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RESCUE

# Emergency Management

September 2015

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S DISASTER RESILIENCE NEWSLETTER

### Andrew Lawson bids farewell to CFS

From a diesel mechanic in the South East to Deputy Chief Officer of the SA Country Fire Service – the past 30 years have been an unbelievable journey for Andrew Lawson, (right).

Andrew will finish active duty with the CFS this month before taking leave until next January.

After six years volunteering for the Bordertown CFS, Andrew started his career with the agency, and what a career it has been.

"The sky's the limit. When I joined the service in 1985 I would have never thought of the opportunities that came my way," Andrew said.

"Probably one of the most memorable was a deployment to Indonesia in 1997.

"South Australia sent two bombing aircraft to Indonesia and I led the first deployment to assist the government control the hundreds of fires they had over there."

"Another highlight was my involvement in the start of the CFS Map Book project with the first map book in the South East in 1999. It was the start of the CFS mapping project which has resulted in the map books that we've now got right across the state."

There have also been lessons learnt along the way.

"Wangary was a real knock for us in 2005 as an organisation, the coronial inquest and the civil action that followed, but we came through. It was the support of people working together and looking after each other that got us through," Andrew said.

"We learned from Wangary and put in place some new systems, primarily the warning systems. That stood us in really good stead when in 2009 following Black Saturday there was a national review of warning systems so our system was seen as a good template, a good start."

Andrew has also travelled overseas to California, Greece, France, Indonesia and New Zealand representing the agency and learning from other countries.

"I'm just amazed at how our volunteers just keep doing the job. This last fire season was a classic example of it, our backs against the wall with a range of issues including Emergency Services Levy and sector reform, yet they still go out and fight fires and protect their communities."



As for what's next, he's not sure. But he and wife Julie are committed to staying in South Australia, and enjoying slightly less responsibility.

"I have absolutely loved the CFS but as the Deputy you are always the Deputy, you're never not on-call. I can't remember a Christmas where I haven't had my phone on and been watching the weather," he said.

"I do look forward to a job where I start at 8.30 and knock off at 5 o'clock in the evening and don't have to think about work outside of that. I'm looking forward to being irrelevant," Andrew said.

### State multi-agency marine rescue exercise program released

Each year Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) flotillas and coastal marine units of the State Emergency Service (SES), along with regional and specialist SAPOL resources, participate in a regional exercise program that enables every marine rescue capability in the state's coastal waters to be exercised in a multi-agency scenario.

During the 2015/16 year, exercise locations will include Adelaide (West Beach), Wirrina, Port Vincent, Port Lincoln, Whyalla and Ceduna.

Conducted under the auspices of the State Marine Rescue Committee, the exercises not only provide an opportunity for volunteer and occupational resources from similar geographical areas to come together to practise a coordinated response to a marine emergency,

they allow authorities to review and validate response plans, ensure interoperability and reliable communications between agencies and provide a significant benefit towards fostering good working relationships and camaraderie.

According to the Executive Officer of the State Marine Rescue Committee Darryl Wright this year's program will, for the first time, incorporate an exercise to be conducted in Ceduna.

Traditionally, volunteers from the far west coast attend the lower Eyre Peninsula exercise without their own vessel, given the distances required to travel, but this year's program will see a number of marine assets from Eyre Peninsula and other locations travel to Ceduna to exercise in that area.

"This will be a fantastic opportunity for the Ceduna SES Unit to practise coordination functions for multiple SAR assets at sea, as well as demonstrate the capacity of local and regional marine rescue resources and highlight the significant role that volunteers play in meeting marine-related risk in our communities," he said.

Each exercise usually extends over two days and incorporates theoretical training, lessons learnt from previous operations and practical command, control and coordination activities. Anyone with enquiries regarding the exercise program should direct them to Darryl Wright, Manager, Volunteer Marine Rescue at [wright.darryl@ses.sa.gov.au](mailto:wright.darryl@ses.sa.gov.au) or (08) 82041672.



*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.*



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## AFAC Conference attracts around 1500 delegates to Adelaide

Around 1,500 delegates took part in the 22nd annual AFAC Conference in Adelaide during the first week of September. The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) again teamed up with the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC to host an extensive four-day event that ignited conversation around the conference theme '*New Directions in Emergency Management*'.

