

Foreword

The Hon Michael Keenan MP, Minister for Justice



Welcome to this specially themed edition of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*. The devastating NSW bushfires occurred a month after my appointment as the Australian Government Minister with responsibility for emergency management, and I saw first-hand the incredible, selfless and professional efforts of our nation's emergency management sector.

It has been a busy period ever since, and I have been fortunate to participate in some key initiatives, including:

- launching the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre
- launching the new Emergency + smartphone app
- announcing and presenting the national winners of the Resilient Australia Awards (featured in this AJEM edition)
- participating in Wear Orange Wednesday to acknowledge the work of the State Emergency Services across Australia
- co-launching with Australian Red Cross the new 'Register.Find.Reunite' service, and
- representing the Australian Government at the recent meeting of ministers responsible for policing and emergency management across the nation, held in Alice Springs.

I would like to acknowledge AJEM for its 28-year contribution to emergency management collaboration. The Journal focuses on both the academic and

practitioner reader and its aim is to strengthen capabilities in the sector by documenting, growing, and disseminating an emergency management body of knowledge.

This special edition of the Journal focuses on youth and children, who are a critical aspect of emergency management and planning. Children, with their proactive approach to problems and strong awareness of their own environment, can often be vital in leading and encouraging family members to prepare for natural disasters. For this reason we are fortunate to have the National Children's Commissioner, Megan Mitchell, provide the special foreword for this edition.

The Australian Government actively works with the states and territories to highlight the needs of youth and children in disaster situations. For example, a unique forum has been established through the work of the Attorney-General's Department, by way of the Disaster Resilient Australia School Education Network. This network brings together education departments and authorities, community engagement and school program officers from state and territory emergency service agencies, academics, non-government agencies and co-opted specialists to collaborate on disaster resilience education programs aimed at school age children.

Another innovation to reflect on is the new Emergency + smartphone app. It is no surprise that more than 65 per cent of calls to Triple Zero are made from mobile phones. Unfortunately however, this increase in mobile phone use can make it difficult for Triple Zero operators to accurately and quickly dispatch emergency services. This app addresses this issue by offering callers the ability to verbally provide emergency operators with their location information through their smartphone's GPS functionality. It also provides users with key emergency and non-emergency contact numbers, and explains who to call in certain situations.

I hope that you enjoy this special youth, children and education edition of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, and wish you and your colleagues a safe summer.

**The Hon Michael Keenan MP
Minister for Justice**