

Foreword

By John Hamilton, Director
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Earlier this year the Prime Minister of Australia offered New Zealand full membership of what was then the National Emergency Management Committee alongside membership of a number of other important Australian co-ordination committees. Not surprisingly the Prime Minister of New Zealand accepted the generous offer and as Director Civil Defence & Emergency Management in New Zealand, I am the Kiwi representative on the re-named Australia New Zealand Emergency Management Committee.

The change consolidates the outstanding trans-Tasman relationship we have enjoyed in emergency management over many years, and which was epitomised for New Zealand and the people of Christchurch in the aftermath of the 22 February 2011 earthquake. Australian support, in so many forms, was rapidly deployed to the city without hesitation and with complete understanding of the operating conditions. We were able to do this because of the relationship and the way in which our two nations have shared experiences and developments in the field of emergency management. The arrangement is the envy of many others, if not the basis of a model for international co-operation in a crisis.

I appreciate the differences between the two nations and I know that not everything that either of us develop or implement has direct applicability

on the other side of the Tasman. But there are many similarities and challenges and the new arrangements give us an even better opportunity to enhance emergency management in both nations by sharing concepts and procedures. We have already shared many ideas including those around the concept of resilience and we have discussed public alerting and warnings. We share with the States and Territories our experiences with public awareness program and programs for schools. We have a common interest in understanding volunteers and how to encourage them and manage them well, saying nothing of coming to grips with social media in the response. We co-operate in recovery doctrine and I expect we will soon have conversations on the lessons we are drawing from the response to the earthquakes in Canterbury just as we in New Zealand have reviewed the lessons from the Queensland floods, and before that the bushfires in Victoria, and drawn important pointers. To continue the theme this edition of the Journal includes two articles contributing to the discussion on lessons from Christchurch drawing on the public information function and the role played by the health sector in the response.

No one wishes an emergency or crisis on any community. But we understand they will come from time to time and probably with little warning and perhaps of a scale that is not anticipated. While we do our best to balance our investment and efforts across risk reduction, readiness and the ability to respond and recover from an emergency, inevitably there will be times when the unstinting help of friends is welcome and essential to bolster local capacities. The Australia New Zealand Emergency Management Committee serves as a foundation for the understandings and procedures that underpin effective emergency management and co-operation. I am extremely grateful that New Zealand has access to the pool of experience in Australia and I will do my best to reciprocate wherever possible.

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