



*Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management - Emergency Management Meeting held at Parliament House 26 March 2008. Bottom Row from left, the Hon. Jim Cox MHA (Tasmania), the Hon. Robert McClelland MP (Australian Government Attorney-General - Chair), Mr Simon Corbell MLA (Australian Capital Territory). Top Row from left, the Hon. Nathan Rees MP (New South Wales), the Hon. Rick Barker (New Zealand), Mr Barry Easther (Australian Local Government Association), the Hon. Bob Cameron MP (Victoria), the Hon. Carmel Zollo MP (South Australia), the Hon. Neil Roberts MLA (Queensland), the Hon. John Kobelke MLA (Western Australia). Not present the Hon. Paul Henderson MLA (Northern Territory)*

**The Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management – Emergency Management, which meets once or twice a year to deliberate on major issues confronting the emergency sector, showed a strong cooperative willingness at its most recent meeting. This communiqué, or summary of discussions, was issued at the conclusion of the Council meeting on 26 March 2008.**

# Communiqué

**A new spirit of cooperation has been evident during the first meeting of the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management since the election of the Rudd Government, which was held today in Canberra.**

Chaired by the Australian Attorney-General Robert McClelland, the Ministerial Council comprises State and Territory Ministers for Emergency Services, and the Australian Local Government Association.

The Council also welcomed New Zealand as a new member of the Council, represented by the NZ Minister for Civil Defence, the Hon. Rick Barker.

The Council endorsed the draft Australian Emergency Management Arrangements, which brings together for the first time the emergency management arrangements across all jurisdictions.

The arrangements will assist in creating more informed, safer and sustainable communities that are better able to withstand natural disasters.

The Council intends to undertake further work to identify and address gaps in existing arrangements to adopt an all hazards approach in dealing with potential catastrophic disasters.

The Council also tasked the Australian Emergency Management Committee to advise on a new public information campaign, which would better prepare local communities for emergencies and make them more resilient when it comes to responding to natural disasters.

A working group was established to report to COAG on the development and implementation of a nationally consistent emergency warning system in Australia. All Ministers agreed such a system has the potential to save lives and all expressed a willingness to work together to ensure better responses to emergencies.

The Council also agreed to work towards implementing the National Emergency Management Strategy for Remote Indigenous Communities (Keeping Our Mob Safe). This Strategy is critical to prepare vulnerable and isolated Indigenous communities from serious disaster. The Council noted the potential for training, education and employment opportunities for Indigenous people. The Council recommended implementing a national standard for the introduction of reduced fire risk cigarettes by early 2009.

The Council noted progress towards a single incident management system and enhancing urban search and rescue capacity including working closely with our New Zealand counterparts.

The Council acknowledged the invaluable contribution of volunteers and requested a report from the Australian Emergency Management Committee on appropriate methods to recognise, recruit and retain volunteers.

The Council also noted the success of the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program in contributing to safer, sustainable communities better able to withstand the effects of natural disasters including the recent Queensland and New South Wales floods and the Victorian bushfires of 2007.

The Council also gave its unanimous support for New Zealand becoming a member of the Council and praised the presentation by Minister Barker, on public education campaigns on community disaster preparedness. The Council sees real benefit in both countries exchanging ideas about best practice in emergency management and response.

*Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management – Emergency Management 26 March 2008*