Held at the Adelaide Convention Centre on the banks of the River Torrens, AFAC15 showcased some of the world's leading experts in emergency management. Taking place from Tuesday 1 September to Thursday 3 September the conference delved into topics such as fires, floods, cyclones and storms, the future of emergency management and diversity within the industry.

Day one kicked off with the BNHCRC Research Forum where Dr Mark Finney of the US Forest Service gave a keynote address on how wildfires spread. The opening program included a number of industry and university researchers discussing the latest hazard science. Dr Paul Willis, Director of RiAus, gave a provocative closing keynote on his own personal experience living in a high-risk fire-prone area in the Adelaide Hills. Dr Willis posed a challenge to all of us to involve ourselves in reducing bushfire risk.

SA Governor, Hieu Van Le, officially opened the main two day conference on Wednesday 2 September marking it as one of importance for both the emergency management sector and the Adelaide community. He reflected on the importance of diversity and inclusion, a topic that the conference addressed across the main program, and spoke of his own journey as a refugee to Australia.

The opening keynote speaker, the Head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Asia-Pacific, Feng Min Kan, gave her address on *A new framework for disaster risk reduction* that was adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, in March this year. She was followed by Dr Rowan Douglas, CEO Capital Science and Policy Practice, Willis Group who presented on *Insuring Resilience: how we need some Aussie rules to handle global natural hazard risk*. Both speakers gave a global and regional perspective on the cost of disasters to the community. They set the scene for the conference that addressed the need for a new direction for



emergency management where multiple stakeholders across business, government and the community can work together to minimise impacts to the community from disasters in our region.

This year the conference program took an all-hazards approach with multiple presentations focused on storms, cyclones, earthquake and other hazards. NSW Rural Fire Service's Ben Millington presented an in depth assessment of the response to Tropical Cyclone Lam. Chrissie Bloss from DEWNR presented on the challenges of communicating flood risk to the public and how the SA Government's new flood mapping website is assisting.

Rounding out day one of the main program was an eclectic panel of speakers, chaired by AFAC CEO Stuart Ellis, discussing gender, culture and diversity. The speakers included Adam Dent, Commissioner NSW SES, Bronnie Mackintosh of Fire & Rescue NSW, Jim Higgins CEO of Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, Ariana Henderson of Parks Victoria and Lauren Wait from the Country Fire Service (CFS). They each highlighted some of the gender issues as well as language and cultural barriers that the industry faces. A festival themed dinner concluded the day.

Group Captain Catherine McGregor delivered a powerful address as the opening keynote presenter on day two of the main conference, where she spoke candidly about diversity and her own experience as a high profile transgender woman. Having an impressive career spanning 40 years in the military and now working as a speechwriter and strategic advisor to the Chief of Air Force, as well as a

cricket commentator and writer, she took us on her incredible personal journey and provided insight into how the ADF has approached issues of gender and diversity.

Thought provoking streams on engaging youth and recruiting volunteers also featured on the final day. Among the speakers were Ruth Tovo and Stewart Germaine from the CFS Youth Advisory Committee. AFAC15 was brought to a close by a panel of young leaders in emergency management discussing their experiences and possibilities for the future. Chaired by Youth Beyond Disasters' Tam Hoang, the panel included Lauren Wait, Ryan Hoult from the University of Melbourne, Tia Rowley from QFES and Gabriele Fuller-Gooey of the Metropolitan Fire Service.

Over the course of the three days the trade exhibition hall was brimming with activity as all the latest equipment, technology and emergency service vehicles were on display. The Dräger Knowledge Lounge gave delegates a unique chance to meet the speakers as well as view the collection of posters.

Although already distinguished as the premier emergency management conference across Australasia, next year's event to be held in Brisbane will be even bigger with AFAC16 powered by INTERSCHUTZ, being delivered in partnership with Hannover Fairs Australia, the organisers of INTERSCHUTZ, the world-leading exhibition for firefighting, fire protection and rescue.



