

## WORKSHOP CLOSING REMARKS

by

THE DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIAN COUNTER DISASTER COLLEGE

During the last two days we've covered a lot of ground. We've heard the results of research recently conducted into individual, community and organisation behaviour in disaster. Indeed, we've had so much information provided to us that I'm sure we all need much more time to mull it over in our minds before we can determine its potential value and application.

Even though this wealth of information has been presented, it behoves us all to remember that we have merely applied the under-coat on a vast canvas which portrays the disaster research field. Many other disciplines will be involved in research into the various aspects of disaster before the canvas is properly covered. Indeed, Dr Michaelis' dinner address focussed on the need for inter-disciplinary research, and called for the establishment of an international disaster research laboratory. I believe that this particular proposal warrants further close consideration, with a view to working towards the establishment of such a research facility. Perhaps, through the various avenues available to you, you might care to further discuss this matter.

But, have we achieved the stated aim of this workshop or even the broader aim which I mentioned in my opening remarks? Not entirely, I would suggest - but we have made considerable progress. We certainly have exchanged recent research findings on recent human and organisation behaviour in disaster and discussed the need for the application of research to the planning and provision of welfare, health and other services before, during and after disaster and we've looked at some possible future directions of, and the support required for, research. However, I feel we did not discuss adequately the research questions which need to be addressed and the methodology to be employed following disaster. Even so, some useful views were expressed on this matter.

I detect a feeling amongst you that you lack confidence in your credibility as researchers. You seem to believe the planners and combat authorities won't acknowledge the importance of the research work which you and others are doing. If my suspicions are correct, I suggest that it is important that you act positively to prove the importance of your research efforts to them as planners and combat authorities. In particular, it seems that there is a need to establish the importance of research in the minds of the bureaucracy at all levels of government, but particularly at local government level,

and with the disaster-affected community. Based on the record, this will be no easy task, but it is a task that I believe you must concentrate on.

I'll be bold and suggest that you - the researchers - must be seen to be providing an essential service (by the cogent results of your research) to the planners and operators to improve your credibility.

I believe also, that you should heed the advice which Dr Leivesley offered, that we don't want to waste our relatively meagre research effort by re-proving earlier research efforts or re-learning. There are too many unresearched areas of Australian disasters to allow this to occur; and, you will recall that Professor Raphael called for collaboration and co-operation. While many researchers feel that co-ordination of their efforts in the national interest could be an impediment, I don't share their views. Co-operation, co-ordination and close collaboration between all researchers - particularly on an inter-disciplinary basis - is surely essential.

Your deliberations have highlighted the importance of researchers becoming involved in the planning process. While it is up to you to ensure that this occurs, this College will play its part in indicating the importance of using the talents of those who are involved in disaster research to assist in the planning processes.

Many times during our discussions the importance of conducting research over an extended period has been emphasised and, yet, it seems that insistence on confidentiality, which was highlighted in Dr Clayer's presentation, inhibits the researcher in this regard. It seems that steps need to be taken to ensure that the genuine efforts of the researcher should be facilitated by the bureaucracy rather than impeded. In the wake of disaster, the attention of those who are charged with bringing about the recovery of the disaster-affected community tends to concentrate on operational aspects. These individuals normally have so many immediate problems on their mind that the intrusion of researchers at this time is regarded as an unnecessary and intolerable luxury. For this reason, it is absolutely vital, in my opinion, that you must attempt to become involved in the planning processes and to improve your credibility - and, if you do become involved, you must make sure your contribution is really worthwhile. It is unfortunate that we did not have time to engage in small-group discussion, to form special interest groups to exchange views formally or, even, to do justice to any of the papers which were presented. However, this is the first of what I believe will be an on-going

series of disaster research workshops. Having opened the batting with this one, we will be endeavouring to ensure that we continue, at reasonable intervals, to conduct follow-up research activities.

I believe it is important that machinery should be established to permit the exchange of research information by way of a news letter. In addition to merely exchanging information, I believe that the news letter could also assist in closing the gap between the researchers, planners and operators.

From my point of view, I thought that Professor Budd highlighted the importance of looking at the total system when he spoke to us on epidemiology. He suggested three steps:

- \*Look closely at what is going on.
- \*Draw conclusions from your observations, and
- \*Apply the lessons which are drawn from your conclusions in practice.

