

for the organisation in question) and task competence (implying that the organisation undertaking a specific activity or task is proficient in that task, with other organisations acknowledging the competence of that organisation to perform the task) was lower than anticipated. The lowered domain consensus and its corollary - a lowered boundary specification is illustrated by:

- (1) the lack of information being provided to TASES regional headquarters;
- (2) the lack of requests for the organisation to be used other than as a 'grocery shop' whereby DROs would 'pick up' their orders (i.e. material resources) to augment their own supplies; and
- (3) not employing the coordination capabilities of the organisation or not using their purpose-designed operations rooms during the bushfire threat.

It did appear that in some instances the effectiveness and the efficiency of TAS SES had more to do with the individuals employed, rather than the organisation or its structure; that is, the interpersonal structure rather than the normative structure predominated. This has problems in the long-term, although in the short-run it may achieve the required results. The effectiveness of the organisation may change if personnel changes are introduced, as they must be over time. It should be remembered, however, that it is the 'system' which should be the basis for effective operations, not the actors in spite of the system.

IN VICTORIA, the Victoria State Emergency Service (VIC SES) is a branch of the Ministry of Police and Emergency Services, and operates under the provisions of a government charter which states that the role of VIC SES is "to plan, organise, coordinate and implement measures that are necessary or desirable in respect of the safety of the public and are designed to guard against, prevent, reduce or overcome the effect of emergencies inimical to life, health or property within Victoria". In terms of the State's Disaster Plan (DISPLAN), VIC SES's role is to supplement the combating agencies in their task, relative to natural and other disasters. In case of floods and windstorms, in particular, VIC SES assumes lead responsibility. It is also responsible for assisting municipalities with the establishment and training of LVES. Under DISPLAN the task of integrating the activities of the statutory and voluntary organisations associated with welfare is also the responsibility of VIC SES in conjunction with the Department of Community Welfare Services (DCWS). This responsibility is elaborated in more detail in the DISPLAN sub-plan related to welfare actions (the Disaster Welfare Plan). This Welfare Plan recognises three stages of a disaster event: impact, post-impact, and rehabilitation. Chairmanship of the committee which oversees disaster welfare planning remains with the Director of VIC SES during 'preimpact' states (although these stages do not appear within the frame of reference of the plan), and during the impact stage. Following impact, responsibility for welfare coordination and chairmanship

is transferred to the Dir. General DCWS. The transition of responsibility from one organisation to the other is not elaborated in the plan, nor has it been rehearsed in simulation exercises.

VIC SES suffers within the counter-disaster arrangements by not being able to carry out tasks to completion. Welfare planning commitments stipulate that VIC SES is to be the main activator following disaster intervention. This, however, is usually a time when organisational disruption is probably at its highest. By the time the organisation has become accustomed to its new role within a disaster context, the task which it has activated is suddenly whisked away from it and given to another organisation for completion. VIC SES is left to adapt to a secondary support role, which is largely unspecified in terms of planning arrangements.

Another difficulty encountered by VIC SES in the present structural arrangements is the command structure inherent within the plan. In DISPLAN there are four controlling - or command - systems that become operationalized in an 'Ash Wednesday' magnitude disaster. Each of these four systems influence the operations of VIC SES. In the Ash Wednesday event the controlling networks were the Police Department, which has responsibility of operating the State Disaster HQ; the lead combat authority, which was the Country Fire Authority and the Forests Commission of Victoria, both charged with eliminating the threat agent; the NDO, which has control of resources external to the State; and, in the post-impact phase of the disaster operations, the DCWS was in control of relief and welfare matters. Probably the most significant difficulty encountered by this arrangement for VIC SES was the flow of information from these sources. The effectiveness of the information channels amongst the organisations caused some concern. VIC SES was not formally advised of the bushfire threat, or of the operations being undertaken by the other DROs in the early phases of the situation. It was only the foresight and dedication of senior officers that VIC SES was opened and manned ready for operationalization on the night of February 16. Later in the disaster sequence the failure of the lead combat authority of the Police Department to establish a Media Liaison Officer, as DISPLAN specifies, contributed to VIC SES having difficulty with public donations. Misleading radio station messages to the public urging it to assist with clothing and other resources led to a flood of material being donated. VIC SES, the organisation in charge of welfare matters at the time, had to divert resources away from attending to the needs of immediate victims to tackling the problem of transporting, sorting and storing the donations. Later again, the Director-General of DCWS, after calling a meeting of all welfare organisational personnel, failed to invite the Director of VIC SES. In addition, a large number of requests submitted by VIC SES officers to the Police for NDO assistance were delayed for considerable periods because the police (which is charged under DISPLAN to be the responsible agent for establishing liaison between State and Federal assistance) failed to realize the significance of the requests.

