

The 38th Annual National Environmental Health Conference

Toni Hannelly, Conference Convener

The 38th Annual National Environmental Health conference was held in Perth, Western Australia from the 24th – 26th September 2013. The extensive and diverse conference programme showcased over 80 speakers and included several high profile keynote speakers whose presentations were not only inspiring and motivating, but also highlighted how environmental health fits into the bigger picture. Keynotes included:

- Akram Azimi: 2013 Young Australian of the Year
- Professor Fiona Wood: Burns Specialist and 2005 Australian of the Year
- Dr Harry Butler AO, CBE: 1979 Australian of the Year and also a National Living Treasure
- Professor Lyn Beazley: Chief Scientist of Western Australia
- Dr Liz Hanna: Convenor, Climate Change Adaptation Research Network, ANU
- Professor Peter Newman: Professor of Sustainability, Curtin University
- Jim Dodds: Chair enHealth
- Professor Tarun Weeramanthri: Executive Director Public Health (WA)
- Peter Davey: President International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH)

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“The conference was an outstanding success with 180-210 attendees each day and delegates from every State and Territory. We were also very pleased to welcome international delegates and speakers from New Zealand, Malawi and Fiji.”

*Toni Hannelly,
Conference Convener*

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Malcolm McCusker (Governor of Western Australia), Akram Azimi (Young Australian of the Year 2013) and Joseph Zapavigna (Former National President of EHA).



Welcome to Country by Marie Taylor



Professor Fiona Wood

38th Annual National Environmental Health Conference cont.

The themed concurrent sessions delivered 'something for everyone' and served to highlight the extreme diversity within the profession. It also made for some tough choices between which sessions to attend. The sessions included:

- Food - safety in business, legislation and industry
- Communicable disease
- Climate change
- Disaster recovery
- Health promotion
- Indigenous health
- Effluent disposal
- EH research / EH risk
- Water management
- International perspectives
- Local government programmes
- Vector management
- Environmental issues

Pre- and post-conference workshops were also held covering practical aspects of day to day EH tasks. Topics included 'Hazardous Materials Awareness', 'Asbestos – A Public Health Problem', 'National Construction Code (NCC) Versus the WA Health Act 1911' and 'Environmental Noise.'

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Vic Andrich (President EHA(WA)), Professor Lyn Beazley (Chief Scientist of WA) and Joseph Zapavigna (Former National President of EHA).



Dr. Harry Butler AO CBE

38th Annual National Environmental Health Conference cont.

And just to make sure it wasn't all work and no play, there was also plenty of opportunity set aside for networking and socialising. The week's social activities were very well attended and began with a Civic Reception hosted by the City of Perth, followed by a Welcome Reception and Sponsors' Sundowner at the Hilton the following evening. The week's 'official' socialising culminated in a Gala Dinner held at the State Reception Centre in King's Park which overlooks the beautiful Swan River and city lights. The Centre was recently refurbished for CHOGM so it was definitely the best view in town!

The EHA (WA) Board and Conference Committee would like to thank all our sponsors for helping make this event possible, in particular we would like to thank our major sponsors enHealth, the City of Perth, Jaymak and the Western Australia Department of Health.

We would also like to thank all the speakers for their time and professionalism in presenting to our delegates. And finally to our delegates, especially those who travelled long distances to attend, thank you for attending, for your enthusiasm and also your positive input – it all contributed towards making this our best conference ever (until next time anyway!).

FUNDRAISER

This commissioned caricature by Jason Chatfield (who also draws Ginger Meggs) depicts the juggling act EHOs undertake each day. Conference attendees who donated to [True Blue Dreaming](#) (a charity for young Australians in rural remote communities) went into the draw to win it. Over \$650 was raised for True Blue Dreaming. A3 copies of the print can be purchased from EHA(WA).

Exhibitors



Access to Presentations

Delegates and EHA members are able to access copies of the conference presentations via EHA (WA) [website](#).



CONFERENCE PHOTOS
EHA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2013





WA celebrated the amalgamation of environmental health associations

Earlier this year the environmental health professional associations Environmental Health Australia (EHA (WA)) and Environmental Health Association Australia (EHAA) amalgamated and will operate under the constitution of EHA (WA).

The presidents of both organisations recognised the need for one strong professional association to represent the interests and the future of environmental health professionals.



