

Foreword

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Welcome to the April issue of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*. As with most Australian summers, the last few months have provided confirmation of the importance of effective warnings, understanding risk and being resilient. We experienced the usual range of emergencies although some, such as the prolonged heat, were worse than expected, and the deadly event in the form of thunderstorm asthma was unexpected.



The issue of water safety, not necessarily on the radar of those used to thinking of major events, was highlighted by the unfortunate number of fatalities with nearly 300 dying nationally last year. Near unprecedented wildfires in the U.S. and Chile are reminders, among many, that the hazards we face are also experienced elsewhere.

Exchanging and learning from experience and ideas, whether from events in Australia, our near neighbours or other parts of the world can occur in many ways. One important way is through the research pages of this journal. AJEM is and should be concerned with Australian and New Zealand research about local issues and also with research from elsewhere that has relevance for Australian and New Zealand emergency management. The journal's Editorial Advisory Board exists to help ensure this is the case. Most issues of the journal, as with this issue, contain Australian research and work from overseas of potential relevance to Australian and New Zealand practitioners. Issues of community participation, warnings, crowdsourcing and resilience are mainstream issues for emergency managers.

It is often asked what role research has and how it adds to the experiences of those tasked with managing emergencies. Accounts of experience are usually personal and necessarily written within the constraints of the multi-dimensional politics of the organisation, sector and political masters. These accounts can offer deep insights likely unobtainable any other way. They can also be overly positive or lie somewhere in-between. The emergency management sector needs these insights and they are an essential part of learning and improvement.

Research complements these accounts and insights by providing arms-length or independent evidence and advice in the sense of a broker rather than auditor. It can also perform an auditing function, as when evaluating policy or practice. Another important contribution is to be forward-looking, for example by helping to identify the attributes of a culture of resilience that would apply to a future society rather than one based on what the society might have been, or by examining emerging technologies for potential roles in warnings and information provision. A positive characteristic of much emergency management research, illustrated by this journal, is the close involvement of practitioners. This can take the form of funding for work on issues identified by the sector or close collaboration at every stage of the research.

For research to be of value we need to have confidence in its integrity and quality—something that assumes heightened importance in an era of fake news and alternative facts. Quality control is generally achieved through transparent peer review by the global scientific community and, increasingly, through the use of online discussion forums. I would like to thank those who help this journal and the sector by performing this role.

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