There is no doubt that the papers which have been presented, have looked closely at what is going on and drawn very useful conclusions from their observations. It is important, however, that the lessons drawn from those conclusions should be applied in practice.

I can't close without mentioning the vexed question of funding. Prof Kearney's view is, I'm sure, valid: "funding for research follows disasters whereas it should precede it."

Thank you all, once again, for your attendance and for your contribution to the success of this Workshop.

AUSTRALIAN COUNTER DISASTER COLLEGE

RESEARCH WORKSHOP - HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IN DISASTER IN AUSTRALIA

25 - 27 April 1984

LIST OF ATTENDEES

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Dr E F Berah         | Dept Psychological Medicine Monash<br>University Prince Henry's Hospital,<br>Melbourne |
| Mr P E Berry         | Ministry of Civil Defence,<br>Wellington, New Zealand                                  |
| Assoc Prof R Blong   | School of Earth Sciences,<br>Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW                     |
| Dr B Boman           | Dept of Veterans Affairs, Repatriation<br>General Hospital, Concord, NSW               |
| Mrs C Bookless-Pratz | Mental Health Research & Evaluation<br>Centre, Glenside, SA                            |
| Mr N R Britton       | Dept of Behavioural Sciences,<br>James Cook University, QLD                            |
| Mr W J Buckingham    | Mental Health Division<br>Health Commission of Victoria, Melbourne                     |
| Assoc Prof G M Budd  | Commonwealth Institute of Health,<br>The University of Sydney, NSW                     |
| Prof E R Chamberlain | Dept of Social Work,<br>University of Queensland                                       |
| Mr P Cheney          | CSIRO Division of Forest Research,<br>Yarralumla, ACT                                  |
| Miss A J Clarke      | Dept of Psychology,<br>University of Adelaide, SA                                      |
| Dr J Clayer          | Mental Health Research & Evaluation<br>Centre, Glenside, SA                            |
| Dr P G Cook          | Sunshine Hospital & Health Services<br>Complex,<br>St. Albans, Vic.                    |
| Mr G Croft           | C/-Flinders Medical Centre,<br>Bedford Park, SA  |
| Dr J R Cronin        | Royal Park Hospital,<br>Parkville, Vic   |

LIST OF ATTENDEES (continued)

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Dr M J Fairly     | Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital,<br>Camperdown, NSW                        |
| Mr W N Frehse     | Psychology Honours Student,<br>La Trobe University, Bundoora Vic.              |
| Dr M Frost        | Royal Adelaide Hospital, SA  |
| Mr B J Grear      | Deputy Director General,<br>Dept of Technical & Further Education,<br>SA       |
| Dr J McL G Grigor | A/Director, Metal Health Division,<br>Health Commission of Victoria, Melbourne |
| Dr J M Innes      | Dept of Psychology,<br>University of Adelaide, SA                              |
| Dr H J Jones      | Royal Children's Hospital,<br>Parkville, Vic.                                  |
| Prof G E Kearney  | Dept of Behavioural Sciences,<br>James Cook University, QLD                    |
| Mrs S Leivesley   | Consultant Social Scientist,<br>Rainworth, QLD                                 |
| Mr L R Lester     | Insurance Council of Australia,<br>Melbourne, Vic.                             |
| Dr A C McFarlane  | Dept of Psychiatry,<br>The Flinders University of South<br>Australia, SA       |
| Dr A R Michaelis  | Interdisciplinary Science Reviews,<br>Hillview Gardens, London, England        |
| Mr E P Milliken   | Psychologist, Research Consultant,<br>Darwin, NT                               |
| Mr J A Nimmo      | Australian Red Cross Society,<br>East Melbourne, Vic                           |
| Prof J Oliver     | Hon Research Adviser, Dept of Geography,<br>University of Queensland, QLD      |
| Mr D R Packham    | National Centre for Rural Fire Research,<br>Chisholm Institute, Vic.           |
| Dr J Price        | Head, Dept of Psychiatry,<br>Royal Brisbane Hospital, QLD                      |

LIST OF ATTENDEES (continued)

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Prof B Raphael | Head, Dept of Psychiatry,<br>University of Newcastle, NSW                                    |
| Mr J D Scroope | A/Assistant Director General,<br>Commonwealth Dept of Social Security, ACT                   |
| Prof B Singh   | Monash University Dept of Psychological<br>Medicine, Royal Park Hospital, Parkville,<br>Vic. |
| Dr P Valent    | Psychiatrist, Jolimont, Vic.   |
| Dr M Wallace   | Dept of Psychology,<br>La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic.                                   |
| Mr D J Withers | Commonwealth Dept of Health, ACT   |