The aftermath of the events of Ash Wednesday may also be significant for VIC SES. Two consequences worth noting in particular are the revision of the State Disaster Plan, and the creation of a Victorian Fire and Emergency Services Board. The special legislation introduced on 22 November 1983, entitled the State Disaster Act 1983, makes provision that the coordination of functions of all government agencies and officers relating to disaster combat are to be the direct responsibility of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In periods of declared disaster the Minister assumes the responsibility for the coordination of all DRO's, and is made "Coordinator-in-Chief". In this role he can implement and control all counter-disaster actions and allocate State government resources without reference to the decisions of his senior professional disaster management staff, if he so pleases. In particular, the Minister as Coordinator-in-Chief may take whatever steps he thinks appropriate for the coordination of all welfare measures in and following a state of disaster. He may also convene and preside over any meeting relating to welfare relief. He has the power to delegate any of these responsibilities should he wish. In addition, under this new policy, the Minister is responsible for the formulation of all policy related to the provision of welfare measures following disaster.

In essence, this new legislation reduces the function of VIC SES quite dramatically. It affects this organisation more than it does the DCWS, the other welfare organisation responsible for disaster welfare relief. Because VIC SES activities are determined only within the context of a disaster situation, any reduction in this area will automatically have a consequence in the role VIC SES will ultimately play. The new legislation further reduces VIC SES access to, and involvement within decisionmaking processes and may, as a consequence, result in an alteration of tasks assigned to this organisation in future declared disasters. This problem is exacerbated by the proposals put forward within the Public Service Board's management consultancy team's recommended Victorian Fire and Emergency Services Board.