National President's Report

As this is my inaugural report as the EHA National President I would like to publicly extend my thanks and appreciation to the outgoing President, Joseph Zappavigna, for his efforts and time at the helm of EHA over the past 3 years. Joseph has played a major part in ensuring that our newly structured national organisation is financially viable and stable and is on course to improve its service delivery to the membership. There are certainly some exciting and challenging times ahead!

The 38th National Conference held in Perth in September was an outstanding success – congratulations to EHA (WA) Inc. for their outstanding efforts and hard work. It certainly has set the benchmark for future national conferences.

The National Conference highlighted to me the potential for EHA to forge new regional and, indeed, international relationships with our colleagues from other countries. The tragedy that has recently unfolded in the Philippines highlights the role that specifically trained and qualified EHOs from Australia can play by volunteering their emergency management services to relevant aid agencies to help in these circumstances. There is no doubt that forging closer bonds with our regional colleagues would be of great benefit to our profession anyway, including during times when natural disasters strike.

You would be aware that the national and state websites are currently being upgraded and improved to enable the members direct access for making on-line payments, booking training sessions and so on. It will also mean that the national Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program for the profession can be managed on-line by individual members in all states.

There are other national projects on the go and these will be reported on as they near completion. I am excited about the next couple of years and the difference that EHA can make in our professional lives and for our communities.

I encourage you to maintain close contact with your respective State Board of Directors as I know they would appreciate hearing from you on any issue.

Mark Dwyer
National President

Emergency Sheltering 'hands on' at Red Cross Conference

Article provided by the Australian Red Cross.

Emergency Sheltering simulations challenged volunteers at the recent statewide *Foundations and Futures Conference 2013* held recently by Australian Red Cross (Queensland). The simulations were facilitated by the Emergency Sheltering Officer and the Work, Health and Safety Coordinator.

The simulations involved a mini-tornado hitting the town. Five 'hands on' activities engaged emergency services volunteers in responding appropriately. A key intended learning outcome was for volunteers to work as a team to successfully enact the designated roles within the simulations.



1. **The Kit** – participants familiarised themselves with an evacuation centre kit and problem solved to find appropriate destinations for particular kit contents in a centre, for example, signage for sleeping spaces; resident information sheets for safety and behaviors; intake and sign in sheets for people affected by the disaster. Participants then 'became' community members (for Simulation 2) entering an evacuation centre for safety and support and to find out information.



2. **Intake** – appropriate practices for the intake of community members presenting at an evacuation centre were enacted. These practices involved setting up a meet and greet space, conducting a triage process for a breadth of distressed community members, and ensuring efficient processing of registration using the correct forms.

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Emergency Sheltering 'hands on' at Red Cross conference cont.



3. **Sleeping** – implementing preferred sheltering practices in relation to sleeping space layout in an evacuation centre was the challenge for this simulation. Using the available space, participants worked as a team to set up for the temporary phase of sheltering (5 sq. metres). Participants organised signage and comfort kits for incoming centre residents.



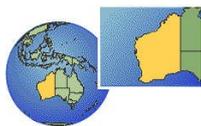
4. **Communicate** – participants worked with role play cards to construct the daily Information Board with critical news about weather, road closures, services, hygiene reminders, appropriate behaviours, visits and meal times. Managing a VIP visit challenged the day's organisation with protocols and protecting centre residents.



5. **Incident and Hazard Management** – the roles of the State and Field Safety Advisors was explained to all participants. Participants then worked with role play cards and completed the appropriate report forms for the situations. In-depth group discussions were then had about the importance of reporting such hazards and incidents, and how this data is used pro-actively for future activations.

Volunteers referred to the Australian Red Cross publications *Evacuation Centre Field Guide* and the *Preferred Emergency Sheltering Practices* to assist their decision-making. For further information contact: emergencysheilding@redcross.org.au.

Updates from the States ...



Western Australia

Workshops/Seminars

There have been a number of workshops and seminars held recently including Public Events, Contaminated Sites, Allergy and Anaphylaxis (2 workshops) and Alcohol and the Role of Local Government. The workshop/seminars are part of a series of training events EHA (WA) has planned and have all had good attendance.

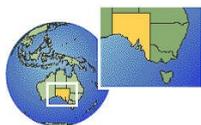
Environmental Health Officer Promotion

EHA (WA) has recently completed a video clip 'A day in the life of an Environmental Health Officer' and it has been released on the [EHA YouTube channel](#). The clip is available for members and others to download and use to promote the profession at career days and other events. Additional resources are currently being produced which will augment the video clip. Please check the EHA website for updates.