AUSTRALIAN COUNTER DISASTER COLLEGE

WORKSHOP ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IN DISASTER IN AUSTRALIA

25 - 27 APRIL 1984

PROGRAM

Wednesday, 25 April 1984

By 6.30 pm Assemble at ACDC  
7.00 pm Dinner

Thursday, 26 April 1984

8.30 am - SETTING THE SCENE

11.30 am Introduction to the Workshop  
(includes morning tea)

Brig I G C Gilmore  
Dr M Wallace

"Psychological Response to  
Disaster: What are the key  
Parameters for Research."

Prof B Raphael

"Applications of Research  
to Discussion Planning"

Mr B J Grear

"Ethical Aspects of Disaster  
Research"

Dr B Singh

11.30 am - STUDIES OF RECENT BUSHFIRES

2.15 pm "Psychiatric Disorder in  
(includes Primary School Children  
lunch following a Natural Disaster"

Dr A C McFarlane

"The Effects of Bushfire  
Disasters on Firefighters"

Dr M Wallace  
Dr P G Cook

"Preparedness for Bushfire"

Dr J Price

"Social Support and Adjustment  
following Disaster"

Dr M Wallace  
Dr P G Cook  
Mr W N Frehse

2.15 pm - ORGANISATION OF WELFARE SERVICES

"Twelve Months after the  
Bushfire a Follow-up Study  
of the 1983  
South Australian Bushfires"

Dr J R Clayer  
Mrs C Bookless-  
Pratz

"Planning for Mental Health  
Counter Disaster Services:  
Victoria's Experience on  
Ash Wednesday"

Mr W L Buckingham  
Dr J McL G Grigor

"Assessment of the Bushfire  
Relief Unit"

Dr M E Frost  
Dr A C McFarlane

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| "Welfare Policy and Disaster"  | Prof E R Chamberlain<br>Dr S Leivesley            |
| "Public Views on Disaster Response and the News Media - Some Australian Examples"      | Assoc Prof R Blong                                |
| "Conceptual Alternatives for the Analysis of Counter-Disaster Organisational Networks" | Mr N R Britton                                    |
| 6.00 pm for <u>WORKSHOP DINNER</u>   | Dr A R Michaelis                                  |
| 6.30 pm Dinner Address - "Inter disciplinary Disaster Research"                        | Editor,<br>Inter-disciplinary Science Review (UK) |

Friday, 27 April 1984

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 8.30 am - <u>GENERAL ISSUES IN DISASTER</u>   |   |
| 10.15 am (includes morning tea)   |   |
| "The Vietnam Veteran as Disaster Victim"  | Dr B Boman                                  |
| "Tropical Cyclone Oscar (1983): Psychological Reactions of a Fijian Population"               | Dr M J Fairley                              |
| "People who Experienced Cyclone Tracy: Human Responses"                                       | Mr E P Milliken                             |
| "The Southland Flood: an Organisational Approach to Disaster"                                 | Mr P E Berry                                |
| 10.15 am - <u>HELPERS AND WORKERS IN DISASTER</u>   |   |
| 12.30 pm  |   |
| "The Role and Reactions of a Mental Health Team involved in the Victorian Bushfire aftermath" | Dr E F Berah<br>Dr H J Jones<br>Dr P Valent |
| "The Response of Fire Fighters to Disaster and the Possible Role of Social Support"           | Dr J M Innes<br>Ms A J Clarke               |
| "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Fire Fighters: Ash Wednesday"                              | Dr A C McFarlane<br>Mr G Croft              |
| "The Epidemiology of Disaster"  | Assoc Prof G M Budd                         |
| "Insurance Response to Natural Disaster"  | Prof G E Kearney                            |



12.30 pm - LUNCH

1.30 pm

1.30 pm SUMMING UP

3.30 pm General Discussion

Chaired by Prof B Raphael

Close of Workshop

Brig I G C Gilmore

Vote of Thanks

Dr A C McFarlane

4.00 pm DISPERSAL

Bus departs for Airport

## HUMAN BEHAVIOUR IN DISASTER IN AUSTRALIA

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#### REFERENCES (Cont'd)

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