

## **Devastating Floods in Queensland, Australia and Other Events in IAEM-Oceania Area Highlight IAEM Member Service in Their Communities**

As always IAEM members are continuing to serve in a wide range of capacities when communities are at their greatest need. The media attention on the devastating floods in Queensland Australia has again highlighted this service.

Volunteers and staff from State Emergency Services (SES), Fire and Rescue Services, Police, Ambulance and others are putting their lives at risk across Australia to assist their neighbours in time of need. Spontaneous volunteers likewise come to the aid of their neighbours in selfless acts of bravery and charity. Volunteers and staff of government and non government agencies work long hours in coordination and operations centres, in recovery centres, in the field, and in offices around the country doing their best to delivery complex coordinated assistance to those in need. Community leaders from the Prime Minister to the local Mayor, and their advisors and staff and working hard to augment resources, make decisions and provide information to assist. The primary focus is on saving life and providing support and assistance to those in need whilst building recovery. This magnificent effort is hampered by continuing dangers, significant logistical and transport difficulties, towns being cut off, power outages, mounting fatigue, and the compounding issues of complexity in our modern society.

Flash flooding, and rising flood waters are inundating areas across Australia with some 50 local government areas in Queensland impacted and some 20 particularly hard hit. With around 63 local government areas in New South Wales, some 36 shires in Victoria, in the order of 7 local government districts in Western Australia, and areas of South Australia also impacted. These impacts are causing significant personal, family, business and community hardship. There continue to be floods and flood warnings in rivers and creeks in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania. Source: <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/warnings>

There also continue to be severe weather warnings in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. Source: <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/warnings/index.shtml>

A tropical Cyclone outlook remains high for the western region of Australia and Tropical Cyclone Vince is North West of Exmouth in Western Australia moving toward the coast.

A Severe to Extreme fire danger exists in parts of Western Australia, and I noted last night, nine homes were lost in a blaze south of Perth in Western Australia.

We are gratified that the Australian Government, State Governments and Local Government, NGO's and the community are working together to achieve mitigation measures, respond to distress and provide recovery services. Emergency Service volunteers and staff are being sent away from their own families to assist in other States and communities. Of course, IAEM Oceania members are heavily involved with these government agencies, NGO's and are involved in a range of capacities to assist in the mitigation, response, and recovery efforts.

Governments and the community are making assistance available to communities, agencies, individuals, small business and primary producers, and for restoration of essential public assets. IAEM Oceania members are involved also in this process.

I am in regular contact with James Gustus, the Secretary of IAEM Oceania who is an Assistant Director in the Australian Government Crisis Coordination Centre (CCC) in Canberra. James has been recalled from leave to work in the CCC on the flood situation and is expected to be deployed to Queensland. We worked together recently in the CCC on the SIEV 221 Incident at Christmas Island.

Kristin Hoskin, the President of IAEM Oceania has been actively involved in responding to the string of earthquakes in Christchurch NZ. At the time of writing there have been 4,337 earthquakes in the Christchurch area since 4 September 2010. Source: <http://www.christchurchquakemap.co.nz/> Kristin said “Around six have caused serious damage, . . . this could keep going for a couple of years.”

Chris Ainsworth, the Australian National Representative for IAEM Oceania is working hard and with passion to establish a more coordinated approach to emergency management education in Australia.

Our thoughts are with IAEM Oceania members, and all those impacted by, and working on their emergencies.

Scott Milne, ESM  
Vice-President Oceania

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