

# Government and Communities Working Together to Manage Emergencies

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**The Australian Government, through Emergency Management Australia (EMA), will soon be seeking grant applications from eligible organisations for funding available under the 'Working Together to Manage Emergencies' initiative.**

Of increasing and vital importance is our national pool of volunteers who represent a critical element of emergency management capability and who play a significant role in assisting communities in response to and recovery from the impact of hazards. Some 500,000 people in Australia volunteer their services in some emergency management capacity, and 350,000 of those are directly involved in emergency first response. It is critical that these volunteer agencies maintain their current staffing and training levels and continue to address the challenge of attracting new volunteers.

Consequently this round of grants (2008/09) will focus on emergency management volunteers in recognition of their needs and the significant front line role they play in reducing vulnerability and enhancing community safety.

**Grants** will be available under the **National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund** for projects that contribute to achieving these aims.

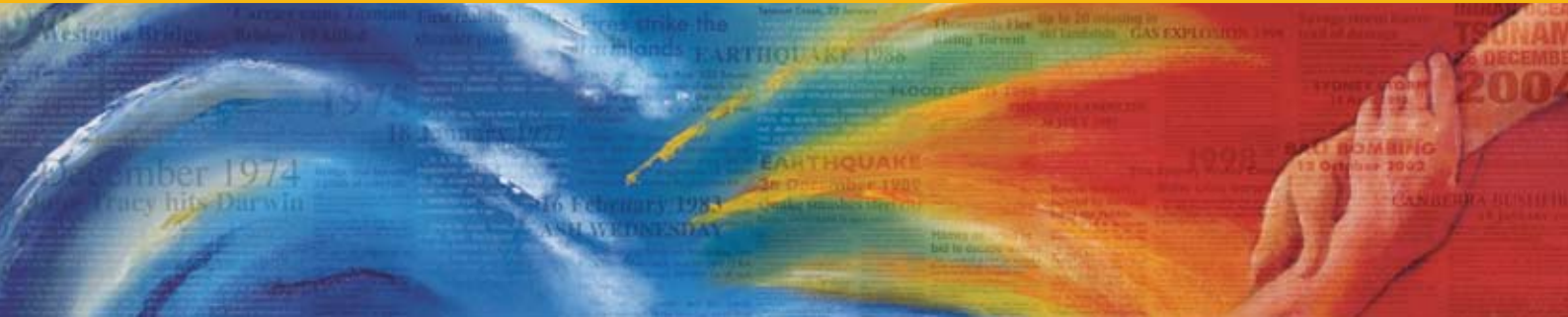
## **How to Apply**

It is anticipated that applications will be called for in the second half of December 2007. Guidelines, application forms and details on how to apply will be available on the EMA website or by contacting the "Working Together to Manage Emergencies" team after that date:

E-mail     cd@ema.gov.au  
Phone     02 6256 4608 or 4687  
Fax        02 6256 4653  
Website:  www.ema.gov.au/communityengagement

The closing date for applications is Friday 7 March 2008.

# DISASTER CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON FUTURE



The traditional emergencies for which emergency managers have planned in the past may not adequately cover the real risks that Australia may face in the future. The theme *Surviving Future Risks* will require delegates at the Australian Disasters Conference 2009 to project their thinking beyond this decade into the future to consider potential risks that may impact upon our communities.

The four-day conference—at the newly refurbished National Convention Centre in Canberra—will be hosted by Emergency Management Australia (EMA). The Conference, as the prime national conference event for emergency managers in Australia and our region, is expected to attract more than 500 domestic and international participants from across the broad spectrum of emergency management and emergency services.

The conference theme of *Surviving Future Risks* reflects current trends in the emergency management field internationally. There will be four threads or sub-themes running through the conference:

- The Changing Face of Crisis Management – a convergence of Consequence Management and Crisis Management
- Global Warming - Potential impact and consequences for emergency management
- The Catastrophic Event – Identifying risks and mitigation strategies, and
- Recovery - Surviving the impact and consequences of a major disaster event.

This national Disasters Conference will provide participants with the opportunity to hear top-flight speakers from the fields of emergency management, community safety, risk management and sustainable development. All the speakers will be tasked to concentrate on future, strategic issues, rather than focus on operational issues from previous times.

## **Conference Context**

The increasing severity and frequency of natural disasters, the increased occurrence and savagery of terrorist-induced emergencies and the ever-looming threat of the next pandemic suggest that past practices may not be enough to meet the challenges of the future.

Natural disasters pose an ongoing challenge for emergency managers worldwide. Data from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) in Belgium shows that in 2006 there were 395 natural disasters worldwide – 88 more than the past decade's annual average.

In Australia alone, governments of all persuasions, non-government organisations, and the business community, are now considering emergency preparedness, disaster management, and business continuity as a matter of course for future sustainability.

Demographic and cultural influences are changing Australian society, while burgeoning information and other new technologies are changing the way Australians lead their lives. These changes provide both opportunities and challenges for the emergency management sector to identify and anticipate as contributors to future risks that could affect community safety and to develop targeted strategies to manage them effectively.

A new paradigm is also emerging on how social cohesion and the economic structure of a community will be influenced by disasters—either natural or human-caused:

- Can communities take responsibility for themselves?
- Are they sufficiently self-reliant to cope, when emergency services are stretched and deployed elsewhere?
- Do we understand community resilience sufficiently?
- What constitutes a catastrophic disaster?

A key role for EMA in planning the conference is to bring organisations and people together with the objective to seriously consider a number of priorities:

- the way that emergency response will develop over the next decade
- the protection of public health and safety
- the restoration of essential government services—at the three levels of government in Australia, and
- recovery in the face of competing challenges and demands.

EMA's Director General, Tony Pearce, is a firm believer in cooperative preparation for the management of emergencies:

"EMA's role in coordinating the Australian Government's support to State and Territory emergency operations, along with leading the national oversight of community safety issues, is to continue to work to build Australia's capability into the future.

"We face the need to develop greater capacity to deal with the risks inherent in major disaster events and to advance understanding of the factors that define and influence emergency management for the decades ahead," he says.

"Emergency Management is a shared responsibility," says Tony Pearce. "In order to meet current and new challenges, emergency managers and key stakeholders at the local, state and national level, volunteers, businesses and communities need to work in partnership to mitigate the impact of emergency and disaster events."

"This conference will provide a significant focal point for the emergency sector in Australia to concentrate on Surviving Future Risks."

The conference will also provide an excellent networking opportunity for those involved in the emergency sector.

For further information on the Australian Disasters Conference 2008, see EMA's website at [www.ema.gov.au](http://www.ema.gov.au) or contact Tonya Evans on 02 6256 4614.