- [A day in the life of an EHO \(long version\)](#)
- [A day in the life of an EHO \(short version\)](#)

FoodSafe™ being updated

EHA (WA) is pleased to announce that it has commenced updating the *FoodSafe™* Food Handler Training package and will be including a new segment on 'Allergens and Anaphylaxis'. The new segment will provide a guide for Food Businesses, Environmental Health Officers and authorised Food Officers on what is expected and what actions are needed to minimise potential allergic reactions to foods. The new segment is in partnership with Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia and it is hoped that it will be released in 2014. EHA (WA) is taking this opportunity to review and modernise the whole food hygiene training package to ensure a consistent quality product. If members would like to have input to the review, please contact our Executive Officer Julianne at wa@eh.org.au.



South Australia

Another year almost gone but EHA (SA) Inc. is still growing strong in South Australia. This year has been a challenging and rewarding year. Challenging in that a lot of time is being spent putting together training that would suit the needs of the environmental health profession here in SA. There is still a lot of decision making happening across this area as we want to get it right.

Training for our members is an important part of EHA (SA) Inc. and the board have been working with our Special Interest Groups (SIGs) representatives to make the sessions that are offered informative and leave members with knowledge that they can utilise in their everyday tasks. Unfortunately organising training can be time consuming and given that SIG convenors and secretaries already donate their time freely to manage the SIGs we are looking at alternatives in rolling out successful training sessions.

The rewarding part is working with professionals who donate their time towards training and SIGs. The SIGs are a primary part of EHA (SA) Inc. and continue to inform and up date our members throughout the year. The Public Health and Food SIG has been very well attended, informing our members and providing presenters to speak at these forums. Our Supported Residential SIG is small, but don't let that fool you, they are still continuing to contribute to our members across SA.

Our state conference was very successful and brought opportunities to partner with other organisations such as PIA, PHAA and SA Health focussing on environmental topics and issues and working towards a better future for all.

The National Conference will be in South Australia on the 15th -17th October 2014 so we working hard to make sure our visitors have a wonderful conference experience in South Australia.



Queensland

EHA (Qld) recently held its annual State conference in Rockhampton. Keynote presentations included 'The economics of improving environmental health' by Professor John Rolfe, 'Microbial quality of alternative water sources' by Dr Simon Toze and 'Public health vectors' by Dr Scott Ritchie. The rest of the program was packed full of topical presentations that addressed the conference theme 'Environmental health - challenging times'. There were sessions on public health, vectors, disaster response, food safety, environmental issues including flying foxes, and environmental health workforce. There was also a technical tour to the historical Mt Morgan mine and a workshop 'dealing with the real problem - hoarding and mental health'. The conference dinner was held at the Capricorn Caves and included a night tour of the caves. The EHA (Qld) Inc. environmental health excellence awards were presented during the conference dinner and we congratulate Melissa McKeown on receiving the 'Environmental Health Professional of the Year 2012' award and Brooke Saunders on receiving the President's Award. Both award recipients have made an excellent contribution to the profession for many years.

EHA (Qld) Inc. has recently prepared draft policy statements which were circulated to the members of all EHA state associations. We are very grateful for the excellent feedback and suggestions received from numerous EHA members. The draft policies are currently being reviewed based on the feedback received and will be presented to the EHA national board for adoption soon.

EHA (Qld) Inc. promotes environmental health careers at various events including the largest career expo in Queensland each year. Although Queensland is not experiencing an EHO shortage anymore, it remains important to promote the profession as many students attending career expos are in grade 10 or 12 and therefore they won't graduate from environmental health university courses for 3-5 years, by which stage there may be workforce shortages again.



New South Wales

Many changes are in the pipeline for local government in NSW at the moment with a number of reviews and inquiries underway.

To promote the voice of environmental health, submissions have been made on topics including a new regulatory framework for wood heaters and the management and disposal of waste on private land.

In relation to the domestic waste inquiry, EHA (NSW) INC highlighted the difficulties Councils face in dealing with problems such as hoarding, illegal dumping and clandestine drug labs due to deficiencies in current legislation. As a result an EHA (NSW) INC representative was invited, and did attend the Parliamentary Enquiry, to answer questions. Fingers crossed, the Government listens and makes some much needed changes that give Council more effective powers to order clean-ups and to recover costs.

