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RESCUE

# Emergency Management

September 2013

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S DISASTER RESILIENCE NEWSLETTER

### Tea Tree Gully SES Unit finishes third in NDRC

A team from Tea Tree Gully SES Unit has finished third in this year's National Disaster Rescue Competition (NDRC) which was held in Fiskville, Victoria on the weekend of 21-22 September.

The team had earlier won the State Emergency Service (SES) State Rescue Challenge and was defending its national title which it won in 2011, the last year the national competition was held. Pictured right is one of the stands at the State Rescue Challenge which was held at the Metropolitan Fire Service's state training facility at Angle Park, Adelaide in August.



### People with vulnerabilities in disasters

Funded by the Natural Disaster Resilience Grant (NDRG) scheme, the People with vulnerabilities in disasters project aimed at examining the services provided to people with vulnerabilities by mapping where the vulnerable populations are located, overlaid by hazards.

An analysis was then undertaken to determine whether services were meeting the need and whether there was adequate cover across all vulnerable groups to improve resilience and safety during disasters.

Research and consultation during the project was extensive with the working group comprising representatives from the State Emergency Service (SES), Country Fire Service (CFS), Australian Red Cross, Domiciliary Care and Department for Health and Ageing.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate there are about 166,200 people in South Australia in just three of the various categories of vulnerability; people with

limited English, a disability or an age-related frailty.

This represents at least 10 per cent of the state's population who would require extra consideration prior to, during and after a disaster. This is a significant cohort in the community who may not have access to appropriate support when disasters occur.

Project outputs include definitions for people with vulnerabilities and specific hazards; maps and tables of the numbers and location of people with vulnerabilities; maps of areas of high risk for specific disasters and a list of services provided by government and non-government organisations.

The project findings indicate that most services are developed by individual agencies and are provided in specific geographic locations for a specific type of vulnerability or are based on the type of potential hazard.

There is an insufficient range of services for people with vulnerabilities and existing services specifically for these people are not reaching all those in need.

It was also identified that mainstream services for the whole community are not meeting the needs of all people with vulnerabilities.

The report concludes that services could be improved with increased collaboration and coordination of all services and by developing comprehensive all-hazard services that reach as many of those in need as possible. These strategies should reduce duplication and improve service efficiencies and outcomes for people with vulnerabilities.

The report was tabled at the August meeting of the State Mitigation Advisory Group (SMAG).

A copy of the report may be found at [www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/disaster-recovery](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/disaster-recovery)



*Each decision and action makes us more vulnerable to disasters – or more resilient to them. Thus disaster risk reduction involves every part of society, every part of government, and every part of the professional and private sector." United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.*



## Local resilience conference attracts delegates from around 60 organisations

Representatives from around 60 organisations came together in the Adelaide Town Hall in July for the first Building Community and Organisational Resilience conference.

Speakers from New Zealand, Canada, Canberra, Perth and Adelaide provided attendees with information and other data aimed at delivering knowledge, enhancing understanding, promoting discussion and generating networking among participants.

Preliminary analysis of delegate feedback indicated 90 per cent of attendees rated the conference a success, 5 per cent rated it useful and the remaining 5 per cent were undecided.

Planning and coordination for the two-day event was managed by a volunteer committee from the local division of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services (AIES) with support from the state's National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) Implementation Working Group.

While organisers set several objectives for the conference, the principle one was the delivery of a forum that included all of the community. This objective was achieved with delegates commenting on the value of having a broad segment of the community at the one venue at the same time.



## All in a day's volunteering for the State Emergency Service

Animal rescues are one of a number of different types of incidents responded to by the State Emergency Service (SES). The recent rescue of a terrified dog stranded in the middle of a swollen creek posed particular difficulties for members of Noarlunga SES Unit. Unit Manager Ian Bonython takes up the story:

The weekend began at 4am Saturday morning. We had to be on the road by 5am to get to the Metropolitan Fire Service's state training facility at Angle Park where the State Rescue Challenge was being held. Home by 6pm was the aim as we were to do it all again the following day. With rain and severe winds forecast for the weekend, coupled with a flood watch, it was going to be a busy weekend for the SES.

The challenge, won by Tea Tree Gully, finished mid-afternoon on Sunday, an early finish but welcomed by all as it was time for a much needed rest.

I was only home for 20 minutes when I received a phone call from the North Region Commander. 'Hope you haven't had your first drink yet, we have a swift water rescue of a dog in a creek.'

Back into the vehicle and off to the unit while the Commander paged for more crew.