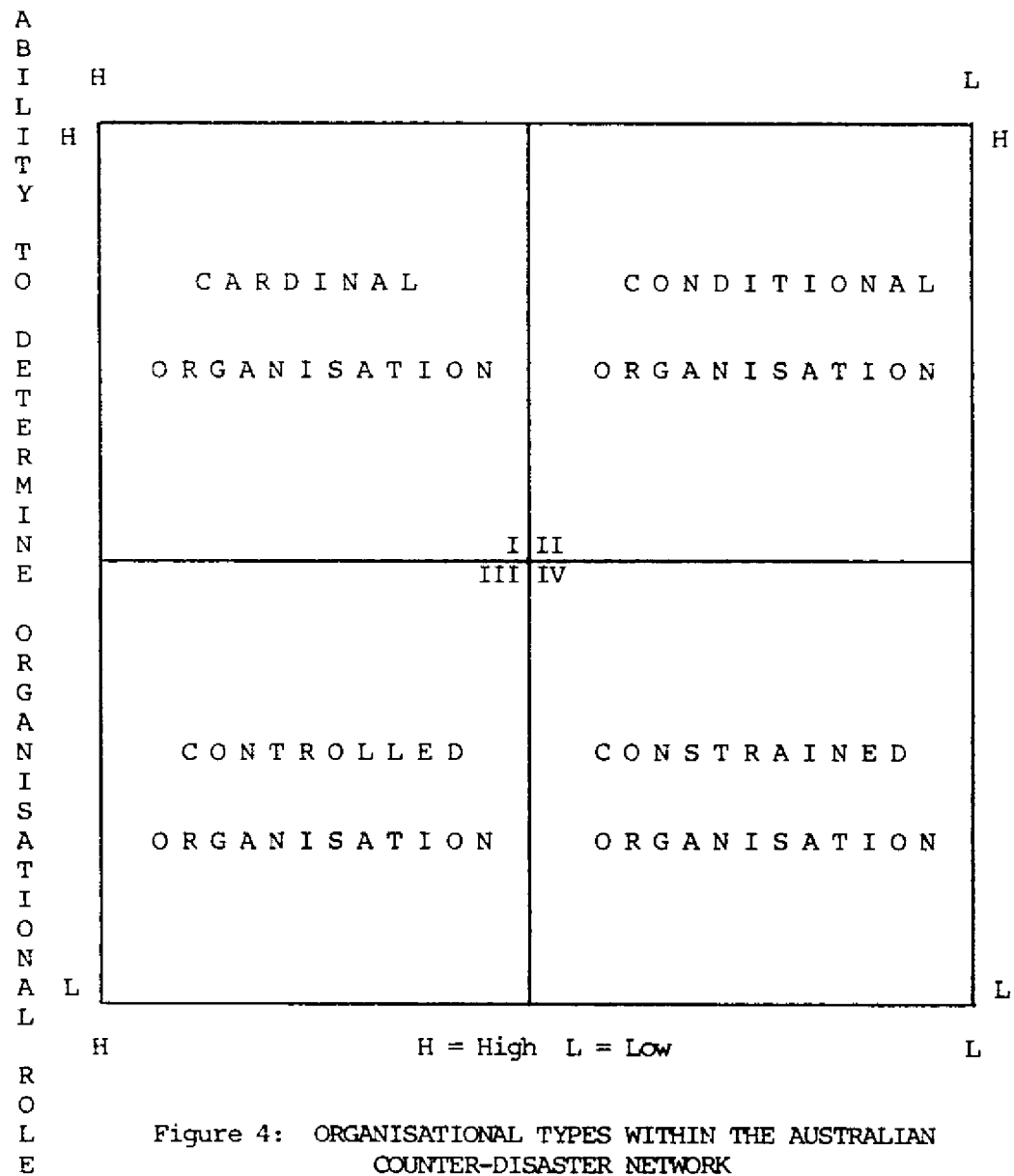
The effect that the creation of the Board will have on Victorian disaster management procedures has yet to be realised. However, it is assumed that one possibility is that the present VIC SES headquarters will eventually be incorporated into the Fire and Emergency Services Coordination Division, which would be responsible for planning and support, and operations liaison. Under this recommendation the operational structure at the regional and local level of VIC SES activities should remain the same, but decision-making and task assignment at State level (which, it should be pointed out, directs lower-level operations) would be given to another organisation. Retention of organisational autonomy, already a problem for VIC SES, may be further affected. Organisational domain may be readjusted, but how this may be altered is not yet known. There are still some areas of policy adjustment which need to be worked out that may yet work to the advantage of VIC SES.

## A NEW TAXONOMY

The seven variables that we looked at which related to organisational effectiveness, and the discovery that these factors were not operating advantageously for the State and Territory Emergency Service organisations, together with the two wildfire case-studies we have presented (we could just as easily have presented tropical cyclones or floods as the natural hazard agent in question and concentrated on other specific S/TES's to illustrate the points made), suggest that the effectiveness of the S/TES within the Australian counter-disaster management system has been compromised. The evidence also suggests that the predicament of the S/TES is a result of influences that stem from within the disaster-relevant organisational network (we are not dismissing the influence that external variables may have - such as the paucity of public understanding of the role S/TES play. These influences, however, are considered to be relatively minor in comparison with the variables we have discussed above). How can we formulate the statements that have been written in a way that illustrates what we believe is occurring?

One perspective which has been found to be most useful for understanding the findings, as has already been spelled out in the introduction, was to focus on how power, in the form of control and influence, was shared amongst the organisations that formed the network. Specifically, the powers of each organisation were considered on the basis of (i) the ability of the organisation to determine the role it would perform within the counter-disaster network, and (ii) the organisation's ability to influence how the network itself would operate. Four types of "organisations" are distinguishable: Cardinal organisations; Conditional organisations; Controlled organisations; and Constrained organisations. The relationship between these different types, and their association with the distribution of power is best illustrated in the form of a diagram:

POTENTIAL TO INFLUENCE DIRECTION OF ORGANISATIONAL NETWORK



By far the most powerful organisational type within the counter-disaster network are those organisations which have the capabilities for their senior officials to determine the role that the organisation will perform during all aspects of the organisation's functions, including a disaster situation. This capacity is achieved either through the acquisition of power and authority bestowed on the organisation by specific legislation; or by the role they perform within the social structure as it relates to emergency management, which is transferred through the process of legitimation to the disaster situation; or because they have skills and material resources appropriate to the amelioration of the threat situation. These organisations also have the power, either by virtue of legislation or their standing within the network, to influence the direction that the network will take. Such organisations are called Cardinal organisations because of their central position within the network and the centralization of power they can muster within the net. The tasks these organisations perform are commensurate with the societal value of preserving or saving life and property.

