

# Foreword

The Hon Michael Keenan MP, Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism



It is my pleasure to introduce the October edition of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (AJEM).

The AJEM is an important publication, which brings together the expertise of practitioners and experts from across the emergency management community to build collective knowledge and strengthen capability within the sector. By reflecting diverse perspectives and disciplines, the AJEM encourages us all to think differently about how we prepare for and respond to disasters. Such approaches are vital as increasing our resilience to natural disasters requires governments, businesses, individuals, non-government organisations and volunteers to pool our skills, knowledge, experience and imagination to anticipate, prevent and respond to disasters.

2015 has been a significant year for new approaches to emergency management.

Since the release of the Productivity Commission's report into natural disaster funding arrangements in May this year, I have been working with my state and territory counterparts to find new ways to better protect communities from disasters. The Commission's central finding was that governments focus too much on recovery, at the expense of directing resources towards better preparing for future disasters. It is vital that we recalibrate these settings to get the balance between mitigation and recovery funding right and ensure that resources are directed towards addressing the greatest risks to communities. I have welcomed the constructive discussions that have already taken place around these issues, and I look forward to further engagement between Commonwealth, state and territory officials as we look to settle new arrangements over the coming months.

Meanwhile, the Australian Government is continuing to invest in programs that encourage innovative approaches to help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and emergencies. In August this year, I announced \$3.7 million funding for 22 nationally significant projects through the annual National Emergency Management Projects program to help communities better prepare and respond to natural disasters. We're also continuing to partner with states to fund projects through the Bushfire Mitigation Program to help local communities better prepare for bushfires. The Australian Government has also allocated \$48 million to the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre to undertake research across the spectrum of natural hazards.

Developing leadership capability and professional competency is also at the core of building disaster resilience in Australia. On 12 August, I announced a new Australian Emergency Management Institute partnership model to deliver emergency management professional development. A consortium comprising the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council, the Australian Red Cross and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre will deliver contemporary professional development products and services for the emergency management sector from late 2015. This will include the delivery of professional development courses and workshops, school education programs, knowledge management services and volunteer support. This public-private sector partnership will give the emergency management sector access to innovative capability development. I look forward to the emergence of this collaborative model with great enthusiasm.

As we again enter the disasters season, my thoughts are of course with the professionals and volunteers who are charged with protecting Australian lives and property. As the Australian Government Minister responsible for emergency management, it has been a privilege to see first-hand the commitment and expertise of our emergency management sector, and I know our communities are in safe hands as we face the challenges ahead.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the AJEM, and I wish you and your colleagues a safe summer.

**The Hon Michael Keenan | Minister for Justice  
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on  
Counter-Terrorism**