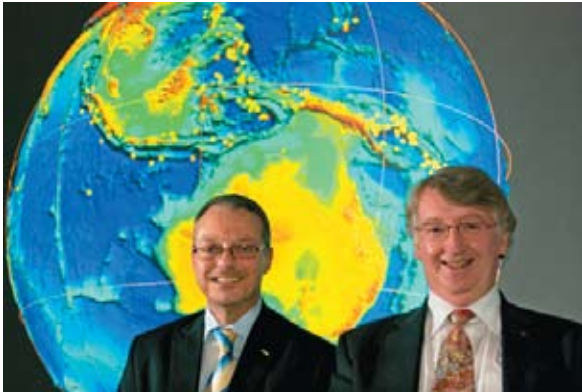


# AJEM FOREWORD

By Tony Pearce, Director General, Emergency Management Australia.

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Tony Pearce, Director General, Emergency Management Australia and Dr Neil Williams, Chief Executive Officer, Geoscience Australia.

The aim of emergency management in Australia is to reduce disaster risk and increase disaster resilience. To achieve this we need reliable and valid information on hazards, society, infrastructure and the environment. Using this information we can develop an evidence-base of the risks that we face and thus target our management of risk.

Risk assessment in the field of emergency management is not new. EMA (then the Natural Disasters Organisation) and other partners developed a process for hazard analysis in 1985 and used this process in professional education for some years. In 1995, we began development of emergency risk management guidelines based on the draft Australian Standard on risk management. This gave us concepts, processes and language that were shared by other government sectors and the private sector, which allowed closer collaboration in managing emergency and disaster risks.

Now, the Australian Standard has been enhanced and adopted by the international community as ISO31000. One of the keys to the process described in ISO31000 is effective risk assessment.

Working with expert organisations such as Geoscience Australia and the Bureau of Meteorology, Australians will be able to access high quality information to inform decision-making on how to manage risk.

Current issues in assessing risk across Australia include:

- how do we ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to risk assessment across the nation?
- how do we best work across government and with the private and not-for-profit sectors?
- how do we bring decision-makers and communities with us?
- how do we ensure the right people get the right information at the right time?

The articles in this special issue of AJEM address these questions through reports on some of the many current projects and trends in Australian risk assessment. The next issue in February 2009 will include articles on how risk assessment fits within current risk management projects and programs.

One of our main challenges for the future, a future of increasing uncertainty and change in the face of climate change, is to ensure an all-hazards and whole-of-government approach to reducing disaster risk and increasing disaster resilience. Risk assessment informs our consultation, decision-making and action in meeting this challenge.

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