

FOREWORD

Comprehensive emergency management embracing prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) has long been recognised and accepted as the framework for emergency management in Australia. While PPRR implies a sense of balance between the four elements critical for effective emergency management, the 'response element' has traditionally been the most dominant and resource-intensive.

The 1994 Senate Standing Committee Report on Disaster Management commented that emergency management in Australia had been too response oriented and identified the need to re-focus on the other critical areas of emergency management – preparedness planning, prevention/mitigation, training, and recovery. This prompted Emergency Management Australia (EMA) to make a public commitment in our 1996/1997 Corporate Plan to the development, in partnership with States and Territories, of a National Disaster-Mitigation Strategy.

There has been growing recognition both in Australia and overseas that loss of life and property due to natural and technological disasters can be substantially reduced through the implementation of a range of measures before the event. These measures can be classed as disaster-mitigation. There are many organisations that play a role in reducing the impact of disasters on the community. Traditionally, this has been considered the responsibility of the emergency services. However, there are many other organisations and individuals who contribute to mitigating the effects of disasters on the community. These include:

- town planners who determine appropriate land-use development;

- organisations such as the tourist industry and the media which increase people's awareness of disasters;
- businesses with excellent occupational health and safety records and continuity plans;
- industries which reduce risks from hazardous substances;
- governments and business which provide funding for mitigation measures;
- researchers who increase understanding of hazards; and
- actions taken by individuals and the community to reduce their own risks.

The Disaster-mitigation Workshop presented an opportunity for us to bring together representatives of the emergency management community and disaster-mitigation stakeholders to consider how to progress disaster-mitigation in Australia. The workshop made significant progress with the task and one of the key outcomes was the development of a paper, *'Proposal for a National Disaster-Mitigation Strategy'* which was endorsed by the National Emergency Management Committee in October 1997.

The development of a National Disaster-Mitigation Strategy is an extremely significant development in the history of emergency management in Australia. The success of the strategy relies on the commitment and support of key stakeholders in the Australian community and in all spheres of government. EMA will continue to work in partnership with all interested parties to progress the outcomes of the workshop.

I appreciate the contribution made by all those who attended this Workshop and their parent organisations for allowing them to attend. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the members of the Steering Committee which made the activity such a success. I would also like to thank the many speakers who shared their insights and experiences from the field of disaster-mitigation and set the scene for a number of vigorous syndicate discussions.

Finally, I am grateful to the EMA staff who worked diligently throughout the life of this activity.



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