

Phone 03 9669 4983
Fax 03 9669 4964
A.Baker@bom.gov.au

Alan Baker

Interest Statement WAS*IS – Melbourne Workshop 2007

I am the Manager of the Hydrology and Flood Warning Section of the Bureau of Meteorology's Victorian Regional Office. I hold a degree in Civil Engineering from James Cook University and a Master of Engineering Science from Monash University and have worked in the Bureau's Flood Warning Services Program since 1991. I have been the Victorian Hydrology Manager since 2001. I am also secretary of the Victorian Flood Warning Consultative Committee and a member of the Victorian State Flood Policy Committee.

Whilst my primary role is in the service area of riverine non-flash flooding warning I have a very keen interest in related severe weather warning services (flash flooding in particular). Whilst acknowledging that the provision of accurate and timely flash flood warning services will continue to be a technical challenge in the future I believe there is much that can be done from a community/public education perspective to mitigate losses during future events. In the City of Melbourne itself there is little doubt that overland flash flooding (i.e.: stormwater drainage system unable to convey run-off) has the highest damage potential and is not currently well addressed from a warning perspective. There is little doubt that an effective community education program that empowers those at risk to take effective mitigation measures when they receive a warning will significantly reduce the potential damage and loss of life from both overland and watercourse flash flooding.

I have also had significant project management experience in the development of a number of catchment based flood warning system upgrades across Victoria and have a clear understanding of the challenges that exist in converting technical based predictions/warnings into a format that is easily understood and acted on by lay users of the service. As a result, I can identify a key interest area of mine as the development of flood warning services (both flash and non-flash as I don't think users necessarily differentiate between the two) that facilitate easy access by community members to timely, relevant and accurate information.

In my role as the Bureau's Flood Warning Services Manager for Victoria I also have the role of implementing the recently developed Victorian Flood Warning Development Plan. A key recommendation of this development plan was the need to fill gaps that currently exist in both the community education and flood interpretation roles in Victoria.

Alan Baker
Manager, Hydrology and Flood Warning Services
Victorian Regional Office, Bureau of Meteorology
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