

## President's Message

Dear EHPA members,

Welcome to the new look 'hEalthY fOcus' newsletter.

2012 has been a big year for our environmental health professional body here in Victoria. The Board of EHPA would like to thank all of our members for their patience and support during the year as we undertook the restructure of the organisation and refocused our priorities for the future. I am pleased to announce that we are now a company limited by guarantee and we are looking forward to the future where we can deliver a greater range of products and services to our members.

On 4 - 5 October 2012 EHPA held its Inaugural National Symposium at Crown Promenade, which was a great success. The theme of the symposium was 'health with no boundaries, turning possibilities into opportunities'. The theme encouraged environmental health practitioners to continue to look outwards, to embrace the challenges that face our industry and consider alternative ways of achieving better health outcomes. During the symposium we presented a number of awards and I wish to congratulate the following:

**Sarah Hughes** - TGO Jordan Award recipient for final year Swinburne University of Technology undergraduate student.

**Samuel Johnson** - Keith W Magee Award recipient for final year Latrobe University undergraduate student.

**Jason Barnes** - James C Smith Award recipient for final year Latrobe University post graduate student.

**Leanne Johnson**, City of Whitehorse - Individual Excellence in Environmental Health award recipient.

**City of Melbourne Senior Environmental Health Team** - Winners of the Inaugural Robert Handby award for Team Excellence and Innovation in Environmental Health.

**Tracey Watson**, Mount Alexander Shire Council - Professional Development Mentor award recipient.

**Ingrid Watson**, Swan Hill Rural City Council - Young Environmental Health Professional award recipient.

The awards are a great opportunity to recognise both individual and team excellence within the environmental health profession and I strongly encourage all members to consider nominating an individual or a team for an award next year.

I would like to thank the Board and the symposium organising committee for their commitment and tenacity over the past year and I look forward to seeing you at the next EHPA event.

Best regards,

Nick Lund  
President



Day 2, Plenary Session with Peter O'Brien, EHPA National Symposium Melbourne 2012



Student Awards, EHPA National Symposium Melbourne 2012. Jason Barnes, Sam Johnson, Nick Lund, Sarah Hughes



Day 1, EHPA National Symposium Melbourne 2012

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## Environmental Health in Padang, West Sumatra After a Major Earthquake

### David Fanany

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A serious earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale that destroyed large parts of the city of Padang, West Sumatra, and surrounding areas on September 30, 2009 brought to the forefront a range of issues surrounding disaster management (or the lack of it), environmental health, and development in this part of Indonesia. The earthquake, which came as one of a series of major natural disasters that struck Indonesia and included the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake, the eruption of Mt Merapi in Central Java in 2010, and a serious tsunami and earthquake affecting the Mentawai islands of West Sumatra in 2010, was the first major natural disaster faced by the regional government of Padang since it assumed responsibility for health and other functions under Regional Autonomy in 2001. My research aims to increase understanding of the earthquake's impact by characterising the social and political forces that shaped Padang's reaction to the disaster and its aftermath, as well as efforts to develop disaster management policies and procedures after the earthquake.

The environmental health issues that developed following the earthquake can be linked to the 36 year New Order [Orde Baru] government that ended in 1997. The New Order era was characterised by a highly centralized system of administration, in which the national government focused strongly on development but tended to manage it from the centre with authority delegated to the provinces and from them to the administrative areas below. The New Order period was a time of rapid urbanization and technological upgrading. The period of Reformation [Reformasi] that followed was socially turbulent and resulted in the inception of Regional Autonomy beginning in 2001. Under Regional Autonomy, a wide range of functions that had formerly been the responsibility of the central government were devolved to the county-level [kabupaten] and city governments. In West Sumatra, as in other parts of the country, Regional Autonomy

has resulted in many changes that relate to health and health services provision, development, and public administration that have had serious implications for environmental health.

