

# FOREWORD

## EMA Training – National Best Practice

by Margery Webster

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Emergency Management Australia Institute recently attained Registered Training Organisation status under the new Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) Standards for Registered Training Organisations, confirming the Institute's position as a national best practice provider of emergency management training and assessment.

The rigorous audit process covered all the Institute's operations, including procedures, competence of staff and the quality of learning and assessment strategies. Working towards compliance with the standards was a significant commitment involving every staff member at the Institute.

The AQTF Standards, together with nationally endorsed industry Training Packages make up the National Training Framework (NTF) for vocational education and training in Australia. The framework is designed to support the quality and consistency of training so that employers and training providers can readily recognise their industry competencies and confidently accept Statements of Attainment or qualifications issued by all Registered Training Organisations. This is particularly important for the public safety industry because as this journal goes to press, emergency management personnel are being widely deployed from around Australia to assist their interstate colleagues with the bushfire crisis.

### What does this mean for EMA training?

The AQTF requires that all training for national recognition is aligned to national industry competency standards where they exist. State and territory training authorities will not accredit courses if the same outcome can be achieved through

national competency standards. The Public Safety Training Package (July 2000) includes the competency standards for the emergency management sector. These describe the industry agreed skills and knowledge for effective practice in emergency management, and are packaged into the qualification *Advanced Diploma in Public Safety (Emergency Management)*.

To ensure EMA programs can be nationally recognised, the content of EMA short courses has been aligned with the emergency management competency standards and learning and assessment strategies developed to meet the competency requirements. Where there is no competency match, EMA curriculum will still be accredited through the Victorian Qualifications Authority and nationally recognised.

The good news is that in 2003 the EMA Institute will be delivering programs against five of the eleven competency standards required for the *Advanced Diploma in Public Safety (Emergency Management)* and will gradually add new competency standards to its program of activities. Participants can gain credit (nationally recognised Statements of Attainment) for completing each unit of competency and may gradually complete additional units to eventually gain the *Advanced Diploma in Public Safety (Emergency Management)*, and/or a nationally recognised qualification in other areas of public safety. Pathways to other nationally recognised qualifications, such as in management, are also possible.

Learning and assessment EMA is incorporating more interactive methods of learning into Institute programs. The Institute is keen to make sure that training in emergency management really helps

people to do their job better and places great importance on *transfer of learning*. Current research into how people learn shows that interactive teaching strategies, with a strong emphasis on moving from theory to practical application, result in the transfer of new learning into actual workplace practice. One of the main features of EMA's new teaching and learning approach is the three-stage structure of the programs:

### Stage 1: Preparation

Before coming to the on-campus component, participants are required to complete preparatory work to introduce them to the content.

### Stage 2: On-campus work

Here new knowledge and skills are applied in practice situations in a "safe" environment.

### Stage 3: Workplace application and evidence collection

Back in the workplace participants apply what they have learnt and collect evidence to show that they have achieved the relevant competencies.

The preparatory work in stage 1 means that participants are tuned into the content of the program before commencing the on-campus component so that time on-campus is more usefully spent interacting with facilitators and fellow participants, learning through problem solving, discussion, practical exercises and sharing individual experiences. The workplace application stage ensures that new knowledge and skill enhances workplace performance and is therefore valuable to both the organisation and the participant.

### Assessment

For competency assessment, participants must present evidence

which clearly demonstrates that they meet the performance criteria outlined in the particular competency standard. Participants are assessed on how they apply skills and knowledge "on the job" (or in a simulated environment where the requirements of the competency unit allow for this). People are not awarded a credit or qualification just for "time served" on the job or in training.

In the new structure, evidence collection and third party reports are essential components of the assessment process. To assist in this process EMA has produced a

*Candidate Assessment Information Kit* for each program. This provides practical information for people who wish to be assessed, as well as for those completing third party reports. The kit includes templates for self-assessment, for planning evidence collection and for third-party reports.

### Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Formal qualifications are becoming more important for gaining employment and/or promotion in the emergency management sector. This may be an impediment for emergency management personnel

who have achieved high levels of competence from on-the-job learning before emergency management credentials were available. Evidence of these achievements can now be used in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment process. If candidates can provide evidence to demonstrate that what they have learned from their experience meets the outcomes of units of competency they may be given formal credit.

Further information about EMA programs can be accessed at [www.ema.gov.au](http://www.ema.gov.au)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The article *Perceived change in risk of natural disasters caused by global warming* by C.R. deFreitas, (Nov, 2002) claims there is little evidence that the enhanced greenhouse effect will result in an increased risk of natural disasters.

This opinion differs on a number of issues from a more comprehensive review of the effect of climate change on extreme events by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Houghton et al., 2001), based on contributions from 1057 scientists and reviewers. The report concludes (page 15) that climate change will lead to:

- Higher maximum temperatures and more hot days over nearly all land areas,
- Higher minimum temperatures, fewer cold days and frost days over nearly all land areas,
- Reduced diurnal temperature range over most land areas,
- Increased heat index over land areas,
- More intense precipitation events,
- Increased summer continental drying and associated risk of drought,
- Increased tropical cyclone peak wind intensities,

- Increased tropical cyclone mean and peak precipitation intensities.

Many of these changes have already been observed in the past 50 years (IPCC, 2001, pages 4–5). Collins et al. (2000) found significant increases in Australian hot days, decreases in cold nights, and decreased intra-seasonal variability. Hennessy et al. (1999) have shown increases in Australian extreme rainfall. Nicholls et al. (1998) found that while the number of cyclones around Australia decreased from 1969–1995, the number of stronger cyclones has increased. Karoly et al. (2003) concluded that the Australian drought of 2002–2003, and the associated impacts on agriculture, water resources and fire, were made more severe than past droughts due to greenhouse warming.

### References

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