

Lessons Management Forum

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In August 2018, practitioners from Australia and New Zealand gathered in Melbourne for the third annual Lessons Management Forum, hosted by AFAC and the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. Building on the success of recent years, the program focused on effective coordination and evaluation of lessons management as areas for growth; from the grassroots level through to high-level policy.

The challenges and opportunities around system-wide approaches emerged early on as a key theme. Emergency Management Australia's Director-General Rob Cameron set the tone with a presentation on coordinating genuinely 'national' lessons management. Lead emergency management agencies from around Australia followed suit. Among these were Emergency Management Victoria that presented its first state-level, multi-agency approach and a joint session delivered by Queensland's Inspector-General for Emergency Management together with the Fire and Emergency Service and Police Service. South Australia's State Emergency Service highlighted the importance of systems approaches for cascading disaster events, with a presentation on the infamous state-wide power outage of 2016.

While effective leadership was emphasised, the community perspective remained central. The forum heard from Sarah U'Brien of Dungog Shire and Kris Newton of the Mountains Community Resource Network. Through an armchair session facilitated by Louise Mitchell of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, participants asked questions to deepen their appreciation for the experience of disaster and recovery in those communities.

The local perspective was also celebrated in the presentation of the inaugural AFAC Lessons Management Award to Logan City Council. The award celebrated the development and delivery of a formal lessons management program in tandem with the council's existing disaster management function, spearheaded by Carla Bailey, Laura Cooper and Margaretta Burton. The Lessons Management Award was made possible by the generous support of ISW, a recognised leader in lessons management software solutions.

Over the two days, many presenters also wrestled with the issue of evaluating lessons management effectively; in the words of Knoco's Nick Milton, who Skyped in from the United Kingdom, 'how do you know if your organisation is a good learner?' Milton looked at various methodologies for measuring quality, efficiency and effectiveness. Others explored the strengths of real-

time evaluation, after action reviews and incident welfare checks.

The program also highlighted insights from beyond the 'traditional' emergency management sphere, including from the Department of Defence, local government, and the health, agricultural and maritime sectors. These sessions offered participants the chance to view lessons from a different lens, such as the biosecurity perspective shared by Jason Males of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

As well as broader networks and different ideas, participants were equipped with practical tools to support teamwork in their organisations. The Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre launched the Emergency Management Breakdown Aide Mémoire and Team Process Checklist; the lead researcher, Associate Professor Chris Bearman of CQUniversity, taking participants through the guidance these tools contain for teams before, during and after emergencies. The New South Wales Office of Emergency Management launched its Lessons Management eLearning Course, which is aimed at people at all levels who are participating in, or will be required to participate in, lessons management activities.

Reflecting on areas for future growth, conversations revolved around capability development, change management, skills implementation, facilitation and approaches for measuring culture to enable improvement.

Learn more:

Proceedings from the AIDR and AFAC 2018 Lessons Management Forum are available on the AFAC website: www.afac.com.au/initiative/research.

A Lessons Management Collection is available on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub, featuring the Lessons Management Handbook as well as research and resources from around Australia: www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/lessons-management.