The group of organisations that has a relatively high degree of determinability to specify the role which it will undertake, yet does not have as much influence within the organisational network, has been labelled Conditional organisations. These organisations are usually autonomous during non-emergency circumstances. Contained within this group are those organisations which have specific skills or resources (or legal bases) that more-or-less predetermine their functions within the counterdisaster structure. However, they do not possess a continual or a significant degree of influence within the organisational network to determine the direction of the entire network. They may, under certain circumstances, be capable of determining the roles performed by some organisations whose functions are similar to their own in an emergency period. Legitimacy and functional performance is conditional upon the acceptance of these specific organisations by the controlling Cardinal organisations, through which it gets approval from the majority of organisations within the overall network. Although the tasks these organisations perform are essential, they are secondary to the tasks performed by cardinal organisations. In Figure 2 these organisations are located within the ERO category, rather than the DRO group.

A further organisational type is characterised by its ability to influence the direction of the organisational network, and to dictate its own role within the counter-disaster organisational framework. However, this organisational type is restrained from doing so by legislation and political considerations. They are high-status organisations but keep a low profile during a disaster event unless called upon by the cardinal organisations or the organisations charged with liaising with external organisations. These organisations can

influence the organisational network in a forthright manner through their control of resources that may be required in disaster situation, and also indirectly by having control over resources that are made available to some network organisations during non-operational periods. These are called Controlled organisations.

Their task is primarily to act as a support net for the Cardinal organisations.

The last type of organisation usually appears to be 'younger' than the more established organisations discussed above. Whereas the other types of organisations have quite a long 'track record' of involvement within emergency management and counter-disaster operations, Constrained organisations are relative newcomers. Consequently, their role within the network is less rigidly defined, and the organisation's functions are not as entrenched as some of the other types can be. The role of this organisation is more-or-less determined externally, by members of the organisational network, either in a direct manner or indirectly; in some cases both approaches may be used. Its placement within the network is determined in varying degrees by its organisational set rather than characteristics of the organisation itself or the personnel within it. The task of this organisation is very similar to that of the Cardinal organisations and Conditional organisations during disaster, at least in terms of official documentation.

It is also possible to regard these organisational types as having different positions along a continuum of "power potency". The continuum is related to whether the organisational network has control over the organisation (indicating little power potency), or whether the organisation has control over the network (suggesting great power potency).

