

# IN PROFILE:

## Andrew James Lea ESM

### Emergency management reformer recognised: Andrew James Lea ESM



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**Enhancing emergency management services, developing all-hazard capabilities and generally reforming the Tasmanian State Emergency Service through times of rising expectations and hefty fiscal pressures, has been no mean feat for Andrew Lea, who this year was awarded the national Emergency Services Medal for his contributions to the sector.**

The citation for Andrew's award opens with: Mr Lea has provided outstanding leadership during enormous change in an environment of increased community expectations...introducing a range of reforms and initiatives to build the capabilities and capacity of the SES at national, state and regional levels in the areas of policy, planning, preparedness, education, training, community capacity building, capability development activities and service delivery.

Andrew took up the role of Director SES in 2001 after 21 years in the Australian Navy, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Since then he has been a strong advocate in promoting the SES and developing programs to support recruitment, retention, training, and recognition of both the SES volunteers and permanent staff.

"I'm quite proud of what we have achieved since I started as Director 11 years ago," says Andrew. "Volunteer numbers have grown considerably, retention has improved and we continue to impress the public and other authorities with our abilities, our commitment and our image and reputation." He says the formula for this has been quite simple in principle: "We must value and support our people as best we can."

Andrew has overseen the promotion of emergency risk management to the community through the management of a number of emergency risk mitigation funding programs that have attracted investments from Commonwealth, state and local governments. He's played a key role in the review and drafting of his state's Emergency Management Act 2006, which replaced and improved previous emergency management legislation. Of this challenging exercise Andrew says: "The rewriting of our emergency management legislation in 2006, with more flexible powers, broader application across the full emergency management spectrum and more streamlined governance arrangements, has been a significant highlight of my service."

For most of Andrew's time as SES Director, he has also represented Tasmania on the Australian Emergency Management Committee (now the National Emergency Management Committee). In addition he represents his state on a number of other national committees such as the NEMC Community Engagement Sub-Committee and the Australian Council of State Emergency Services, and he chairs the Australian Tsunami Advisory Committee and the National Flood Advisory Committee.

Supporting Tasmania's response to interstate disasters has been one of the highlights of Andrew's career to date. "The enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism of our volunteers with all their operations, particularly the recent deployments to Victoria (Melbourne storms, 2010) and Queensland (floods and TC Yasi, 2011) have been a gratifying experience."

Andrews believes that as Director of an organisation such as his, it's been important to keep in tune with what's happening at all levels, to keep in touch with volunteer issues and trends and to meet emerging needs. "Our organisation also has broader whole-of-government emergency management responsibilities, which require a different set of needs," he says.

"Meeting all requirements is not always easy in practice with budget and resource pressures and growing expectations, but I'm proud of how we have all pulled together to build the SES we have today. It's really been a team effort."

During his tenure as Director, the SES has responded to significant emergencies in Tasmania and interstate. These include the August 2007 floods in all regions of Tasmania and the April 2008 hurricane-force winds that caused considerable damage around the State, search and rescue operations, widespread storm and wind damage in January 2009, response to pandemic (H1N1) between April and August of 2009, as well as last year's massive storms and floods in Victoria and Queensland. More recently there has been the SES response and emergency management coordination following significant Tasmanian flooding in 2011.

Among the other highlights Andrew identifies are the improvements in the profile and identity of the Tasmanian SES with the provision of uniforms, long service awards and medals, better equipment and vehicle standards, and improved internal and external engagement. "We've been able to maintain high equipment standards, better training and volunteer support despite growing pressures," he adds.

"I am driven and motivated by the enthusiasm of our staff and volunteers. My regular visits to our volunteer units remind me just how lucky we are to have such committed and willing volunteers, wanting to give so much back to their communities.

"While I've been honoured with the ESM, the recognition should really go to my colleagues in the Tasmanian SES for their great team effort," he said.