

# Graduate education in the planning and management of natural hazards

It will come as no surprise to readers of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* that people have always lived in the presence of natural hazards. Yet it is widely accepted that contemporary factors like increased urbanisation and climate change are exacerbating global vulnerability to natural hazards. In Australia, the extent of the threat of natural hazards was borne out by the unusually high losses of 2009-2011 as a result of the Black Saturday bushfires, the Queensland floods and *Cyclone Yasi*.

The response of policy makers to natural hazards has been increasing alongside the rising toll of natural disasters. The United Nations has actively promoted global strategy around natural hazards planning since the mid-1990s, most actively through the Hyogo Framework of 2005. A variety of national strategic responses have since appeared, and a significant contribution in Australia has been the recent *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*.

Dr Melissa Parsons, lecturer in Geography and Planning at the University of New England in Armidale, NSW, states that 'the resilience approach adopted in Australia's disaster strategy is pioneering. It extends Australia's excellence in emergency management further into the inter-crisis periods where disaster resilience is built strategically using ideas of shared responsibility, co-ordination, adaptation and risk awareness'. The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* will steer policy work around natural hazards in various tiers of government in Australia for years to come.

To lend support to the expanding policy arena around natural hazards in Australia, the University of New England (UNE) has launched a series of graduate courses in the Planning and Management of Natural Hazards. The courses range from the relatively concise Graduate Certificate, to the more substantial options of the Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree. The courses offer analysis of historical and contemporary examples of natural hazards and disasters, relevant policy in global, national, state and local contexts, and practical considerations for translating knowledge around natural hazards into effective public policy. In the Diploma and Masters courses, this core work can be linked to additional studies in governance, environmental policy, and geography.

According to Associate Professor Neil Argent, co-ordinator of the new graduate courses, 'UNE has received expressions of support for the courses from professional bodies and experts in areas ranging from urban and regional planning, environmental policy, and emergency management. This indicates not only the diversity of fields with a direct interest in natural hazards, but also the expanding career advantages for professionals with training in the planning and management of natural hazards.'

The new courses are delivered online with many constituent units of study also offered on-campus, and study can be undertaken either on a part-time or full-time basis. UNE has been a leading innovator of flexible study for over 60 years and is committed to giving busy adults the chance to study effectively from home. With UNE, the ability of graduates to upskill into the important field of planning and management of natural hazards is now more achievable than ever.



Associate Professor Neil Argent (Right) and James McGregor (Left), course coordinators. Dr Melissa Parsons (Centre) lectures within the program. All are researchers within the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, developing an Australian natural disaster resilience index.

Information on the new graduate courses in Planning and Management of Natural Hazards can be found at [www.une.edu.au/naturalhazards](http://www.une.edu.au/naturalhazards). Interested persons can contact James McGregor at [jmcgreg5@une.edu.au](mailto:jmcgreg5@une.edu.au).