

Developing disaster leaders for contemporary times

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In 2017, the New Zealand Government completed its review of the country's emergency response capabilities. The review was to make sure New Zealand's emergency response capabilities and frameworks are well placed to meet future challenges.

As a result of the review, the New Zealand Government commissioned a revolutionary change to the capabilities required for response and recovery leaders. The previous command-and-control style of training is no longer adequate.

Massey University established a consortium of New Zealand and Australian education specialists to form Response and Recovery Aotearoa New Zealand (RRANZ) with a charter to build and improve the capabilities of leaders in response and recovery roles. RRANZ programs focus on the contemporary leadership capabilities needed to lead multi-agency responses and recovery operations, particularly in novel situations.

The program commenced in 2019 and covers VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) environments, network leadership principles, leading through influence, working in effective partnerships with Māori communities, creating good decision-making environments, creating high-performing teams, the ethical base for decisions, social licence, psychosocial impacts of disasters, community leadership and managing self and others in high-stress environments.

The program consists of online interaction and virtual discussion forums combined with an intensive face-to-face block. A key component of the face-to-face block is daily simulations with teams working on complex and novel disasters. A specialist coach observes the teams and conducts reflective coaching sessions. Participants learn to use tools and techniques they can apply in multi-agency response and recovery operations. Through reflective practice and coaching, participants explore ways to improve their leadership potential.

Across the ditch in Australia, the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) worked with Queensland Disaster Management Training Command to develop a suite of master classes on

leadership capabilities in emergencies in Australia (see Zsombok J 2019). AIDR teamed with The Learning Organisation and Crisis Management Australia to establish three master classes covering topics of high-consequence decision-making, leadership in crisis, disaster and adversity and coordinating teams operating in disaster.

AIDR collaborators, Dr Christine Owen and David Parsons, are currently independently developing a new master class, 'Leading in Uncertain Times'. The master classes provide participants with insights into their personal leadership approach and they walk away with practical tools they can adopt to improve their leadership performance.

And in Canada, the Centre for Applied Disaster and Emergency Management at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology recently launched their comprehensive Crisis Management Program.

New and returning disaster threats are highlighting the nature of society as a complex adaptive system. Developing contemporary leadership capabilities to lead effectively in the current context is of the highest importance.

End notes

Zsombok J 2019, *Queensland's leadership and crisis management education, Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, vol. 34, no. 4, p.13.

Crisis Management Program. At: www.nait.ca/nait/continuing-education/programs/crisis-management-essentials-certificate.

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