**Managing Animals in Disasters**

Improving preparedness, response and resilience through individual and organisational collaboration

# MAiD AWARE

## July 2014

# Introducing MAiD

The Managing Animals in Disasters (MAiD) project is a Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) initiative and is part of the *Communication and Warnings* cluster of projects. It commenced in January 2014 and will run for three and a half years – ending in June 2017.

**AIM** - The MAiD initiative is seeking to identify and build best practice approaches to animal welfare emergency management to enable engagement with animal owners, and other stakeholders in disasters/emergencies.

**GOAL** - The goal is to improve outcomes for public safety and the resilience of responders, animal owners, those with animal-related businesses, and their communities.

In this project 'animal owners' include pet owners, small land holders with animals, those with animal-related businesses, and farmers with livestock. Similarly, 'responders' may include emergency services personnel, staff from Primary Industries or local government, RSPCA or Red Cross personnel, and could extend to private vets, animal rescue, shelter volunteers, or enthusiastic members of the general public.

The main areas of focus of the project are shown in the table below.

| P | Prevention | - Emergency management engagement with owners, communities, and other responders. |
|---|---|---|
| P | Preparedness | |
| R | Response | - Coordination with other emergency service agencies and participating organisations.<br>- Management of owners and their animals, and untrained animal-related volunteers. |
| R | Recovery | - Supporting owners and communities post-disaster to build resilience. |

**OUTPUTS** – Project activities will lead to the development of evidence-informed support tools to assist operational response, communication and professional development. These could include training resources, guidelines, or engagement materials.

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# The first six months and beyond



*L-R: Mel Taylor, Brad Smith, Kirrilly Thompson*

The project officially kicked-off on 01 January with the 'usual' project start-up activities; team teleconferences, project plan development, and recruitment. The University of Western Sydney (UWS) and Central Queensland University (CQUni) both offered PhD scholarships to align to the project and UWS PhD scholarship interviews took place in March (more on that later).

Project funding supports two part-time post-doctoral positions, one at UWS and one at CQUni. Brad Smith was recruited to the CQUni position and started work on 01 March.

**RESEARCH ADVISORY FORUM** - The BNHCRC hosted a Research Advisory Forum 18-20 March in Adelaide; bringing together the project researchers and the CRC partner organisations – including most of the nominated project end users. All projects had five minutes to tell those assembled what they planned to do in their projects. Our MAiD project was last to go – out of 35 projects – so we hope we left everyone with something to think about! The photo (above right) was taken at this meeting.

**YEAR ONE SCOPING ACTIVITIES** – The MAiD project is using the first year to take a broad look at the area of animals in disasters. A national critical analysis of needs, practices, policies and local initiatives is being undertaken; this includes a survey of stakeholder organisations' needs and priorities. In addition, a series of scoping studies has been planned. These comprise a study of responders' experiences with animal owners in disasters/emergencies and their engagement with them prior to disasters, an interview study of commercial animal enterprise owners, eg. breeding, boarding, and small commercial establishments, and a small exploration of spontaneous volunteers, such as those involved in organising animal rescues through social media or local rescue groups.

**BUSHFIRE CRC INTERVIEWS** – In May, Brad Smith and Kirrilly Thompson were involved in the Bushfire CRC's program of interviews with residents affected by fires earlier in the year in South Australia. This deployment enabled them to collect data from bushfire-affected animal owners; information that will be valuable to the MAiD project.

**REMAINING ACTIVITIES IN 2014** – Project activity this year will be bringing together information to identify gaps and priority areas. A series of end-user and stakeholder engagement activities, starting with a knowledge exchange workshop, will be used to agree the focus for subsequent support tool development.

## HELLO FROM THE PROJECT TEAM

The MAiD project team comprises researchers from the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and Central Queensland University (CQUni) in partnership with RSPCA Queensland.

Dr Mel Taylor is the Project Lead Researcher, based at the Centre for Health Research at UWS. Mel is an occupational psychologist with interests in preparedness and risk communication. Mel is joined by Dr Penny Burns at the School of Medicine, UWS. Penny is a General Practitioner who specialises in Disaster Medicine.

Dr Kirrilly Thompson leads the CQUni research group. Kirrilly is an anthropologist and she is joined by Dr Brad Smith, who is a psychologist. Both have research interests in the human-animal bond. Kirrilly is also researching how to use this bond as a motivation for disaster preparedness.

Mr Greg Eustace is our team member from RSPCA Queensland. Greg is State Coordinator Emergency Management and brings invaluable operational emergency management expertise to the team.

The team is supported by an advisory panel comprising Prof Beverley Raphael, ANU, Prof Kevin Ronan, CQUni, and A/Prof Pauleen Bennett, La Trobe.

## PROJECT END-USERS

Current end user agencies supporting the MAiD initiate are: ACT Emergency Services Agency, NSW State Emergency Service, WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services, TAS Fire Service, and the Attorney-General's Department: Australian Emergency Management Institute. The MAiD team is very appreciative of the input of these end-users.

The MAiD project has three students currently linked to it; two PhD students and an honours student.

### Rachel Westcott



Rachel was awarded a PhD scholarship from UWS to link to the MAiD project. She is an experienced veterinarian and co-ordinator of South Australian Veterinary Emergency Management (SAVEM); she is also an ex-Police officer.

Rachel will be looking at how structured animal emergency management contributes to and influences community resilience and behaviour, and if providing formal animal emergency management procedures, outside the Control Agency but aligned with existing protocols to manage life and property, enhances the community/ responder interface.

Further information about SAVEM can be found at www.savem.org.au.