CONTINUUM OF POWER WITHIN THE COUNTER-DISASTER ORGANISATIONAL NETWORK

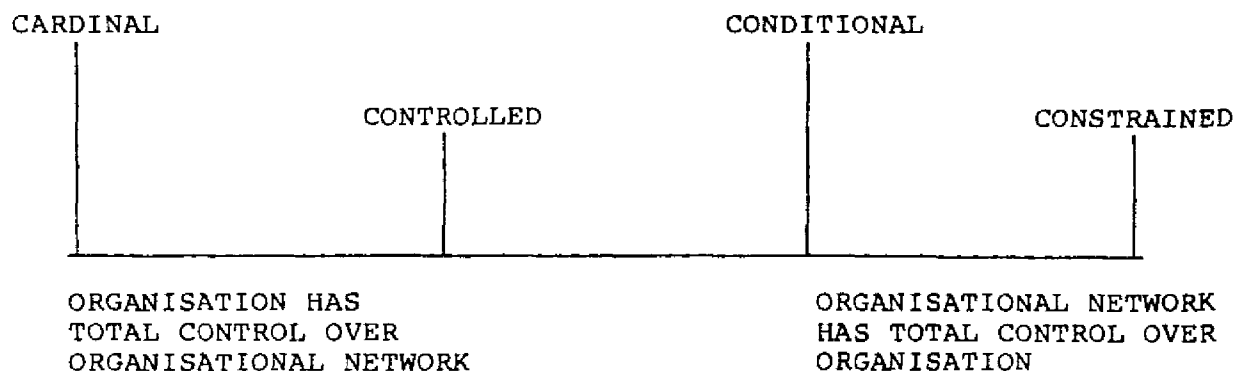


FIGURE 5

As Figure 5 suggests, at the highest level is the Cardinal organisation because it has the greatest real and potential power to control the orientation of the entire disaster management network. It has more power vested in it than the other organisational types. The next organisation in terms of power is the Controlled organisation. It has a significant amount of potential power, yet does not wield it all at any one time during civil crisis periods. It can nevertheless exert significant influence on the organisations within the network both directly and indirectly. The next level of organisational power is the Conditional organisation. They do not usually wield a significant amount of power within the disaster situation in terms of network influence, but they may be powerful within areas that are designated as being in their jurisdiction. The final organisation with the least amount of power potential and with the least possibility of influencing the network is the Constrained organisation. It does not appear capable of exerting much control over the network decision-makers.

In terms of specific organisations, we suggest that the Police Department, the lead combat authorities and the State/Territory Disaster Committees are examples of Cardinal organisations. Senior officials within this central organisational type form the 'dominant coalition' within the disaster management network. The dominant coalition may be expanded at times to include representatives of Conditional organisations with the onset of post-impact operations. In this group of organisations, government welfare or social security departments, voluntary agencies (that is, most of the support organisations), and other combat authorities would be placed. Examples of a Controlled organisation would be the Natural Disasters Organisation (NDO) and its parent organisation, the federal Department of Defence. The State and Territory Emergency Service (S/TES) would be the example provided for the Constrained organisation.



# POTENTIAL TO INFLUENCE DIRECTION OF ORGANISATIONAL NETWORK

A B I L I T Y  T O  D E T E R M I N E  O R G A N I S A T I O N A L  R O L E	H			L
	H	<p>CARDINAL ORGANISATION</p> <p>-Police Departments -(s/t) Disaster committees -Lead Combat Authorities</p> <p>1</p>	<p>CONDITIONAL ORGANISATION</p> <p>- Other Combat Authorities - Voluntary Agencies - Govt. Welfare Dept's</p> <p>2</p>	H
	L	<p>CONTROLLED ORGANISATION</p> <p>- Natural Disaster Orgn. - Federal Dept. Defence</p>	<p>CONSTRAINED ORGANISATION</p> <p>- State &amp; Territory Emergency Service organisations</p>	L
	H			L

FIGURE 6: EXAMPLES AND TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE  
AUSTRALIAN COUNTER-DISASTER NETWORK

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The basic findings presented in this paper suggest that the State and Territory Emergency Service organisations do have a number of constraints placed upon them; and that these constraints are imposed by factors external to the organisation, but internal to the network. Restrictions placed on the

functions of this organisation during operationalisation appear to be a deliberate attempt by traditional disaster-relevant organisations (DRO's) to exclude the S/TES from actively engaging in the full potential it can offer within the counter-disaster organisational network. In particular, the dominant organisations within the network seem to employ two types of method to reduce the involvement of the S/TES, which have serious repercussions on the effectiveness of that organisation.

In the first category, formal constraining methods are used to control the functions of the organisation. These are manifested by devices such as;

- having the position of Director placed within the role-set of a senior incumbent in another counter-disaster organisation; or
- having organisational policy determined by officials outside the organisation; or
- by defining the roles of the organisations on the basis of nebulous legislation that is open to wide interpretation and possible manipulation by officials who have the capabilities to influence the organisation in question.

Formalized prescriptions such as those found within the Acts of Parliament and the various State Disaster Plans determine the parameters that the S/TES must work within. These boundary specifications, however, have a certain degree of flexibility contained within them. It is the second category of limiting devices employed by the traditional DROs that further reduces the choices available to the S/TES. These are the informal methods.

Informal methods can be more constraining than formal prescriptions. It is the application of informal practices that determine the amount of flexibility available within the official boundary specifications. Informal mechanisms that restrict the performance of the S/TES are:

- delaying to inform the S/TES officials that the network has become operationalized;
- refusal to share information that is essential for continual and effective participation;
- negative attitudes that question the effectiveness and the role of the organisation; and
- not attempting to be cognizant of the roles the organisation plays within the disaster context.

All of these have been employed at some stage by DROs within the Australian counter-disaster organisational network in their relation to the S/TES. Unfortunately, it is not only the S/TES that suffers. The effectiveness of the entire counter-disaster network must also be reduced by these practices.

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