

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Mental Health Consequences of Environmental Disasters

**Professor Beverley Raphael from the Disaster Response and Resilience Research Group is leading a research team in partnership with Peking University Institute of Mental Health and Shanghai Mental Health Centre to study how the mental health consequences of environmental disasters can be reduced. This project is funded by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.**

'China and Australia are vulnerable to and have experienced major environmental disasters, with the associated mental health, social and economic impacts on their populations,' says Professor Raphael. 'There is a need to conduct decisive research on mental health impacts of environmental disasters. The team has been collaborating since the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. Educational programs on mental health preparedness, response and recovery based on scientific research has also developed. We will share scientific and educational collaborations to the benefit of both nations in terms of reducing the risk and impact of environmental hazards, including disasters, climate change impacts, with potential human and economic benefits.'

This program will address the range of environmental hazards, including biosecurity. It will utilise shared research expertise, including statistical assessments. We now need to focus on rapid assessment in the acute phase. A joint workshop will be held to develop ways of assessing and responding post disaster with crisis intervention strategies that can lessen the risk of more severe and long term mental health and health consequences of environmental disasters. This will involve the identification and implementation of focussed, brief research indicators and screening strategies that can be integrated with operational procedures of assessment, response, and ultimately evaluation. It will take into account both those directly affected and emergency and other



responding personnel. The outcomes will assist education and training for disaster response, the development of consensus guidelines for use in both countries but with flexibility for local need and disaster type. It will also improve capacity and support for disaster assistance personnel, and improve cost effectiveness of early intervention across the lifespan for mental health services in environmental disasters.

**Project Title:** Partnership with Peking University Institute of Mental Health and Shanghai Mental Health Centre on Mitigating the Mental Health Consequences of Environmental Disasters

**Funding has been set at:** \$45,000

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[http://www.uws.edu.au/disaster\\_response\\_resilience](http://www.uws.edu.au/disaster_response_resilience)

**August 2012**

### Research Team

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