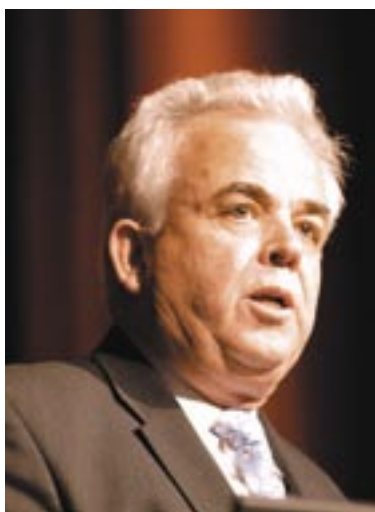


2005 Emergency Management Volunteers Summit Summary

Opening address by Mr David Templeman, Director General of Emergency Management Australia



Mr David Templeman

Immediately before the opening address, the delegates observed one minute's silence out of respect for the Australian military personnel who lost their lives during the humanitarian operations in Indonesia following the Indian Ocean tsunami.

David Templeman began by giving an account of the types and scale of emergencies which threaten Australia and the region. He acknowledged the contribution made by volunteers to the emergency management sector, and called on all governments to recognise the vital role played by volunteers.

He reminded delegates that EMA and the Department of Family and Community Services co-sponsored the first ever National

Emergency Management Volunteers Summit. As part of the United Nations sponsored *International Year of the Volunteer*, he recalled that the main themes of the first Summit were recognition, legal protection, training and funding. This led to the emergence of new initiatives as part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) review of natural disasters, which was commissioned in June 2001. In December 2003, COAG gave in principle support to the recommendations of the COAG Review report.

Since the COAG Review, the emergency management sector has seen a greater emphasis on security issues and the impact this has had on Australian society. He spoke of the recent tragedy of the Indian Ocean tsunami, which he said reminded us that "we cannot lose our focus on the possibility, indeed probability, of a significant catastrophe occurring in Australia".

He thanked the organisations represented at the Summit for assisting in the logistics and co-ordination of the Australian assistance to Indonesia following the tsunami. In particular, he applauded the way they came together as one, demonstrating the strong emergency management capability in Australia, which is strongly supported by so many volunteers.

Finally, he introduced the Hon Philip Ruddock, the Attorney-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Address by the Hon Philip Ruddock, MP, Attorney-General of the Commonwealth of Australia



The Hon Philip Ruddock and Keith Pakenham, Country Fire Authority, Vic.

The Hon Philip Ruddock opened his address by stating how fortunate Australia is to have more than 500,000 volunteers in the emergency management sector, with exceptional skills and outstanding abilities. He described Australia as a land of extremes. With the risk of bush fires, floods and cyclones ever present, and used the recent example of *Cyclone Ingrid*, which put hundreds of communities on alert. He added that the risk of terrorist attack has added a new and urgent dimension to emergency management planning.

He paid tribute to the scale and scope of the work done by emergency management sector volunteers, often at great personal risk, and stated that governments can never hope to replicate the work done by volunteers, as

emergencies are best managed at the grass roots level. He said, "Australians are in the best position to work for the good of their communities and to overcome the problems they face".

This philosophy underpins the Australian Government's new program, *Working Together to Manage Emergencies*, which recognises the need to develop self reliance at both the community and local government levels to enhance community safety. He said, "The Government recognises the expertise you provide in this area. Accordingly the Government has allocated \$16 million for a National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund". He advised that the fund will provide grants aimed at boosting recruiting, retention and training for volunteer organisations in the first responder role.

The Attorney-General stated that EMA had consulted with many of the volunteer emergency services and other volunteer organisations from the emergency management sector in order to ensure the new program achieves practical outcomes for both volunteers and local communities.

He added that the Australian Government is also establishing a Local Grants scheme to assist in the development and implementation of community risk management plans, consistent with a National Strategic Plan.

He concluded by saying "I know you don't volunteer for money, personal reward or grand recognition. You volunteer because

you care, because you want to make a difference and because you want to contribute to our great country. On behalf of the Australian Government I want to assure you that your efforts, your dedication, professionalism and sheer hard work are well and truly recognised and appreciated".

The Attorney-General then introduced and welcomed His Excellency Mr John Landy, AC, MBE, Governor of Victoria and Administrator of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Official opening of the 2005 Volunteers Summit by His Excellency John Landy, AC, MBE, Governor of Victoria and Administrator of the Commonwealth of Australia



His Excellency John Landy AC, MBE

His Excellency conveyed best wishes for the Summit from the Governor General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffrey, and declared

that he was honoured to be among so many dedicated Australians who make such extraordinary contributions to the nation. He continued, "The tragic event off Nias Island serves as a poignant reminder of the vulnerability and uncertainty of life for all men and women who serve in potentially dangerous circumstances".

He paid tribute to the deeply embedded sense of service which is evident in the Australian community, attributing it to the harsh Australian environment, and to the continent's vast distances and isolated communities, which necessitate the use of commonsense and self-reliance.