The submission EHA (NSW) INC made into a new regulatory framework for wood heaters emphasised the significant adverse health impacts that arise through the use of wood heaters – an issue particularly important for the community in metropolitan and rural areas alike.

Recently the media picked up on the findings of a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into domestic wastewater. EHA (NSW) INC made a submission to the inquiry and as a result, the Sydney Morning Herald sought comment from us on our views on the use of wastewater from domestic septic systems in market gardening operations. The article can be found at <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/health-risk-as-crops-watered-with-effluent-20130706-2pily.html>.

The annual state seminar held in Wollongong on 27 and 28 May with a diverse range of presentation topics, was very well received. Upcoming training includes a Noise Management Course and NEPM 2013 Amendment Training for EHOs, both being held in Sydney metro area in November. The popular Public Health School will be held both in Sydney and south western NSW in 2014.



Tasmania

The quarterly professional development seminars held at The Grange Function Centre in Campbell Town in March and June were both well attended and included an extensive range of relevant and interesting topics. Training courses provided during the year to date include an *Infection Control Course for EHOs* concerning public health risk activities and a *Food Microbiology and Sampling Workshop*. Both courses were well attended and it was clear that more training variety and opportunities would be appreciated by the membership.

The State Conference held in September at the Fox and Hounds Inn, Port Arthur was another popular and well supported annual event. The conference theme - *Environmental Health: A Risky Business* enabled a host of topics and speakers to present on issues such as immunisation and the anti-vaccine lobby, local government amalgamations, interpretation of health legislation, partnerships with the EPA, emergency management and the Tasman Peninsula bushfires, exhumations, backyard tattooists, environmental mismanagement – a case study, technical tours to a controversial landfill site and a local oyster hatchery, climate change and its impact on local government, places of assembly, infection control workshop, food allergens and Foodbank of Tasmania.

The Annual General Meeting of EHA (Tas) Inc., which was held during the State Conference, and a subsequent Board meeting saw a total of 11 members appointed to the Board. This near capacity Board has already expressed its desire to improve communication with all members of the profession and to increase the benefits for the membership. Exciting times lay ahead!



Victoria

EHA is committed to working towards reconciliation with the EHPA group in Victoria. The national Board had a fruitful face-to-face meeting with members of EHPA board in June and the general consensus was that both organisations should endeavour to engage further with each other to identify and progress issues of common concern. Since that time the EHA Board has written to EHPA seeking feedback from them on their willingness and capacity to undertake further communication and liaison with EHA and we are awaiting their response with interest. EHA is also committed to re-establishing EHA (VIC) Inc. in the state of Victoria.



Environmental Health Australia

39th Annual National Environmental Health Conference

15-17 October 2014
Adelaide, South Australia



International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH)

13th World Congress on Environmental Health

7-10 July 2014
Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

EHA is planning a group tour prior to the IFEH World Congress on Environmental Health next year. The tour may involve technical tours and meetings as well as several days visiting national parks (e.g. the Grand Canyon) and other significant sites. Register your interest with the [EHA national office](#) if you're interested in participating.



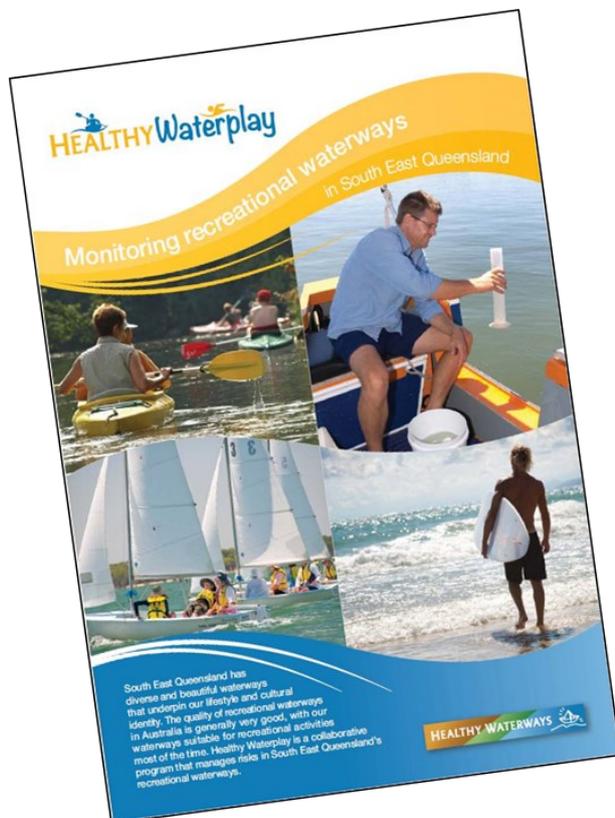
Article provided by Healthy Waterways.

