

## **WAS\*IS Workshop 28 Jan – 2 Feb 2007**

### **Statement of Interest: Paul Gabriel**

I work with the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner, as the Manager for Emergency Management Policy. Part of my duties involve the publication of the Emergency management Manual Victoria which is the primary reference for emergency management policy and practice in this State.

I have worked in emergency management policy for about 20 years. Rather than the delivery of direct service to the community, this agency's role is basically to promote the continued deepening and evolution of Victoria's emergency management arrangements and to advise the State Government on emergency-related issues and monitor the activities of certain emergency services.

My interest in the workshop is from the perspective of emergency management. The main emergency impact from weather in Victoria is flooding, but windstorm, bushfire, and drought are also very important weather events for us. Emergency management in has been strongly influenced in Victoria by response to and recovery from bushfires, and there are major resources devoted to that matter. I am also very involved with a number of projects aimed to improve the way Victoria deals with flood issues, in both urban and rural contexts.

I am interested in understanding, describing and building the systems and networks that link all the players in understanding, mitigating, planning for and responding to major hazard impacts and their aftermath. This can involve working with scientists who are developing new and better ways of describing the world and the natural systems, and with various practitioners who can apply the knowledge if presented in ways relevant and meaningful to them. This extends to how governmental systems adapt to mediate scientific knowledge and predictions into variations in policy, noting the various influences of politics and the more deliberate policy development process.

This endeavour crosses disciplinary boundaries and presents stimulating challenges in bridging differences in jargon, meaning and various practitioners' paradigms.

I am closely involved in an innovative State-level emergency risk assessment and, as the State's representative on the National Risk Assessment Advisory Group (to the Australian Emergency Management Committee), I am also interested in the relationships between the various levels of Government and the political influences that bear on the understanding of hazard, risk and treatments of risk.