

# Foreword

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**As part of the 2014-15 Federal Budget, the Australian Government announced the establishment of a virtual Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI) within the Attorney-General's Department to be run out of Canberra. This decision saw the relocation from Mount Macedon in Victoria to Canberra in the ACT, a process completed in June 2015. This issue of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management (AJEM)* is significant in the new direction AEMI is taking and in discussing how we manage and prepare for catastrophic disasters in the future.**

AEMI at the Mount Macedon site was established in 1956 and has built a national and international reputation as a centre of excellence for knowledge and skills development in emergency management. The Mount Macedon based Institute provided a range of education, training, professional development, information, research and community awareness products and services.

In relocating to Canberra, AEMI required significant reworking of the existing operating framework. A review explored the most effective model to continue delivery of the AEMI core objective to build national capability in emergency management and disaster resilience through education, collaboration and innovation. Underpinning the review was the fact

that the Australian Government remains committed to developing and delivering national capability in emergency management, but in a more effective and efficient way that better meets the needs of the sector.

The review included an extensive stakeholder engagement and market analysis process to evaluate the best way to continue to provide Australia with a range of emergency management products and services, ensuring their continued improvement and suitability to build Australia's national capability and resilience to disasters. As part of the analysis, the Department explored the opportunity to deliver AEMI's products and services in partnership with the emergency management and education and training sectors. The Department undertook two tender processes seeking to enter into collaborative interface arrangements for the provision of emergency management education, training and professional development products and services.

This process is going through the final stages before a decision is made on who will work with the Department in delivering top quality emergency management capability to the nation.

The arrangements will potentially include the delivery of educational services, doctrine development through comprehensive stakeholder negotiation, networking and building national capability, school education programmes, knowledge management, volunteer support and accredited education and training.

The Department is confident that the establishment of these collaborative interfaces will prove to be a useful mechanism that will greatly increase the reach and accessibility of the Institute's products and services.

For existing students who have indicated their intention to complete their studies, AEMI continues to maintain seamless support and course delivery through the Department.

New students will access a variety of vocational and post-graduate emergency management qualifications through the new model.

Support for emergency management volunteers to develop their skills through education remains a high priority. AEMI will continue its current commitment to

volunteers and will consult with peak volunteer bodies, including the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum, the Australian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and the Australian Council of Social Service, to develop accessible and targeted training, education and professional development.

The Department continues to welcome feedback about the delivery of services to the community through the AEMltransition@ag.gov.au email address.

I am confident that the successful tenderers will work very closely with AEMI, and we look forward to a strong partnership with far reaching benefits across the emergency management sector.

In this issue of AJEM I have contributed a paper titled 'How a change in thinking might change the inevitability of disaster'. The paper explores the inevitability and predictability of catastrophic disaster and how it is not possible to avoid natural disaster events. The purpose of the paper is to explore how changing our perspective when looking at complex problems in uncertain environments influences our understanding, situational awareness and outcomes.

The paper discusses the necessity for us to not only get better at being prepared for, responding to, and recovering from natural disasters (which we are doing) but also to accept the inevitability of a catastrophic disaster that would stretch us beyond our own limits. I argue that we should approach the problem of catastrophic natural disaster differently by changing

the way we think about them to better manage these events.

This AJEM issue also provides insight into the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-2030, which was adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference of Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan in March 2015.

The Sendai Framework, which replaced the Hyogo Framework 2005-2015, marks a paradigm shift in the international context and provides innovative initiatives, including for example a shift from disaster management to disaster risk management and a strong call for strengthening the use of science and technology in policy-making.

'Understanding disaster risk' is one of the Framework's four priorities for action. The Australian Government supports this priority through AJEM as a platform to share knowledge, experience and imagination. AJEM has had and will continue to further such understanding to strengthen national and all-hazard disaster resilience.

This AJEM also looks at leadership in disasters, communication and community engagement and situational case studies. I hope you find the content informative and useful in building your own capability.

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**Australian Government**

**Attorney-General's Department**

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Community awareness publications can be downloaded for free from the **Emergency Management Australia** website from early August

**[www.ag.gov.au/EmergencyManagement](http://www.ag.gov.au/EmergencyManagement)**

