

Foreword



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Anniversaries invite reflection about where we began and how far we have progressed. The research and analysis contained in the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (AJEM) since its inception in 1995 (and earlier as *The Macedon Digest*), reflect significant advances in emergency and disaster scholarship.

AJEM has increased our attention on gender, diversity and inclusion. This trajectory has early roots. In Volume 8 of *The Macedon Digest*, contributions by 3 women¹ raised important questions about the specific needs of women in emergencies. While these early papers were shaped by the prevailing binary and heteronormative understandings of gender, they represent an important foundation and remain relevant to current debates on equity, safety and disasters.

The AJEM body of work has evolved into a broader and sustained engagement with gender, diversity and intersectionality across multiple editions, including volumes 8, 21, 22, 28, 37 and 39. Recent editions deepen this focus. Volume 37, Issue 1 (2022) included the Gender Justice in Disaster conference proceedings, explored gendered dimensions of long-term resilience, violence against women post-disaster, masculinity and power structures and broader questions of gender inequality in disaster contexts. Volume 39, Issue 3 (2024) further expanded this scope, with contributions examining gender and sexual diversity, caregiving responsibilities, menstrual health, women in firefighting, leadership stereotypes and gender justice.

Research has matured from early gender-aware inquiry framed within binary assumptions, towards a more intersectional and systems-oriented understanding of gender, power and lived experience in disaster contexts.

This current edition brings together research examining how leadership, collaboration, governance and community practice are evolving in response to increasingly complex disaster risks, focusing on the systems, relationships and human factors shaping effective emergency management.

Owi et al. (p.55) examine systemic institutional approaches to flood risk mitigation, while O'Hara (p.35) considers how interest-based conflict shapes collaboration in disaster recovery. Massie et al. (p.48) also examine post-disaster governance in strengthening local health system resilience.

Drummond et al. (p.25) investigate moral distress and moral injury among emergency service personnel, highlighting how leadership behaviours and organisational dynamics shape these experiences and underscoring the importance of trust, values alignment and supportive leadership.

Drawing on the perspectives of experienced leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand, Conley and Perry (p.70) examine how emergency management leadership is evolving, including the need to extend leadership beyond the response phase and strengthen reflection, capability and organisational learning.

Taken together, the contributions in this edition highlight the complexity of contemporary disaster environments and the evolving approaches required to support more adaptive, inclusive and resilient systems.

I encourage readers to reflect on the gendered implications embedded within each contribution and their intersections with leadership, governance and practice in disaster contexts.

1. AJEM, Fuller, 1994; Honeycombe, 1994; Williams, 1994