HEALTHY Waterplay

South East Queensland has diverse and beautiful waterways that are embraced by our community for their recreational value. Following the January 2011 floods, Healthy Waterways established a collaborative program called Healthy Waterplay to assess human health risks associated with the recreational use of waterways in South East Queensland. Partners of the program include a number of local governments, water utilities and Queensland Health. Since its inception, Healthy Waterplay has proved fundamental in facilitating regionally consistent monitoring, reporting and management of microbial risks associated with primary and secondary contact recreation in waterways. Healthy Waterplay enhances safe recreational use through the implementation of a regional risk management framework that has been adopted from the National Health and Medical Research Council 'Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water'. Healthy Waterplay provides our members with community engagement and education, advice on monitoring programs and best practice site management as well as a platform for regional knowledge sharing and capacity building. Highlights of the program include:

- establishing regionally aligned trigger values for routine microbial water quality monitoring
- benchmarking the communities' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of recreational use of waterways via a community survey
- developing engagement tools such as [factsheets and webpages](#) to promote key messages for safe waterway recreation to the community.

For more information on Healthy Waterplay and to access the program's resources, please contact [Healthy Waterways](#).



News in brief ...



CPD scheme re-launched.

EHA has had a Certified Professional Development (CPD) scheme since 2008. Earlier this year EHA benchmarked our scheme against other professional associations. The scheme has been updated to reflect current best practice and is available. The [CPD scheme](#) was re-launched at the national conference and all members are encouraged to maintain their CPD log either online or manually.



Social media.

EHA (WA) has developed a video clip 'A day in the life of an Environmental Health Officer' and it has been released on the [EHA YouTube channel](#). The clip is available for members and others to download and use to promote the profession at career days and other events. Additional resources are currently being produced which will augment the video clip.

You may also like to join the [EHA LinkedIn group](#), like [EHA on Facebook](#) and follow [EHA on Twitter](#).



Environmental health awareness and information resource.

Last year EHA (SA) Inc. was successful in receiving a \$22,000 grant to develop an environmental health awareness and information resource which can be used by environmental health professionals to promote the environmental health profession. Healthy Environs successfully tendered for the project. It will be launched at EHA (SA) Inc. AGM on 11 December 2013. Those who have had a sneak preview think it is awesome and will be well used by EHOs.



Environmental health disaster management course.

EHA (Qld) Inc. has led the formation of a partnership with the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) and the USA Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to deliver an Australianised version of the CDC environmental health disaster management course. The CDC course is delivered in numerous countries, enhancing international consistency in environmental health disaster management. The feedback from the 2013 course was excellent.

The next [environmental health disaster management](#) course is scheduled for 24-29 August 2014.

Environmental Health Resources

Agents of Foodborne Illness, 2nd edition

FSANZ have released the second edition of the publication '[Agents of foodborne illness](#)'. The publication includes updated information about pathogens that cause foodborne illness and has been expanded to include information about parasites and infectious prion particles.

The information about pathogens includes:

- Growth and survival characteristics
- Symptoms of disease
- Virulence factors
- Epidemiological data including summaries of significant outbreaks
- Occurrence in food
- Susceptible populations
- Dose-response relationship.

For more information and to download the publication '[Agents of foodborne illness](#)' visit the [FSANZ website](#).

National Strategy for Disaster Resilience Community Engagement Framework

The '[National strategy for disaster resilience community engagement framework](#)' provides guidance for practitioners to effectively engage with their communities. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) 'Public participation spectrum' was used to develop a model that details principles of and approaches to community engagement in the context of emergency management.

For more information and to download the publication '[National strategy for disaster resilience community engagement framework](#)' visit the [Australian Emergency Management](#) website.

Australian Emergency Management Knowledge Hub

The '[Australian emergency management knowledge hub](#)' contains a wide range of information and resources of interest to environmental health professionals.

The important role environmental health professionals play in all phases of disaster management continues to be recognised by other organisations. EHA was invited to attend the 'Building Capability in Communities: A National Approach to Animals in Disasters' workshop in September 2013. Numerous organisations attended including government agencies and not-for-profit organisations. EHA will continue to work with other organisations interested in animal management in disasters and will keep members informed of relevant outcomes.



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