

National Security Update

The following are extracts / summaries of news items and media releases that may be of interest to the emergency management sector.

10 -11 June 2009

AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEERS FORUM

The Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, welcomed members of the Australian Emergency Management Volunteers Forum (AEMVF) to Mount Macedon, Victoria.

The Attorney-General explained to the Forum how volunteering fits into the Government's broader emergency management agenda and suggested ways in which volunteers can be of assistance in this vital area of public policy.

"It is estimated that if Australia's 500,000 emergency management volunteers did not exist, Governments would have to find an extra \$18 billion on wages alone to provide a comparable service. Volunteers are also a vital bridge with the general community and are a key mechanism for enhancing individual resilience."

The AEMVF is the peak voluntary body for response and recovery volunteer organisations in Australia. The Forum meets on a quarterly basis, with one outcome of this meeting intended developing the strategic and policy direction of the AEMVF for 2010 – 2015.

For more information, please visit www.attorneygeneral.gov.au

15 June 2009

ATTORNEY-GENERAL ROBERT McCLELLAND MP AND MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES & FORESTRY TONY BURKE MP

FURTHER ASSISTANCE FOR QUEENSLAND FLOOD VICTIMS

Attorney General, Robert McClelland, and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, announced further assistance for small businesses and primary producers affected by the February floods in Queensland.

Recovery grants of up to \$15,000 will be provided to eligible small businesses and primary producers to assist in clean-up and restoration activities.

The move follows a recent request from the Queensland Government for further assistance.

The grants will be jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments.

In addition to the small business and primary producer grants, the Commonwealth is already providing significant assistance to affected communities, including:

- personal hardship and distress grants to low-income earners whose principal place of residence has been damaged;
- concessional loans to small businesses and primary producers;
- concessional loans for the restoration of essential facilities; and
- road and rail freight subsidies to assist primary producers for the carriage of livestock and fodder.

Inquiries in relation to the recovery grants should be made through the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority on 1800 623 946 or at their website www.qraa.qld.gov.au

For more information, please visit www.attorneygeneral.gov.au

19 June 2009

TSUNAMI EXERCISE TESTS AUSTRALIA'S WARNING SYSTEM

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland delivered the findings of 'Exercise Ausnami', a comprehensive test of the Australian Tsunami Warning System (ATWS).

The aim of the national exercise was to allow the Government to test the effectiveness of the Australian Tsunami Warning System's communications for delivering and managing tsunami warnings for Australia.

'Exercise Ausnami' was conducted on 15 and 16 June 2009 and simulated a magnitude 9.0 earthquake in the Pacific affecting the east coast of Australia and a magnitude 9.0 earthquake off Indonesia, affecting Western Australia, South Australia and relevant off-shore islands.

The test reaffirmed that in the event of a tsunami, the Australian Government is ready to protect the Australian community.

The test confirmed:

- the capability of the system to detect and verify tsunami threats from earthquakes;
- that warnings could be issued within thirty minutes of an undersea earthquake; and
- the timely provision of information to affected jurisdictions and relevant Government agencies.

'Exercise Ausnami' involved Geoscience Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Attorney-Generals Department and State and Territory emergency management agencies from Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.

For more information, please visit www.attorneygeneral.gov.au

16 July 2009

AUSTRALIAN TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, acknowledged the effectiveness of the Australian Tsunami Warning System (ATWS) following the undersea earthquake that took place last night off the coast of New Zealand.

"The nature of tsunamis means it is important to warn the community of a possible threat, and to use all possible time to prepare," Mr McClelland said.

"For this reason, Australia has robust arrangements for coordinating responses to tsunami warnings."

"Last month, I was pleased to visit the ATWS and deliver the results of 'Exercise Ausnami', a comprehensive test of the system." The events of last night confirm the ability of the system to detect a tsunami threat and provide quick warnings to relevant authorities, emergency agencies and the Australian public.

"I would like to thank the staff of the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia,

Emergency Management Australia and relevant agencies in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Norfolk Island for their excellent work and quick cooperation."

For more information, please visit www.attorneygeneral.gov.au

4 August 2009

RUDD GOVERNMENT INVESTS IN OUR EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, announced additional funding of over \$3.3 million for 179 projects as part of the National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund (NEVSF).

The NEVSF provides practical support for volunteers by building and improving our national preparedness to manage emergencies. The Fund has been particularly successful in building and training volunteers to be ready to respond to a range of possible emergencies.

Speaking at St John Ambulance Australia national headquarters, Mr McClelland said it is important to appreciate just how vital volunteers are to Australia's emergency management framework.

"Every year some 500,000 Australians volunteer their services, with 350,000 of them directly involved in emergency first response through State Emergency Services and rural fire services."

"It is estimated that these emergency volunteers save taxpayers more than \$12 billion on wages alone – an amount that would be impossible to provide in their absence."

Funding will be provided to a range of projects that will, for example:

- enhance the quality of training for volunteers;
- improve volunteer recruitment campaigns;
- construct and fit-out dedicated training facilities; and
- purchase key infrastructure and equipment.

Each project aims to boost the recruitment, retention and training of volunteer organisations at the frontline of emergency management.

Collectively, they represent a significant addition to the capability of volunteer agencies to prepare for, respond to and recover from, emergencies.

The Rudd Government is committed to ensure that this remarkable voluntary work continues, that training is provided, and that new recruits are encouraged to come forward.

Details of projects funded through the NEVSF can be found on the Emergency Management Australia website at www.ema.gov.au

7 August 2009

AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, released the Australian Emergency Management Arrangements (AEMA).

The Arrangements provide an overview of how Federal, State, Territory and Local Governments collectively approach the management of emergencies, including catastrophic disaster events.

"Australia has adopted a comprehensive and integrated approach to the management of emergencies and disasters," Mr McClelland said.

Under Australia's constitutional arrangements, State and Territory Governments have responsibility for emergency management within their jurisdictions.

Australia's Emergency Management Arrangements, however, are based on collaborative partnerships between all levels of Government as well as business, industry and the community.

These partnerships aim to minimise our vulnerability to disasters and emergencies by protecting lives and facilitating recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The Arrangements, endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management (MCPPEM), outline:

- the principles, structures and procedures that support the coordination of emergency management in Australia and its offshore territories; and
- the collaboration necessary to match the response and assistance required to the nature of the event.

"This will assist in creating more informed and safer communities that are better able to withstand natural disasters."

The Arrangements are reviewed and reissued regularly by the Australian Emergency Management Committee in consultation with relevant agencies and organisations.

The AEMA will be discussed next month as part of a workshop to examine Australia's arrangements for preparing and responding to catastrophic disasters.

A copy of the Arrangements can be found on the Emergency Management Australia website at <http://www.ema.gov.au/>.