

# MAINSTREAMING FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: LAW AND POLICY LEARNING

Michael Eburn<sup>1</sup> and Stephen Dovers<sup>2</sup>

1 ANU College of Law and Fenner School of Environment and Society, the Australian National University, Canberra.

2 Director, Fenner School of Environment and Society, the Australian National University, Canberra.

## The research question

Emergency management is a whole of government and cross-sectoral challenge. It need to be a mainstream issue – it’s everyone’s business.

We asked “How does law impact upon emergency management and in particular the emergency services?”

## Findings

1. There is mainstreaming of emergency management, though the strength of the mainstreaming is unclear and contestable
2. Despite perceptions to the contrary, litigation is not a significant threat to the emergency services.
3. Australian emergency management policy suffers from a lack of clear objectives or measures of success. Agencies, governments and citizens cannot identify whether or not policy objectives are being met and whether the emergency services are succeeding in their tasks.

## Selected Outputs

- Eburn, M., and Dovers, S, ‘Mainstreaming Fire and Emergency Management across Legal and Policy Sectors: Preliminary Findings on Measures of Success’, (2012) 27(2) *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 14-19.
- Eburn, M, and Dovers, S, ‘Australian wildfire litigation’ (2012) 21(5) *International Journal of Wildland Fire* 488-497.
- Eburn, M ‘Sharing responsibility and community resilience: The role of law in converting policy to action’ in Clarke, M and Griffin, G (eds) *Next Generation Disaster Management* (Australian Security Research Centre, 2012).
- Eburn, M., and Handmer, J, ‘Legal Issues and Information on Natural Hazards’ (2012) 17 *Local Government Law Journal*, 19-26.
- Eburn, M and Jackman, B, ‘Mainstreaming fire and emergency management into law’ (2011) 28(2) *Environmental and Planning Law Journal* 59-76.

## A view from the lead end- user

“Research conducted into emergency management legislation and policy to date has provided some comfort to emergency responders that the perception of frequent litigation against individuals and agencies has been overstated and in fact, individual emergency responders across Australia are well protected against personal liability.

“Emergency Services have reacted positively to research on this topic and many have given support to after action reviews by emergency services that facilitate a no blame culture.

“The research outcomes have given emergency service agencies and responders significant encouragement that positive change can be implemented in policy and law, reducing the perception that the finger of blame for loss of life and property during emergency is invariably pointed in the direction of those who sacrifice their time and family commitments to serve their community.”

Mick Ayre, SACFS

Lead End User