West Sumatra has experienced natural disasters, in particular earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, throughout history. However, the 2009 earthquake was the first occasion in some time in which a natural disaster had struck in such close proximity to a major population centre. It was also the first major challenge of this type for the provincial and local governments during the era of Regional Autonomy. As such, there were a number of factors that set this experience apart from previous ones. First, there were a number of differences in Padang's living environment compared to its situation in previous disasters: the city is much more densely populated, yet city planning and zoning, as well as infrastructure such as water facilities, have not kept pace with the city's growth. Second, the fact that Regional Autonomy places the bulk of responsibility for addressing disasters and for contingency planning on local authorities necessarily means that some localities and regions lack the expertise required for effective long-term planning and response to disasters. Third, the social upheaval that accompanied the end of the New Order government in Indonesia has facilitated changes in the way the public and the government of Padang perceive the risk and impact of natural disasters, and the expectations they have in responding to and preparing for disaster.

The effect of these factors is apparent when considering the impact of the earthquake. Padang's physical landscape and infrastructure are yet to recover to their pre-disaster status, and long-term changes have occurred to the state of environmental health in the city. The earthquake has also resulted in significant changes in the way the public perceives scientific information as well as its trust in the authorities. Perhaps most significantly, this natural disaster, perhaps because of the very high level of destruction it caused, seems to have resulted in changes even to the nature of social interaction, religious observance, and individual decisions about major life choices, such as where to live, whether to engage in business, and whether to rebuild damage due to the earthquake. My research has already resulted in a published book chapter and several articles currently under review. I anticipate that more will follow in the near future.

## Bob's Retirement

Bob started his career in local government in December 1980 as an EHO at the Sherbrook Shire Council in the Dandenongs. He then went to South-West Victoria in January 1985, when he accepted an EHO position working jointly with the shires of Mortlake, Minhamite and Belfast, and the Borough of Port Fairy which then amalgamated to form the Moyne Shire Council.

During 22 years of service for the Moyne Shire, Bob took leave to work with the International Committee of the Red Cross in some of the world's worst human tragedies including conflict zones in Uganda, Iraq, Rwanda, Kosovo and Sri Lanka. Bob has also worked throughout Asia and the Pacific including significant natural disasters like the Boxing Day Tsunami in Banda Aceh and Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar.

In 2007, Bob left the Moyne Shire and joined Australian Red Cross as Manager, Water and Sanitation, International Emergencies. His work in this position has included the establishment of the Australian Red Cross Disaster Response Team which has a response capacity in emergency water, emergency shelter, vector control and sanitation. In the past four years this team has been deployed to disasters in India, Vietnam, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Samoa and New Zealand

Bob is looking forward to spending his time caravanning around Australia and perfecting his golf swing.

EHPA wishes Bob all the very best in his retirement.



Bob Handby

## Emergency Management SIG

**Author: Kirsten Jenkins**

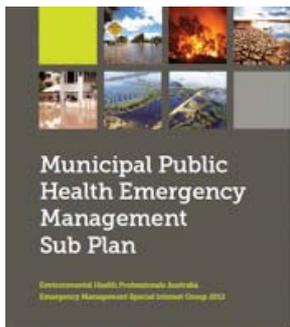
**Member Emergency Management SIG**

It's been another busy year for the EMSIG. The Emergency Management Training for Public Health Professionals course was held from the 22 - 27 July 2012. There was a full complement of 30 participants from a wide range of Victorian and interstate councils, Department of Health and a number of defence force personnel. Speakers represented a number of different agencies such as VICSES, Red Cross and Victoria Police. This year the course also included a presentation by Sharon Des Landes on the psychological aspects of disasters for community and workers. All of the participants did a great job of contributing to discussions with their experiences and knowledge and overall it was very successful.

### Emergency Public Health Aide-Memoire Review

The SIG have recently completed a review of the Emergency Public Health Aide-Memoire. Since the original version was produced in 1995, this booklet has provided Environmental Health Professionals throughout Australia with a quick reference guide to the essential elements of Public Health Emergency Management. It has now been updated to include setting up emergency campsites and revised checklists.

### New edition of the Municipal Public Health Emergency Management Planning Package available now



The initial 'Guidelines for Public Health Emergency Management Planning' were originally produced by EMSIG in 2005, with the financial support of the Department of Human Services and the MAV.

