

Foreword



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Gender and Disaster
Australia



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The capacity of Australia's emergency services organisations could be doubled if traditional and persistent barriers to women and LGBTIQ+ people are removed. Capacity can be further increased if masculinity is recast away from heroism and machismo. Emergency response to events like major bushfires and floods demands 'all hands on deck' and now is the time for the sector to act.

We know emergency services organisations have harmed women and LGBTIQ+ people, and men who don't ascribe to a dominant way of being. Men are part of 'gender' and Bob Pease (referring to Ainsworth et al. 2014) notes that when women demonstrate proficiency in a 'man's job' they may 'experience significant push-back from men. Similarly, in studies in New Zealand and Australia, LGBTIQ+ people were found to be marginalised and excluded through hypermasculinity.

This edition of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* takes a gender focus and considers intersectional dimensions that can add weight to gender oppression. I draw your attention to groundbreaking commentaries from Carlie Atkinson and Ruth Rosenhek that beautifully capture 'the challenges faced by First Nations peoples in Australia during disasters (and) emphasises recognising historical trauma, promoting indigenous leadership and integrating this knowledge into emergency and disaster management'. It includes recommendations for the sector and 'stresses valuing First Nations people's resilience, strengths and cultural heritage ... for more just and resilient communities'.

Tegan Larin offers a comprehensive and succinct overview of the implications of disasters for women, men and gender and sexual minorities. She notes the contribution of Queer Theory and tensions arising from a 'focus on the individual risks overshadowing the structural dimensions of gender and sexuality'. For example, the binary of female and male, LGBTIQ+, SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics). There are tensions regarding the 'right' terms to

use, but there is no agreement on what these are. A temptation to say 'people' means analysis of gender discrimination is not possible. Terminology is contested and ever-changing (as it should be) but whatever terms we use, the focus must be first and foremost to acknowledge and address gender discrimination in emergency management.

Pressures are high when disasters hit and recriminations can haunt people. Two articles point out that 'vulnerability' as a concept is fraught. Their insights are compelling: one from a First Nations perspective, the other urges a shift away from encouraging men to express 'vulnerability' to 'authenticity' to allow constructive responses.

Internationally, how do we achieve gender justice in emergency management? The consensus from gender and disaster experts in 6 countries is that, 'Culture has to change and it has to change fast – because our climate is changing and equal representation matters'. The emergency management sector is strengthened when contributions are valued from a range of people. It is not money that's needed, but a change of mind and zero tolerance for violence and discrimination.

The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience acknowledges the effects of disasters on people and communities. Collaboration with the organisation has amplified our gender and disaster message to the sector, and, in turn, has increased understanding of the escalating challenges for emergency services organisations. It is a challenge facing the entire country.

The *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* is a leader in bridging the worlds of academia and emergency management practice. This edition will help take on the challenge. I commend this journal's long-standing commitment to communicating across theory and practice and its attention to the lived experience of disasters and emergency management.