He said that he would be surprised if many other nations match the level of voluntary service achieved in Australia, with some 4.3 million people giving around 3.5 hours each week to a wide range of organisations. "It is estimated that 500,000 of these Australians come from your own ranks". He added that volunteers have proven time and time again how invaluable their contributions are to our nation, and Australian communities recognise the importance of volunteers during times of crisis, particularly during floods, fires and cyclones.

He concluded by stating that he sees the volunteer's role as one of "active citizenship". He applauded the work done by volunteers, and expressed his encouragement and thanks for their commitment. "Whatever your role in emergency management, I trust you will find great value in this Summit".

Keynote address by Maj. General Hori Howard AO, MC, ESM (Retd)



Maj General Hori Howard

Where volunteers have been and where we are going

Major General Hori Howard, Chair of the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum (AEMVF), delivered the keynote address of the 2005 *Emergency Management Volunteers Summit*. He traced the development of volunteer organisations involved in managing emergencies, from 2001 to the present day and outlined what the future may hold.

Maj. General Howard said that until 2001, emergency management was not on the national agenda except during actual emergencies. Not surprisingly, he explained, emergency management volunteer organisations were also not on any main agendas. He said that now emergency management was firmly on the national agenda, a proper profile of the volunteer end of emergency management was possible.

He said, "Until the first Volunteer Summit in 2001, there was no real sense of togetherness amongst volunteer organisations dealing with emergencies. They worked well together during emergencies, but did not regard themselves as a sector.

The situation changed in 2001 because of two events – the first ever *Emergency Management Volunteer Summit* and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Review into Natural Disasters that recognised the vital role played by the emergency management volunteer organisations.

During the inaugural Summit, the themes of training, legal protection, funding and recognition were examined in depth and attendees formulated many recommendations. The main tangible outcome of the first Summit was the formation of the AEMVF, which had its first meeting in April 2002. The creation of the AEMVF was a real step towards the formation of a volunteer emergency management sector.

The COAG Review into Natural Disasters was also significant to the future of the sector, as there was a wide-ranging recommendation included in the report, which called on all levels of government to provide increased assistance to volunteer emergency management organisations. Fortunately, the Volunteer Summit was held before the COAG Review as it provided the basis for the recommendations regarding the volunteer sector in the COAG Review report.

The AEMVF has made steady progress, concentrating on sharing ideas and achieving peak body status for the sector. With support from Emergency Management Australia, it is now conducting a major survey into the costs of being a volunteer.

A report on the volunteer recommendations from the COAG Review report was tabled at the first meeting of the Ministers responsible for emergency management held in March 2005 chaired by the Attorney-General. The report maintained that despite considerable progress on the main issues raised at the Volunteer Summit and in the report of the COAG Review since

2001 – there was still much to be done. The Australian Emergency Management Committee (AEMC) is now responsible for developing proposals to provide tangible support to organisations in the sector and to report back to the next meeting of the Ministers later in the year.

In explaining the purpose of the 2005 Summit, Maj. General Howard said the AEMVF was seeking advice on the vision for the sector's future agenda and said the Summit would continue to pursue the first Summit's four main themes of training, legal protection, funding and recognition.

In addition, he explained, the AEMVF will continue to co-ordinate the survey on the cost of being a volunteer, seek greater recognition for the Forum as the peak body of the sector – particularly from the Department of Family and Community Services, attempt to rationalise any future offers of hardship payments by the Australian Government, and continue to share good ideas.

In concluding his keynote address, Maj. General Howard said "the emergency management sector is the backbone of Australia's emergency management system. As a collective it is effective and efficient. Governments and the community however must acknowledge the sector's stresses and strains".

His final remarks left the room contemplating, "Above everything else, volunteers still believe they are largely taken for granted – a situation that must be turned around. Australians must recognise that it is demanding to be a volunteer. If they don't look after them and recognise them more effectively, they will lose them", he said.

Dr Fiona Wood AM, FRACS, Australian of the Year 2005



Dr Fiona Wood

Drive the change from the front

“There is only one certainty – change is part of life.”

Following the Bali bombings in October 2002, Dr Fiona Wood, Head of Royal Perth Hospital's Burns Unit and Director of Western Australia Burns Service led a courageous and committed team in the fight to save 28 patients with between two and 92 per cent body burns, deadly infections and delayed shock.

Her strong leadership and vision to plan for a large-scale disaster five years before the Bali tragedy brought world-wide praise and recognition to the Royal Perth Hospital Burns Unit and highlighted the ground-breaking research into burns treatment in Western Australia. She emphasised the need for collaboration, planning and exercising and for first responders to be well trained because what they do initially can minimise the long-term effects on victims.

Dr Wood opened her address by challenging the audience with questions “What changes need to be made? Why change? What's wrong with what we do now? Who's driving the change?”

On reflection of her experiences, she said, “We should take the challenge: not to be driven but to be driving the change from the front”.