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## Recent heatwave in India has had enormous impacts

**Earlier this year the world's media focused its considerable attention on the impacts of severe heatwaves in India, reporting that thousands of people had died as a direct result of the extreme weather.**

Television images showed melting roads in the Indian capital of New Delhi and people queuing outside hospitals that were struggling to meet the demand. Power outages and spoiled food compounded the impacts. Media reports highlighted the difficulty of coping in rural parts of the country where airconditioning is unheard of and where there isn't necessarily access to water coolers or even electricity to operate fans.

India's emergency management strategies included public information from affected state government agencies and the Indian Meteorological Department urging people to stay indoors during the day; the recall of doctors from leave; encouraging people not to work between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm; and the easing of requirements (at least in the state of Andhra Pradesh) to access a state recovery (compensation) payment of 100,000 rupees (\$2060 AUD) to families of people who had died.

Despite these arrangements the human impacts alone were enormous. Construction workers, the homeless, the elderly, very young, and people with pre-existing medical conditions were among groups most affected.

Unsurprisingly there was criticism of the central and state governments' lack of mitigation and community preparedness, limited planning and warning capabilities and inadequate relief arrangements.

Effectively managing extreme heat events is and will continue to be a challenge for India and it's a challenge we face every year across Australia, including South Australia.

While many Australians have firsthand experience of the impact and effects of extreme temperatures there are many who remain unconvinced that there is actually an issue or that they personally should do anything to prepare. Indeed, many people would be surprised at recent findings from Macquarie University risk scientist Lucinda Coates and her colleagues that extreme heat has been responsible for over half of all listed natural hazard fatalities in Australia from 1900 to 2011.

Nationally states and territories are responding to the challenge and are examining how to better manage heatwave risks.

For example, a Victorian Auditor-General report released in October last year highlighted a number of gaps and issues such as the need for better governance with increased clarity around roles and responsibilities, concerns about inadequate and variable planning, a lack of targeting for public health messages, insufficient strategic monitoring, a need for greater clarity around triggers for activation, and better sharing of data across multiple systems. In response, Victoria revised its arrangements and in November 2014 released a new plan detailing revised governance and a focus on a whole-of-government/all-of-society approach and responsibility for preparing for extreme heat.

In South Australia, the State Emergency Service (SES) plays an important and unique role as Hazard Leader and Control Agency for extreme heat. It partners with a host of government and non-government organisations to improve understanding of the risk, increase community resilience and preparedness and minimise impacts during heatwave events.

Since 2009, the agency has been building a more comprehensive approach to extreme heat management that has included:

- Supporting research into extreme heat, its impacts and the effectiveness of public messaging and community preparedness by partnering with groups such as the University of Adelaide's School of Population Health, the Bureau of Meteorology and SA Health
- Facilitating emergency risk assessments for extreme heat at zone and state levels
- Promoting community preparedness through the Heatsafe program
- Maintaining SA's extreme heat response and communications plans
- Coordinating and authorising public messaging
- Community support measures for vulnerable people such as Red Cross' Telecross REDi service
- Exercising and validating extreme heat plans with partner agencies
- Promoting community-led responses and prevention measures such as making state and local government airconditioned buildings and facilities available for respite
- Encouraging employers to implement workforce protection measures and balance business needs with the welfare of employees
- Distributing public information before, during and after events that focus on staying safe, checking and helping the vulnerable, being mindful about secondary risks such as from

stressed trees (which can suddenly fall or drop limbs) and how to manage if electricity supplies are interrupted

- Partnering with tertiary institutions to develop community education strategies and materials to support the resilience in CALD communities to extreme heat
- Implementing a whole-of-government monitoring and reporting system during heatwave events
- Leveraging non-traditional networks and partners (such as Meals on Wheels) for messaging and intelligence purposes during events.

Of note, South Australia does not maintain arrangements or the capabilities to activate and manage dedicated cooling centres. A community-led approach is however adopted where people are encouraged to keep cool at home and work or use existing community facilities such as shopping centres, public swimming pools, movie theatres, libraries and art galleries where the public can seek refuge from the heat. This is supported by an acknowledgement that people need to take responsibility for their own safety and wellbeing and think of others during extreme heat events.