The situation: Lucy, a Staffordshire cross, was trapped in the middle of a swollen creek with the water flowing at about running speed. She had entered the creek about 200 metres upstream and found herself on some debris against a tree, which was normally on the edge of the creek's bank. The first responding teams had tried to use a ladder to get to Lucy but found it was too short. The SES crew had swift water safety training and knew that this required a swift water technician team. Peter sent some CFS members upstream to keep a watch for any large objects that might be coming down the creek, and Bruce and Scott took up their positions as downstream safeties.

The creek was lined with blackberry bushes, luckily with a small gap opposite where Lucy was stranded. It was quickly determined that entering the water was out of the question as I could not get upstream to enter and was unlikely to get to Lucy by diving in opposite her as I would have been washed into the bushes. We found some boards that were long enough to reach

Lucy, and laid them across the creek, just above the water line, and then laid the ladder over the boards, a perfect bridge to crawl across.

A pair of pruning shears in hand, a tether to my onshore safety, and I started to make my way across, trimming a path through the blackberry bushes to Lucy. After two minutes of patting and talking to a terrified Lucy, we started to make our way back. But Lucy was frozen with fright and did not want to move. My only option was to lift her front legs forward, then lift her back legs forward, then move her front legs forward and so on, stopping every now and then to give her a reassuring pat and nuzzle of our heads. This continued until we were almost back to the end of the ladder where either a bit of courage or the idea of what we were doing kicked in as Lucy started to crawl by herself towards me. Handing her back to the CFS crew, I got off the ladder bridge and pulled the ladder and boards back to dry land.

As I turned around, Lucy was chasing a goat! I was as happy as her, but not quite ready to be chasing goats.



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## Emergency management web-based information portals

At both the national level and in South Australia emergency management authorities are working to bring together all-hazard emergency management information into one-stop-shops.

This is important because the emergency management community of interest is ever expanding, and disaster resilience has progressed beyond simply emergency management plans to become a multidisciplinary learning environment.

It is worth visiting the sites below to find out what information is available.

### Australian Emergency Management Knowledge Hub

The AEM Knowledge Hub was launched in November 2012 to provide research, resources and news relevant to emergency management. The site includes statistics and information, photos, video and media about past disasters.

You can also access the AEM library's collection, including the library catalogue and electronic journal databases.

The web address is  
[www.emknowledge.gov.au](http://www.emknowledge.gov.au).

### SA Emergency Management Govdex Portal

This secure site is specifically for the South Australian emergency management sector. It contains the suite of emergency management plans, latest news and updates, the SA National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) Implementation Plan and relevant information resources. It also provides an orientation for new staff and those wanting to learn more about the Commonwealth, state, zone and local government arrangements.

The SA NSDR Implementation Plan outlines the projects underway at the national and state level to progress the NSDR. Related publications are also available on the site.

If you want to register to join the site please email [Frittum.julie@safecom.sa.gov.au](mailto:Frittum.julie@safecom.sa.gov.au). If you are an existing member and have forgotten your password you can reset it at [www.govdex.gov.au](http://www.govdex.gov.au).



These recent publications are available on the SA EM Govdex Portal.

*From Disaster to Renewal: The centrality of business recovery to community resilience*, Regional Australia Institute. August 2013.

*Process and Tools for Building Resilience in Vulnerable Households*, Torrens Resilience Institute. August 2013.

*Senate Report: Recent trends in and preparedness for extreme weather events*, Commonwealth of Australia. August 2013.

*Emergency management planning for children and young people: Planning guide for local government*, State Government Victoria. June 2013.

*National Strategy for Disaster Resilience Community Engagement Framework*, Commonwealth of Australia. July 2013.

*National Emergency Warning Policy Documents*, Commonwealth of Australia. July 2013.

## SA Remote Aboriginal Community Emergency Management project (RACEM)

The South Australian Remote Aboriginal Community Emergency Management (RACEM) project is a 12-month partnership project between the State Recovery Office and the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM).

The project has State Strategic Project status under the SA National Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP) as endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).

The project includes: the completion of an updated community and emergency contact list for the APY Lands; an environmental scan of existing community safety initiatives and programs and the development of a training framework that incorporates prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR).

Included in the project scope is the updating of 2006 APY Lands risk assessments into the National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines (NERAG) framework.

This work will link to the recent risk assessments outlined in the APY Lands Community Safety Plans – work undertaken by SAPOL. Liaison with SAPOL and other key identified stakeholders is integral to the success of the project.

