

Notes from the Field

Public event marks International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

Monday 13 October was the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction. To raise awareness, the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC held a free public forum in Canberra.

The forum featured a panel of speakers who explored Australia's contribution to natural disaster risk reduction at home and in the region. All talks were filmed, with replays and an overview available at www.bnhcrc.com.au.

The panel featured:

- Samantha Chard - Attorney-General's Department, Assistant Secretary Emergency Management Policy.
- Dr Helen James – Australian National University, a specialist in Asian disasters, governance and sustainable development.
- Andrew Coghlan - Australian Red Cross, National Manager, Emergency Services.
- Professor Stephen Dovers - Australian National University, Director of the Fenner School of Environment and Society.

The event was held at University House at the Australian National University. Around 60 people attended, with a lively question and answer session following short presentations by each of the speakers.

The forum drew on the perspectives of researchers, academia, government and NGOs, exploring the challenges faced in preparing for and responding to natural disasters, what can be done today to ensure the impacts are less tomorrow and that the recovery process is better, and what policy changes would be needed.

The International Day for Disaster Reduction started in 1989 with the approval of the United Nations General Assembly. The UN General Assembly sees the day as a way to promote a global culture of disaster reduction, including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

The day promotes how people and communities are reducing their risk to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of disaster risk reduction. Each year the day is themed. For 2014 the theme was *Resilience is for Life: Older Persons and Disasters*.

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC was recently appointed the national coordinator for the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) in Australia. This is backed by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the International Council for Science and the International Social Science Council and seeks to promote and support disaster risk reduction research programs and activities around the world, including the International Day for Disaster Reduction.



Samantha Chard, Assistant Secretary Emergency Management Policy at the Attorney-General's Department speaking at the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction forum.



Speakers at Disaster Day 2014 were Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC CEO Dr Richard Thornton, Samantha Chard (Attorney-General's Department), Dr Helen James (Australian National University), Andrew Coghlan (Red Cross), Professor Stephen Dovers (Australian National University) and MC Catherine McGrath.



The panel discussions explored Australia's contribution to natural disaster risk reduction at home and in our region.