Foreword

By Chris Moraitis PSM, Secretary, Attorney-General's Department

As incoming Chair of the Australia–New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC), I acknowledge my predecessor, Roger Wilkins AO, for the legacy of successful work to build Australia's disaster resilience. As many would be aware, ANZEMC is a truly national strategic forum that drives the national policy agenda and supports relevant Ministers under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). It includes representatives from First Ministers and Emergency Management policy agencies from each jurisdiction including the Commonwealth.

Its most significant initiative was undoubtedly the development of *the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, which was agreed by COAG in 2011. The strategy is well recognised both domestically and internationally, and represents a fundamental shift in our approach to emergency management.

Over the last four years, ANZEMC has championed the strategy and driven a significant program of work in community engagement, recovery, risk assessment and mitigation, and capability development.

The wide ranging programme of work undertaken by the ANZEMC sub-committees provides valuable insights to inform policy considerations and planning. For example, the Risk Assessment, Measurement

and Mitigation Sub-Committee has developed a nationally agreed risk assessment methodology and is currently evaluating the total economic cost of natural disasters and developing a model to evaluate mitigation projects. The Capability Development Sub-Committee is developing a decision support tool for the ongoing identification of national capability priorities for ANZEMC, and exploring better engagement with the private sector, including overseeing a project to develop coastal shipping emergency response capability. Improvements to the surge capacity of the Triple Zero emergency call service, Emergency Alert warning service, and National Fire Danger Ratings System have also helped to better support and target at-risk communities in times of emergency. The Community Engagement Sub-Committee has developed key messages and a community engagement framework to strengthen community understanding and engagement in building disaster resilience. It has worked to strengthen the attraction and retention of emergency management volunteers and is also examining how community resilience in remote indigenous communities can be enhanced. And finally, the fourth sub-committee, the Recovery Sub-Committee, has undertaken a review of the effectiveness of Commonwealth, state and territory disaster relief and recovery payments and is developing a national impact assessment model to better target recovery assistance. It is also undertaking a community recovery workforce development project.

This work is supported by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC), which is delivering an extensive research program, linked-in with jurisdictions and academic institutions.

In 2015, the ANZEMC will focus on reviewing the National Strategy in order to better understand the progress made, and the areas on which we need to focus in the future. The Strategy will continue to provide direction for the emergency management sector on how we can build resilience at the local, state and national level.

In addition to the work being undertaken with our partners, the Attorney-General's Department is also engaged in the Productivity Commission inquiry into natural disaster funding arrangements.

The Productivity Commission's draft report, released in September 2014, outlined that effective planning and mitigation of risks is an essential task for governments, businesses and households. The report noted that governments generally overinvest in post-disaster reconstruction, and underinvest in mitigation that would limit the impact of natural disasters.

The Government is currently considering the Productivity Commission's final report, which was delivered in December 2014. It will be made public when it is tabled in Parliament, within 25 sitting days.

Looking towards the year ahead, the *Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction*, to be held in Sendai Japan between 14-18 March 2015, will be a valuable opportunity to engage internationally on continuous improvements in disaster reduction.

In this issue of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, I am pleased to note that a number of articles are strongly aligned with our National Strategy.

With a focus on the current theme of the International Day for Disaster Reduction on older people, this edition also examines how vulnerable and aged people in our communities can be better informed and prepared for disasters.

Also included are articles related to social media and the role it can play in emergency management and an assessment of community disaster resilience for small, high-risk communities on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* and wish you and your colleagues a safe summer.

Chris Moraitis PSM

Secretary, Attorney-General's Department
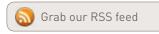
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Episode 7 – looks at Ebola and the use and misuse of drones in firefighting. Dr Gary Lum, specialist medical advisor from the Department of Health gives some insights about the Ebola virus. Richard Alder, General Manager – National Ariel Fire Fighting Centre in Victoria and Superintendent Anthony Ferguson from the New South Wales Rural Fire Service talk about the potential for the use and misuse of drones in the firefighting process.