

Medical Displan Victoria

Annual Review 2000

Mission Statement

The mission of Medical Displan Victoria is to coordinate all of the necessary health-related activities of planning, preparedness and response to an emergency with the potential for mass casualties in the State of Victoria.

Medical Displan - Aims and Objectives

Medical Displan Victoria is the Medical Response Plan under the Victoria State Emergency Response Plan arrangements. The Plan sets out policies, procedures and guidelines to assist medical and health personnel to carry out response and recovery actions in conjunction with other emergency service plans.

The aims and objectives of Medical Displan Victoria are:

- To provide overall medical control, coordination and effective mass casualty management in major emergencies and disaster situations;
- To carry out triage, first aid and resuscitation;
- To coordinate transport of the injured to the most appropriate hospital or treatment area;
- To provide qualified and experienced medical teams to assist at the emergency site;
- To coordinate medical, nursing and first aid volunteers at the disaster site;

- To provide and coordinate public health resources for the maintenance of general health in the community during a disaster;
- To provide psychological support for victims and team members;
- To provide an interface for simultaneous responses and early activation of recovery plans; and
- To mitigate disasters by participation in event planning and medical and emergency service education and training.

The Year 2000

In Victoria, the start of the new millennium, with all the potential for infrastructure problems, involved detailed and integrated emergency medical planning to cover potential scenarios. This process extended to all Medical Displan agencies and branches of the Department of Human Services that have emergency response and recovery duties.

The anticipated Y2K millennium bug and the extensive New Year celebrations saw the manning of the DHS Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) to assist agencies. The State Ambulance Services and First Aid volunteers were extremely busy treating revellers but everywhere else it was business as usual.

Checks and evaluation of all essential equipment and computerized systems throughout the healthcare sector, including hospitals, were had been carried out to ensure effective compliance with standards and functionality. As a result, no major failings occurred in the Public Sector over the New Year period.

The highlights of the remainder of a busy twelve months included major event planning and attendance at the Australian Grand Prix, the 2000 Olympic Games Football Competition, and the demonstrations surrounding the S11 World Trade Meeting in Melbourne.

Chemical, Biological & Radiological (CBR) Preparedness

Recent events throughout the world have created awareness of the possibility of terrorist activity causing mass casualties through the deliberate or accidental release of Chemical, Biological, or Radiological (CBR) weapons.

The use of low grade Sarin gas by Japanese terrorists in the underground railway system in Tokyo in 1995 caused many casualties, incapacitated responding medical staff and overwhelmed health facilities. It highlighted the potential result of a hypothetical release of a far more refined toxic substance. The awarding of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games to Australia created a national concern that this event could attract dissident groups wishing to cause major disruption and casualties. It had been reported elsewhere that ambulances were used to access the athletes' village during the Munich Games where a massacre occurred. This single event has been the principal catalyst for a national awareness CBR programme. Commonwealth initiatives were provided in each State that hosted either Olympic training or actual Games competition. Caches of personal protective equipment and drugs to supplement State resources were installed in preparation of a possible CBR event.

The benefit of all this activity to Victoria has been extensive training and the provision of personal protective equipment for hospital medical teams and medical coordinators responding to, and managing contaminated casualties from, industrial incidents in the pre-hospital stage of a major emergency. Hospital Emergency Departments have also been issued with protective equipment for decontaminating casualties who present a hazard prior to entering the Emergency Department, to avoid contaminating treatment areas. At this time, 800

sets of protective equipment have been issued to hospitals and ambulance services in Metropolitan Melbourne and in Rural Base Hospitals. This has also met the needs for a potential CBR incident.



Dr Jane Canestra, the DHS CBR Training Coordinator, inspecting staff of the Sale Hospital Emergency Department using the PPE during recent trials.

The Department of Human Services has provided CBR Awareness and Training Programmes in the use of protective equipment on a wide scale throughout Victoria for health professionals, with follow up programmes scheduled for 2001.

Hospitals have examined and reviewed emergency plans and have assessed the current capability for managing contaminated casualties.

In Metropolitan Melbourne, major hospital emergency departments have been visited by advisory officers from the DHS Acute Health Division and the Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services, to

survey current facilities for casualty decontamination and to recommend measures for improvement.

The measures taken to prepare for a CBR incident have ensured that hospitals are much better organized to manage the day to day hazardous incidents that occur in communities.



Annual Seminar/Exercise

The Medical Displan Annual Seminar/Exercise was held in Sale, at the Base Hospital Victoria, over the weekend of 28/29 October 2000.

The activity was well attended by participants from Victoria and interstate, together with the Commonwealth Department of Health, Emergency Management Australia, and Defence personnel from 6 RAAF Hospital, Laverton and the Medical Centre at East Sale RAAF Air Base.

The scenario for the field exercise, using an 'all agencies' response, was based on a hazardous materials incident. The Sale Hospital Emergency Department was able to trial the recently improved decontamination facilities at the Hospital in conjunction with the

Country Fire Authority, using the recently issued hospital personal protective equipment.



The conduct of the exercise highlighted the difficulty response agencies have in initially recognizing the dangers associated with any hazardous release. Rescuers need to exercise great caution to avoid also becoming victims during first assessment of an incident, particularly where casualties may require urgent assistance to escape from the scene.

National Disaster Medicine Training Course

Three people from Victoria attended the 7th National Disaster Medicine Training Course held at the Australian Emergency Management Institute at Mt Macedon in December 2000. This course, initiated at the behest of the Australian Disaster Medicine Group and given approval by the Health Ministers Advisory Committee, is designed to enhance pre-hospital and hospital mass casualty management on a qualitative standard across all States and Territories.