

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS: REFRAMING THE DISCUSSION

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the world's population has been subjected to an unprecedented number of major natural hazard-based disasters of great magnitude, and the focus of the international community in relation to risk, disaster or emergency management has shifted from the development of disaster response capabilities to the need to strengthen risk reduction and control mechanisms and policies, with a particular interest in the design and implementation of better early warning systems as a major mitigator of disasters. The emphasis on early warning systems has turned attention and funding to the current capabilities and developments in science and technology, and unfortunately, distracted us from the central issue of addressing the real needs of the communities and people at risk.

This paper argues from a background in mission critical systems, project management and business performance, that we cannot achieve the risk reduction and mitigation we seek until the emphasis is placed on the leadership role of emergency management in providing an effective early warning capability through the integration of the improvements in science and technology with traditional methods and an expanded commitment and involvement by all those at risk.

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BIOGRAPHYA

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Philip has led large-scale and high-profile initiatives delivering operational facilities and systems critical to ongoing operations both in Australia and internationally for major companies and organisations across a diverse range of industries from Defence aerospace, information technology and telecommunications, theatre and entertainment, to scientific facilities and networks, and risk management.

More recently Philip coordinated subject-matter-experts across five Australian Government departments to produce the Australian Tsunami Warning System Project Implementation Strategy and Plan, which was accepted by the Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in July 2005. He is currently coordinating national and international partner agencies in implementing Phase IV of the South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project across 12 Pacific Island Countries, a project sponsored by the Australian Agency for International Development.

Philip works as an independent business consultant. He is currently collaborating on a number of professional publications, including a business text book that defines practical strategies for achieving sustainable business performance.