Despite these measures, extreme heat continues to be a significant emergency management issue. In January 2014, two extreme heat episodes occurred and together they formed a 13-day heat episode which was similar to the 13-day episode in 2009. This allowed a comparison of events and health impacts. The effects of interventions and the benefits from our emergency management measures are somewhat mixed. While ambulance call-outs and hospital admissions were significantly reduced (with a notable and substantial decrease in cases for cardiac-specific ambulance call-outs), overall mortality rates were similar to those in 2009.

Clearly more needs to be done. There is a strong case to move beyond community education, emergency planning and warnings. However, driving down long-run impacts from heatwaves will undoubtedly require a sustained focus on risk reduction through measures such as improved urban planning, building design, community development, investment in green infrastructure, recovery and social equity measures.

Such a focus sits outside the traditional policy and program areas of the SES and in some domains will rely on taking a nationally coordinated and cooperative approach.



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## Brown Hill Keswick Creek System the focus of post-conference field trip

The State Emergency Service (SES) and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) jointly hosted a post-conference development flood management field trip session for 36 attendees at this month's AFAC Conference in Adelaide.

Attendees visited the Brown Hill Keswick Creek catchment in metropolitan Adelaide. The field trip had a focus on the challenges of community engagement and managing risk.

Travelling by bus, delegates visited various points of interest in the catchment, including a proposed dam site in the Brown Hill Creek Recreation Park and an aged care facility next to Parklands Creek. The Adelaide Airport and the Patawalonga Lakes system were also on the itinerary.

Several local experts on board the bus spoke in detail on a range of flood management issues. Ed Pikusa, Principal Flood Management Officer at DEWNR, spoke on the history and flood risk of the catchment and challenges presented by community attitudes to proposed mitigation measures. Detailed information on the hydrology, engineering and planning issues was provided by Bill Lipp, the Principal Stormwater Engineer at the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI).

Derren Halleday, SES Regional Commander – South, spoke about emergency planning and response from the perspective of the flood response agency while Stephanie Bolt, Environment Manager for Adelaide Airport, gave an account of the flood risk issues facing the Adelaide Airport and how these are being managed.

The final speaker was Ralph Hack, the Asset Services Officer for DEWNR, who spoke about the Patawalonga Lakes system and the function it serves in managing flood risk for the most downstream point of the catchment.

Feedback indicated that participants were highly engaged and finished considerably more educated about dealing with local community groups with conflicting viewpoints when managing flood risk.



*Bill Lipp describing the Creek system*

## TEAM SPIRIT 15 to be held next month

**The annual state exercise 'Team Spirit 15' will be held on Wednesday, 21 October (between 8.30 am and 3.30 pm) in the School of Health Sciences Lecture Theatre Complex (Level 3 - Building 53) at Flinders University, Bedford Park**

Exercise 'Team Spirit 15' is a multi-agency discussion exercise with aims to evaluate the strategies detailed in the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) and its sub plans for the response to recovery phases of a significant emergency (cyber-terrorism) in South Australia.

It is written and conducted under the guidelines developed by the State Response Advisory Group (SRAG), Central Exercise Writing Team (CEWT), and other interested parties.

The exercise will also examine government, agency and private sector crisis management procedures at the strategic level.

Invitations have been sent to all Functional Services State Controllers. Any requests for information concerning the exercise should be directed to **Pat Lycett**, or **Sarah Mason** or by contacting your agency's CEWT representative.



## New CFS and SES recruitment project

The Country Fire Service (CFS) and the State Emergency Service (SES) have had recruitment television commercials and documentaries developed as part of the Targeted Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project.

The campaign commenced earlier this month and will run for a three week period across Port Pirie, Port Lincoln, Mount Gambier and Riverland broadcast channels. The campaign will also be seen across social media, YouTube and agency websites.

The campaign focuses on targeting South Australians who may not have previously considered volunteering with the emergency services sector. These include people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, youth and women. The campaign also highlights the non-operational roles available in the CFS and SES.

The campaign consists of a number of short video clips which can be accessed through the following links:

CFS Recruitment Documentaries:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/SACFS1>

SES Recruitment Documentaries:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQrUvbACpXersceifczQ9w>