care.

Part of the formal process:

The State Disaster Plan (DISPLAN) details the management arrangements adopted by the NSW Government in response to major emergencies. It provides for several specialised plans and establishes the overall management arrangements.

Disaster Recovery is the coordinated process of supporting disaster-affected communities in the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing.



DISPLAN vests responsibility for the Disaster Recovery Human Services functional area in the Department of Community Services (DoCS) with input from a number of Community Partners. ANGLICARE is a key Community Partner participating with the other signatories to a formal Memorandum of Agreement which specifies the role of each agency. The focus is the provision of support and resources like accommodation, personal support, clothing and personal requisites and catering. ANGLICARE provides practical support and assistance to all the Agencies involved as part of the

Disaster Recovery (Human Services) Plan. This requires both flexibility and access to good local resources.

The role the church can play:

ANGLICARE has access to the physical infrastructure of the church in partnership with local parish communities. These are often located in close proximity to the scene of the emergency and offer a range of useful resources. ANGLICARE relies on its 1 500 volunteers who are the backbone of our ability to be of use in emergencies.

A specific role:

The particular responsibilities of our Emergency Services program include:

- the development and coordination of training materials and specialised resources appropriate to assist the volunteers;
- the provision of technical and operational support to the pastoral leadership in the management of major emergencies;
- the development of the Anglican Diocesan Emergency Plan (ADEP) for use within the State; and
- making an effective contribution as a member of the NSW State Disaster Recovery Committee.

In essence, ANGLICARE's role is to harness the resources of the Anglican Church community in providing practical support and trained personnel who are deployed in teams when a major emergency occurs. The approach works well.

Operational exposure:

ANGLICARE has participated effectively in operations including bushfires, storm, flood and drought relief, the reception of the Kosovo and East Timorese Displaced Persons and the Glenbrook train accident. More recently we were able to offer support to the ANGLICARE team in Canberra at the time of the horrific ACT fires there this year.

Volunteers: the critical resource

ANGLICARE has developed a strong commitment to training these volunteers since it is essential that those we deploy in these events:

- are well trained and fit for the task;
- know who is responsible for what and
- know just what their role is.

The training covers emergency management, disaster recovery and the flexible yet coordinated support role we play in relation to all the other agencies involved. We believe that there can be little room for enthusiastic but unorganised amateurs.

Non Government Organisations (NGOs), whether church-based or

not, are most often made visible by volunteers active in a variety of ways in disaster recovery. Operational experience recognises that, very often, the excitement of the moment, the drama, the keen desire in people to assist the victims, to "DO SOMETHING", can lead to action being taken which, whilst best-intentioned, reflects a lack of planning and organisation



A small miracle in the midst of a firestorm

On Boxing Day 2001, ANGLICARE emergency services volunteer Doug Philpott was working at the Wollongong Entertainment Centre. It was full of people who had evacuated Helensburgh NSW because of devastating bush fires that were impacting their homes.

"There were horse floats outside, people with dogs, cats and other family pets, people who had just left their homes with whatever they could carry," said Doug. "In one corner there was a small medical facility set up for people who needed medical attention and for those who forgot to bring their regular medication in their hurry to leave.

"Someone from the Red Cross came up to me with a distraught man who was desperate to find his wife and child.

"The three of them had been at home while the fires were raging outside. The man had sent his wife and daughter off early while he remained to do some protective work around the house and then moved to help his in-laws. He was at their home when the final evacuation call sounded.

"He had come to the Wollongong Entertainment Centre thinking he would meet his wife and daughter there, but was dismayed to find they were nowhere to be seen.

"I spent hours with him trying to track down information and possible places they could be. The poor man was sick with worry and I tried to do what I could.

"We eventually managed to surmise they had been evacuated to Stanmore Park along the coast, but we could not find out for sure because there was no way of communicating between the two evacuation centres at that time.

"It was a small miracle to track down his wife's sister so that he had somewhere to stay for the night.

and fails to recognise the consequences of ill-considered enthusiasm. Scarce resources can be inappropriately used, critical need missed and volunteer effort made fruitless and frustrating.

Local groups of trained volunteers play a vital role in delivering practical care and assistance to those affected by disasters. Teams leaders are specifically appointed and trained in the role, both regionally and locally. They are also responsible to attend required training and refresher training for accreditation, attend Local Team meetings and understand and implement their roles and responsibilities during disaster recovery operations.