### Steve Glassey





*Mel Taylor*

# Scoping responder needs and priorities

**RESPONDER SURVEY** - An important component of the project's first year scoping activities is to explore the experiences and perceived needs of a range of emergency services and other responders in managing animals and their owners in disasters/emergencies. A number of issues have been reported in the media and in conversation, and many agencies have responded with engagement activities and initiatives. The rationale for undertaking scoping activities in this area is to understand these issues better, to learn from those who have encountered these issues first-hand, to identify their needs, and to avoid duplication of effort with regard to project outputs. A short generic questionnaire was developed by the MAiD team to collect this information.

Two early opportunities were taken to collect data. In May, data were collected from attendees at the Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness (ACEFA) conference in Wollongong.  Most responders were RFS volunteers, although a range of responses from other agencies was collected. Also at this conference, Mel Taylor gave a presentation on how pets influence decision-making; drawing on data collected from pet owners and their experiences of natural disasters collected last year - see photo (above) of Mel in action!

In early June the Emergency Media and Public Affairs conference in Canberra provided another data collection opportunity. Data were collected from a smaller group of emergency services and NGO media personnel; including Australian Red Cross and Guide Dogs Queensland.

At the time of writing, action is underway to gather further information using an online version of the same survey. A link to the survey has already been sent out by two emergency services agencies, and the MAiD project end-users are also being asked to assist with sending the link out in their States and Territories.

Data collection will continue until the end of July.

The MAiD team would like to thank those who have given their time to complete the survey and to help with administration and distribution. We are inviting people who respond to our surveys to join our mailing list so they can receive Newsletters and information from us about the project – and maybe get involved with us again further down the track!

Steve is based in New Zealand and is just starting his PhD at Canterbury University. He is linking his research to the MAiD project and is now an Associate Student of the BNHCRC. Steve has an interesting background - as well as a cute dog – Diesel! He has 15 years' experience in Emergency Management and was once an SPCA inspector.

Steve is currently Associate Director of the Centre for Risk, Resilience, and Renewal at Canterbury University.  Steve's Master's project outlined recommendations to enhance companion animal emergency management in New Zealand, and his PhD is looking at the impact of the Canterbury 2010-2011 earthquake series on animal welfare.

**Monica Sultana** - Monica is a psychology honours student at UWS. She is working with the MAiD team to explore the relationships pet owners have with their animals and how/if they have considered their pets in bushfire planning, including plans for if they are away from home (and pets) when a bushfire starts. She is currently part-way through a series of interviews with pet owners who live in Maianbar - a bushfire prone area to the south of Sydney that is surrounded by the Royal National Park.

# Getting the message out



*L-R: Greg Eustace, Penny Burns, Mel Taylor*

**ANZDMC** - The MAiD team has been busy raising awareness of the project. One of the first opportunities for this was at the Australia and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management conference (ANZDMC), held on the Gold Coast in early May. The team hosted a poster presentation (see photo above) which provided an excellent focus for discussion with conference delegates. Mel Taylor and Greg Eustace also chaired sessions at this conference, and Penny Burns gave one of the keynote presentations on the role of GPs in disasters.

**ACEFA** - The MAiD team, and the BNHCRC *Communication and Warnings* cluster of projects, were actively involved in the Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness (ACEFA) conference in Wollongong in May. It was a packed session for the presentation on pets and decision-making that Mel gave – reflecting the general interest there is in this area!

Finally, the **AFAC Community Engagement sub-committee** six-monthly meeting was timed to coincide with the ACEFA conference. This allowed the team to present the project to the representatives on this committee.

## BREAKING NEWS!

The National Advisory Committee for Animals in Emergencies (NACAE) has just announced that its **National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters** have been endorsed by the Australia and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee.

These principles build on best practice and are designed to be a tool to support jurisdictions as they seek to improve disaster management planning by ensuring that animals are considered.

The MAiD project team will continue to liaise with NACAE, and our Knowledge Exchange Workshop has been timed to coincide with their meeting in Sydney.

We have invited NACAE members to attend our workshop and Mel Taylor will be presenting at their meeting about the MAiD project.

# Coming up

**Knowledge Exchange Workshop** The highlight of our first year will be our Knowledge Exchange Workshop. This is being held at Rydges Sydney Central on Tuesday 19th August. We hope that our end-users, stakeholders, and others working in this area will attend.

The aim of the workshop is to bring together and share what we have learned about the needs and priorities in the area of animal and animal owner management from a range of stakeholder organisations and the responders themselves. By the end of the day we want to agree on a shortlist of priority issues and/or target groups to focus on for the next stage of our project. This will help us to start to plan the types of project outputs we will develop.

**Stakeholder Survey** - To complement our responder data we will also be contacting senior staff in stakeholder organisations in July to identify the challenges they feel they face at an organisational level in relation to engagement with, and management of, animal owners, and in the coordination of animal management. We will also be identifying their priorities for solutions.

**AFAC 2014** - The annual joint conference of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre is taking place in September, in Wellington, NZ. This will be an important event for our MAiD team (and other BNHCRC researchers). Mel Taylor will be presenting findings from the responder scoping study. This paper will be available in published conference proceedings before the end of the year. Kirrilly Thompson will be presenting a poster on large animal rescue, and we will also have a MAiD poster.

**SRA-ANZ** - A week before AFAC 2014 the Society for Risk Analysis – Australia and New Zealand (SRA ANZ) is holding its annual conference in Palmerston North, NZ. Brad Smith will be giving a presentation on 'Risk management for livestock producers during natural disasters'. This presentation is based on data collected during the Bushfire CRC interviews he and Kirrilly conducted this year, and will be considered for publication for the journal *Risk Analysis*.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about the project or you would like to contact the project team please email:
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