

Foreword

By Hon Nikki Kaye, Minister of Civil Defence, New Zealand.



This issue of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* is published as New Zealand hosts the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council conference, *After disaster strikes, learning from adversity*. Our countries have much to learn from each other. The conference is an opportunity to come together and share the combined wisdom of experience, research and analysis from across the sector, to enable a deeper understanding of the approaches needed to secure the region's future and prosperity.

Natural hazards and even man-made emergencies know no boundaries and in our region there are a myriad of recent examples we can learn from, including the bushfires that struck many Australian states, cyclones and flooding that periodically strike the region, and in New Zealand's case, earthquakes and tsunami risks.

Few, if any, countries in the world can respond on their own to a national disaster. As neighbours, New Zealand and Australia have a long history of working together successfully. We both value the alacrity and ease in which our Ministers and agencies are able to share information in times of adversity and agree to support each other's operations.

Strong relationships are critical at all levels of emergency management and not just in the response. In a community prepared for emergencies, relationships should promote co-operation and self-reliance. At the incident level in a response, relationships will be personal and team-focused. In a multi-agency setting, it will be about attaining a shared objective through drawing on the expertise and capabilities of all those involved. The key to successful emergency management is having strong working relationships, trust, and clearly specified processes and arrangements that cover the most likely scenarios, that can be adapted to cope with those contingencies that are at the fringes of our experiences and imagination.

Building strong, well-prepared and resilient communities is at the heart of civil defence emergency management in New Zealand. As the Minister of Civil Defence, I am conscious that the bulk of the work required to generate community resilience, let alone respond to an emergency, relies heavily on community volunteers. I have nothing but admiration for those men and women who commit so much of their time to helping their communities get ready, and praise for those that courageously and selflessly undertake response roles frequently in dangerous conditions.

To our international friends attending the AFAC conference in Wellington, I take this opportunity to wish you a warm welcome to New Zealand. To all those attending I hope the conference expands your understanding of emergency management and fosters international engagement and strong connections which help make our countries and region safer.

Hon Nikki Kaye

Minister of Civil Defence, New Zealand