

Case study: Exercise “Stuffed Goose” – involving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

In March 2007, representatives from the Migrant Resource Centre SA, Multicultural SA, Metropolitan Fire Service SA and the Department for Families and Communities SA attended a national workshop at the Australian Emergency Management Institute with the aim of developing a project to undertake a series of “consultation and engagement activities between CALD communities and the emergency management sector” within South Australia¹.

This project is one of the Jurisdictional Community Partnership projects being undertaken nationally as part of the Attorney-General’s Department’s *Inclusive*

Emergency Management with CALD Communities Program.

The opportunity to include members of a CALD community in an emergency management training exercise planned for November 2007 was identified and supported by the project team.

Exercise “Stuffed Goose”² was to be a significant, multi-agency exercise involving State Government departments and agencies, including the Country Fire Service (CFS), SA Police, State Emergency Service (SES), Metropolitan Fire Service SA, Local Government, and community volunteers. It was coordinated by Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) and involved a simulation of a major bushfire that threatened the township of Murray Bridge, surrounding farms, parks, and significant transport, electricity and water infrastructure.

The Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA) is an independent, non-government peak settlement agency responsible for the settlement



At the mock emergency recovery centre (Source: Murray Valley Standard, 2007).

and participation of migrants and refugee entrants across all of South Australia and operates from various metropolitan and rural locations. As Murraylands is one of the regional areas serviced by The Migrant Resource Centre of SA (MRCSA), and includes the township of Murray Bridge, it was suggested that the Murraylands Multicultural Network (MMN) be the appropriate body to advise on community involvement in the exercise.

Following a meeting with the MMN and a briefing held at the Murray Bridge TAFE, six women from the local Filipino community volunteered to participate in the exercise in the following areas:

- As observers at the Zone Emergency Centre
- As a volunteer 'disaster affected person' or a 'meeter and greeter' (a role usually undertaken by the Australian Red Cross) within the Recovery Centre.

Summary of feedback from CALD community participants

At the completion of the PIRSA exercise, the volunteers were given a one-page feedback form to complete.

Following is a summary of the comments from those feedback sheets.

- Increased knowledge of fire safety and managing emergencies.
- Learning about emergency service organisations and particularly the need for communication between the agencies.
- A feeling of confidence in attending a Zone Emergency Centre and Recovery Centre.
- Enjoyed participating in the Recovery Centre activity.
- Confidence in ability to take on a role of informing their local CALD community about recovery centres, and what will be available there. Also a willingness to assist in the 'meet and greet' element of a recovery centre.

Exercise debrief for CALD community participants

A debrief was held on 27 March 2008 and was attended by four of the CALD participants. They were invited to share their thoughts on the exercise with the group.

Key Points and Suggestions from the Exercise Stuffed Goose Debrief:

- Having access to interpreters for identified nationalities within communities is critical to the success of managing an emergency safely and inclusively.
- Women (who are housebound) and workers isolated from the community (such as 457 Visa holders) are most likely to have low or non-existent English skills and are therefore more at risk in an emergency situation.
- Emergency Service Organisations should be notified where there are significant CALD communities identified and a CALD Register created with up-to-date contact lists, agencies, useful networks,

support groups and individuals who can assist in an emergency situation.

- Picture cards (or Crisis Communication Cards) showing emergency pictures and actions accompanied by translation in various languages would be useful for emergency workers, and standard equipment on all Emergency Service vehicles.
- Local support groups could be formed from interested residents from a variety of ethnic backgrounds who could be trained to appropriately facilitate emergency management within their communities.
- The need to find a way to communicate with all members of non-English speaking communities, and educate them about emergency management.

Source: SA Inclusive Emergency Management with CALD Communities Report 2007

Recommendations:

The following recommendations were compiled as a result of this project to be forwarded to relevant State committees:

- The involvement of CALD communities is considered in the planning for all future exercises and that participation in a range of activities is promoted.
- To enhance the involvement/observation at a Zone Emergency Centre, develop a list of questions or issues that the participants can use to enhance their learning experience.
- Review emergency management arrangements and ensure that culturally sensitive approaches are in place.
- Investigate how the CALD community can take on a role in a Recovery Centre following an event.

Source: SA Inclusive Emergency Management with CALD Communities Report 2007

Reinforcing the benefit of CALD community involvement in exercises such as this one, one of the participants said she believed it was good for her community to know what to do, who to call, and where to go.

"Every person needs to know the first thing to do," she said. "If you know the first thing; you can find the second thing ..."

(Endnotes)

¹SA Inclusive Emergency Management with CALD Communities Report 2007.

²The 'Goose' is the mascot of retiring PIRSA staff member, Garry MacPhie, who coordinated the 31 Goose exercises.