The RACEM project is managed by the State Recovery Office and supported by a multi-agency project control group that includes representatives from: the Department of Premier and Cabinet; Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division; the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA); SAFECOM and Australian Red Cross (South Australia).

Communication and engagement with relevant community and emergency management stakeholders is vital to the success of the project and has been factored into the project process.

The RACEM project is expected to be completed by the end of December 2013 and will provide recommendations for stage two of the project, including identified opportunities for implementation.





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## Support for deaf, hearing and speech-impaired persons

It is estimated that more than 1.1 million Australians have difficulty communicating or being understood.

Approximately 2.67 million Australians – one in every eight people – have some form of hearing loss.

People who are deaf, hearing or speech impaired are unable to access telecommunications without specialised equipment and services. To help address this issue, since 1995 the Australian Government has overseen a National Relay Service (NRS), an Australia-wide phone service for people who are deaf, or who have a hearing and speech impairment.

Deaf, hearing and speech-impaired persons can use the NRS through any of five different contact options including:

- 1) a TTY (teletypewriter),
- 2) a phone number for those who have a speech impairment (but still use their own voice and can hear) and can use an ordinary handset,
- 3) an access point to an internet relay for those users who prefer to phone online,
- 4) video relay for those who prefer make their call using Auslan (Australian Sign Language), and
- 5) via SMS relay for those who prefer to use a mobile phone.

The South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) is currently undertaking a project looking at improving the accessibility of emergency information and services to the deaf,

hearing and speech-impaired community in South Australia.

This project is funded by a grant that SAFECOM successfully applied for as part of the Natural Disaster Resilience Grant (NDRG) scheme for 2012-13.

The agencies that form part of this project include the CFS, SA Police (SAPOL), SES, SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS), SAFECOM and the State Recovery Office.

The project began in May 2013 and will conclude in November 2013. The project is guided in part by the NRS steps for becoming NRS friendly for deaf, hearing and speech-impaired persons. More information about these steps can be found at <http://relayservice.gov.au/business/becoming-relay-service-friendly/>.

The project team is currently drafting implementation strategies and an associated plan to help assist the various agencies improve the accessibility of their information and services to deaf, hearing and speech-impaired persons in South Australia.

As part of this process, the team is seeking feedback from interested parties that work with, represent or regularly interact with deaf, hearing and speech-impaired persons in South Australia.

For further information about the project, please contact Justin Ward on 8463 4064 or email [ward.justin@safecom.sa.gov.au](mailto:ward.justin@safecom.sa.gov.au).



## Flood management conference attracts 300 attendees

More than 300 people from state and federal government agencies, as well as local government, attended the recent Floodplain Management Association national conference in Tweed Heads in New South Wales.

Local attendees included representatives from the State Emergency Service (SES), South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR).

Conference highlights included:

- The keynote speech by **Larry Larson, the Senior Policy Advisor to the Association of State Floodplain Managers (USA)**. Mr Larson pointed out that the United States had experienced the two largest disasters in history in the past few years – Hurricane Katrina (2005) and Superstorm Sandy (2012). These were both coastal events with evidence showing that coastal areas are becoming more vulnerable from rising sea levels and increased storm activity. The United States is also experiencing rainfall in many of the internal riverine areas that is unprecedented.

- The speech by **Brendan Nelson, the Asia Pacific Director – Risk for MWH Global**. Mr Nelson presented evidence indicating that the frequency, intensity and unpredictability of natural disasters is expected to increase as a result of climate change. As a result, it is more important than ever that emergency management authorities learn from the past and plan for the future. Innovation and out-of-the-box thinking leads to future investment in providing mitigation for communities most at risk.
- The speech by **David Parsons, the Manager Emergency Management and Security Network for Sydney Water**. Mr Parsons' presentation Decision making during extreme events looked at how the human brain functions during an extreme event when people are required to make critical decisions with insufficient information in a short time frame. Another presentation highlighted the development of a flash flood warning system for Sydney's Northern Beaches area.

The Northern Beaches Flood Warning and Information Network program is a joint partnership involving Pittwater, Warringah and Manly councils with guidance from the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage and the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM).

The aim of the program is to develop a flash flooding warning system for the community using strategically located rainfall, water level and flow gauges across the Northern Beaches area. Currently there are 16 rainfall and eight water level gauges. However this will be expanded over the next five years with the addition of a further seven rainfall, three water level and five flow gauges.

A website has been developed to provide the community with real time gauged information. This information will also be fed to the BoM to support its severe weather and flash flood services.