Giving an example of a school visit where a student asked her to explain her positive attitude, Dr Wood gave a demonstration of the “Living pulsating spirit of positiveness” she has experienced in Australia. “Imagine that a meteor is going to hit. In one room they are saying “everyone's going to die”, in another room, the emergency management people are saying excitedly, “we're getting ready for the biggest fireworks display ever”.

“The drivers for change should be societal and it starts with you and in universities and schools. Children are vital in the whole scheme of things and we should facilitate positivism around them.

“I implore you to lift the ante and get people over the line so that we become a society based on the fabric and integrity of every one of us. It's a challenge, but it's do-able.”

Mr Len Foster AO



Mr Len Foster

The future of volunteerism in Australia deeply etched in strategic community linkages

In his address to the Summit as presenter of Theme Two, *Enhancing links to further benefit volunteers and their communities*, Mr. Len Foster AO, Chief Executive Officer of the Australasian Fire Authorities

Council (AFAC), maintained that developing two-way linkages with communities and establishing strategic, national perspectives are two crucial factors that will help meet the challenges facing the emergency management volunteer sector in Australia.

He confirmed the mindset change from the tactical issues of the previous Summit, into the strategic issues that the sector needs to address to ensure success today and into the future.

“In the past, emergency service organisations have been insular and reactionary in nature, leading to widespread waste. There was no national approach to the emergency management environment and no mechanisms for communication between agencies,” he said.

He outlined the significant changes in community expectations over the last ten years that have driven change within the emergency management environment including: an increase in litigiousness and the changing way people view volunteers; increasing public sector and media scrutiny of emergency management; a trend to community empowerment; and increasing community acceptance of volunteers as an essential part of emergency services activity.

“Today we must recognise that the community is the most important strategic partner that we have, but a partnership requires an empowerment where the community is actually working with us. An informed and prepared community will reduce the efforts required in our response activity and improve our ability to recover after events,” he said.

He indicated that emergency service organisations cannot do the job on their own any more. He said the environment is changing but if the relevancy and value-adding is not there, how do emergency service organisations remain relevant?

Tax Commissioner launches new publications for non-profit sector



Mr Michael Carmody

The Commissioner of Taxation, Michael Carmody launched two new publications for the non-profit sector at the 2005 *Emergency Management Volunteers Summit*. These are:

- *Volunteers and tax* which explains the tax treatment of common payments made to volunteers. It provides guidance on the GST, fringe benefits tax and pay-as-you-go withholding obligations that may arise on transactions involving volunteers.
- *Non-profit organisations and fundraising* which explains the various concessions that exist under the income tax, GST and fringe benefits laws to assist non-profit organisations with their fundraising activities.

The guide also outlines the State, Territory and local government requirements in relation to fundraising.

These two publications are part of the range of advisory, educational and electronic products and services the Tax Office has prepared for non-profit organisations. Non-profit organisations can choose the information that best suits their needs by referring to the *Take a closer look* flyer for non-profit organisations.

Summary of recommendations from the Summit

AEMVF Strategy

- The AEMVF should continue to pursue the themes of recognition, training, legal protection and funding, with a particular focus on recognition.
- The AEMVF should continue to work through EMA on the initiatives contained in Recommendation 58 of the Council of Australian Government Review into Natural Disasters Reforming mitigation, relief and recovery arrangements report.
- The AEMVF should seek formal recognition as the appropriate national peak body for the volunteer emergency management sector.
- The AEMVF should become more visible, providing more information on what it is doing, on best practice, and research.
- The AEMVF should continue to advocate for appropriate representation for the sector in the new training advisory arrangements.

Recognition – Government

- Volunteer organisations should strengthen their links with their State and Territory governments, to ensure that their worth is well recognised and they receive appropriate support.

- Volunteer organisations should develop strong links with local government as a means of providing access to a wide range of support and to enhance their credibility.

Recognition – Community

- Volunteer organisations should engage the local media, providing regular information on matters of community interest, particularly during operations.
- Volunteers should become involved in local community safety programs, engaging service clubs, churches, and other community based groups, and conduct demonstrations and school visits.

Recruiting and Retention

- Volunteer organisations should develop innovative strategies to attract younger volunteers and to retain older volunteers.
- Organisations should consider restructuring and reorganising in order to compensate for the smaller pool of volunteers in some areas, and apply flexibility in respect of volunteers' availability for operations.
- Organisations should develop new strategies to minimise the amount of time volunteers are required to devote to non-operational tasks, including increasing the use of permanent staff.

Training

- Volunteer organisations should develop robust and flexible training regimes to ensure that high quality training is readily available to all their volunteers, particularly those in rural areas.

Legal protection

- Governments and organisations must ensure that their volunteers and the organisations themselves are well protected against litigation, and in the event of accident, illness or death.

Management of volunteer organisations

- Organisations should ensure that they pay more attention to providing good leadership and effective management for their volunteers, paying particular attention to recognition.
- Organisations should develop strategic partnerships with other volunteer organisations at the most senior levels and at lower levels, co-operate, work together, share resources, and conduct joint training and exercises.