The types of training provided by Emergency Services Accredited Trainers include:

- one day Disaster Recovery workshops;
- yearly refresher training for team leaders and members;
- ADEP (Anglican Diocesan Emergency Plan) implementation training for volunteers and leaders;
- recruitment and training briefings for Regional and Local Team Leaders;
- operational briefings on potential emergency procedures for appropriate personnel.

All one-day workshop participants must complete the required assessment, provide appropriate referees and receive an ANGLICARE certificate dated for three years with allocation to a Local Team, relevant to geographical location across NSW.

This training is approved by the State Disaster Recovery Committee managed by the NSW Department of Community Services and complies with required training and accreditation standards.

These training workshops are designed to ensure that our teams are properly prepared for their

roles. Particular emphasis is given to:

- the adoption of a community development perspective
- the active participation of the affected community
- maximum reliance on local capacities and expertise
- ongoing team development using training programs and exercises.

Our experience is that this process actively strengthens the teams' resourcefulness and that training, often with people from other organisations, develops self-confidence and improves performance.

Operational exposure has taught us much about the valuable contribution which can be made by non-government organisations. The reality is that local people, properly prepared for their involvement, can make a difference, if we all work together and are effective in fulfilling our roles.

ANGLICARE was recognised at both National and State levels by the Australian Safer Community Awards in 2001 for our contribution to training and volunteer development.

Some lessons learned:

- The continuing need for the NGO contribution to be negotiated with Government as part of a planned response to the situation so as to enable the recovery process to be timely and effective;
- Effective involvement during operations depends on the negotiation of a clear and agreed role for NGOs in advance of the event;
- Successful coordination between Government and Non-Government agencies can only be achieved if it occurs in a consistent and co-ordinated way at all levels—State, Regional and Local;
- Disaster recovery operations work best when local people are involved in caring for each other, within the limits of professional and technical considerations. Operational experience confirms that people affected by high impact incidents prefer to deal with people they know, rather than alleged experts from 'away';
- The knowledge of local ways and culture, the importance of existing relationships between key individuals and organisations as well as the rich interaction between Church and civic leadership provide the best environment for effective response and recovery;



- The church is an integral part of the social infrastructure of a community and, when properly organised, can effectively address the spiritual as well as the other needs of people in these circumstances;
- Communicate: Communicate: Communicate: the process involves ears as well.

Spontaneity must be well planned:

Proper planning and preparation in anticipation of likely incidents is vital at all levels—operational, resource allocation, communication and decision-making. The effort made in advance of the critical incident has a dramatic impact on the effectiveness of the action we can take when such an incident occurs.

There is a strong correlation between the best planning and the best outcomes.

The strategic appreciation of NGO roles and responsibilities by those in key roles is of critical importance. The expectations of the public in such situations, the difficulties sometimes inherent in media coverage and the potential for litigious consequences emphasise the importance of quality assurance and a well managed response.

Effective planning and training are vital to ensure that actions taken in times of crisis respond to real needs and are operationally and pastorally effective. The key is the clarity of roles and functions—and the quality of the policy base, which supports them.

ANGLICARE's involvement in emergency services is soundly based on professional training and experience. It relies on established principles of risk analysis, on sensible anticipation of likely incidents, and on effective planning at all levels.

What works?

The philosophy of making a difference in the local community is the backbone and heart of the work of ANGLICARE volunteers within the State Disaster Recovery Plan. It is about teamwork, together in partnership within local communities with local people assisting local people when disaster occurs.

One Anglican minister made this comment following the 2001/2 bushfires:

“What is even of further encouragement to me and to our church is that a door, a wide door, of opportunities has been opened into the community because of our involvement under the banner of ANGLICARE. I am very grateful, the whole team is, for the training and authorisation we received less than 8 months prior by completing the one-day Emergency Training Day Course. God knew what was ahead and I am relieved that we picked up on the opportunity to be trained. We now look back on the training as essential, if not compulsory, ministry training for an area such as our own.”

We are committed to assisting afflicted communities throughout the recovery process, supporting individuals, families and communities in the restoration and reconstruction of their lives. Our experience has been the church is well placed to help people in this way. This is about 'being there' for people in trouble in practical and appropriate ways.

We find it works: and the church has a real role to play.

For further information on ANGLICARE Emergency Services contact Terry O'Mara or Jenni Davies on (02) 9895 8000.