

FOREWORD

by Tony Pearce, Director General, Emergency Management Australia



I recently returned from a visit to Canada and the US where I met with a number of Federal, State/Provincial and local government officials to explore a number of issues. Not the least of these was an analysis of where things are currently at in the US regarding the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and more

specifically how EMA's counterpart organisation the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is progressing since the recent introduction of the Amendment Bill designed to address some of the issues that have arisen since FEMA became a part of DHS.

I visited Toronto and Ottawa and met with numerous officials from the various agencies that comprise Public Safety Canada. These meetings were extremely beneficial and interesting. Apart from the fact that they have 10 Provinces and 3 Territories versus our 6 States and 2 Territories, the Canadian system is almost identical to ours. They were extremely interested in a number of Australian initiatives including our Critical Infrastructure Protection processes and the relationships with the private sector that have resulted through that. They were also very interested in the *Working Together to Manage Emergencies* program that contains the National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund and Local Government Support Fund.

I attended the Canadian Emergency Management College and discussed the Emergency Management Australia Institute (EMAI) facility with them. They were thoroughly impressed with the description that I gave them of EMAI and its programs, envious of the relationship that we have with the States and Territories relative to EM education and training, and of the institute's library and resource centre which is renowned for being the largest and best resourced facility of its kind dedicated to emergency management in the southern hemisphere.

After leaving Canada I went to New York City and had meetings with the CEO/Director of the New York State Emergency Management Office, New York State Department of Homeland Security Regional Office and the Mayors Office of Emergency Management. These meetings predominantly looked at local/state/federal emergency management relationships, discussions on community warning concepts, and public education considerations.

Following New York I went to Washington DC and had meetings with many different areas of the DHS. The highlight of this was meeting with my counterpart the Administrator of FEMA, Mr. F. David Paulison. We spent a considerable time talking about the DHS concept and its pros and cons as well as looking in depth at the US implementation process which is still clearly a bone of contention for many, and finally the recently introduced Amendment Bill that attempts to address some of the FEMA issues and the Hurricane Katrina Reform Bill.

I also met with Senator Landrieu (Senator for Louisiana) who sits on the President's National Security Committee and is also heading up the Hurricane Katrina Senate inquiry on behalf of that committee. The Senator was keen for me to explain the National Registration and Inquiry System, Australian building code requirements in cyclone prone areas and most interestingly wanted to discuss how it is that we get our communities to listen to the authorities prior to and during emergencies, and more importantly, why they trust us. This issue of a lack of trust was clearly one of the major issues that had arisen in the inquiry. I think that we sometimes underestimate, and clearly lack understanding of how valuable the trusting relationship is between the Australian community and government with regard to emergency management.

After leaving Washington DC I went to San Antonio in Texas. My visit here saw me participate in a multi-agency workshop on the impacts that the consequences of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans had had on Texas. This was one of the more thought provoking and revealing parts of my time away. More than 200,000 refugees from Louisiana were sent to Texas and nearly 100,000 of them are still there. The social structure/order impacts that this has had are staggering. There are clearly some major social policy issues that we could learn from the experiences of these guys and what I referred to as the 'secondary disaster of Hurricane Katrina', issues that to this time I am sure have never been considered adequately in this country. Food for thought maybe.

Tony Pearce

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Pearce', written in a cursive style.