Since then, major emergencies such as the bushfires in 2009 and the 2010-11 Victorian floods have provided opportunities to review and build on what we've learnt as a profession in responding to emergencies.

The new edition also provides for key

organisational and departmental changes that have occurred since its inception and subsequent changes to roles and responsibilities under the emergency management arrangements.

Other key inclusions are improved Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and checklists and proformas for ease of use by EHO's. These can form a basis for developing mobile technology inspection tools.

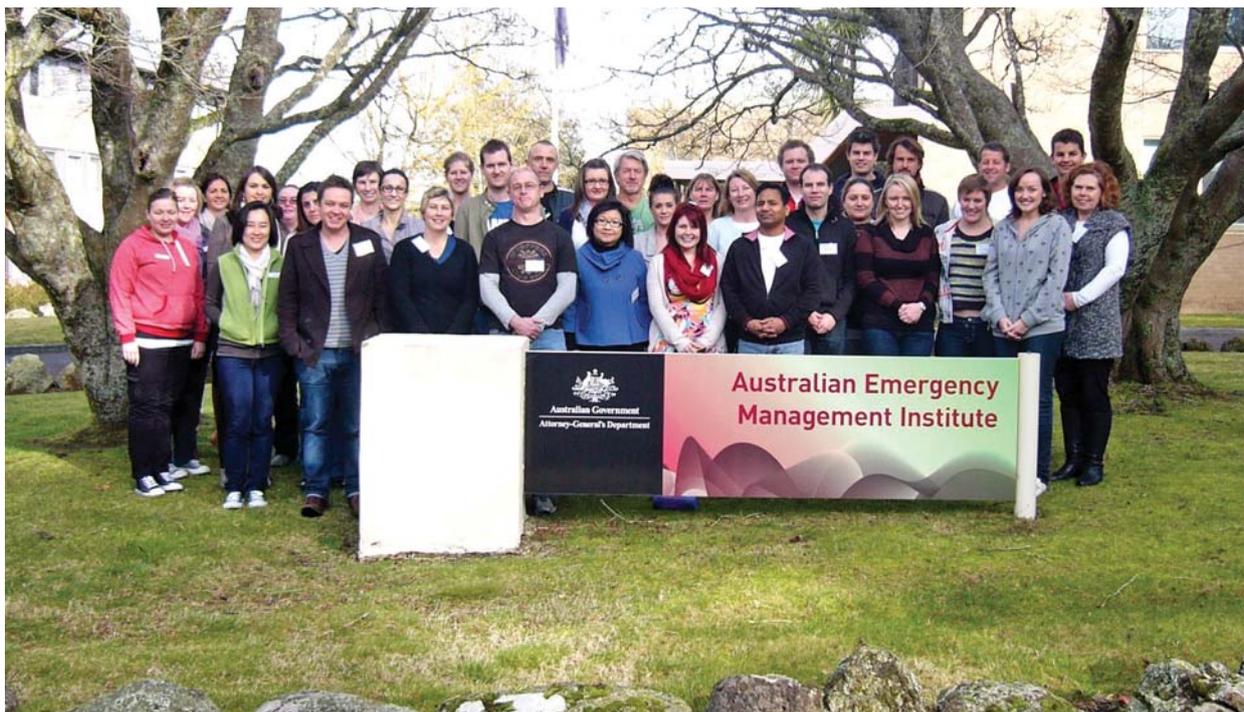
The document is aimed to provide a foundation for municipal public health emergency management planning. It is by no means exclusive, and is developed to be used as a guide only. It should be tailored to your Council and should include additional information that is pertinent to your municipality. A list of useful references is provided in the template for further information and assistance in development of practice notes.

No planning should be done in isolation. It is intended that the document will be incorporated into your Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan, further highlighting the importance of the role of EHO's in an emergency.

Both documents will be available soon for purchase through the EHPA office and website.



Participants of Emergency Management Training for Public Health Professionals, 22-27 July 2012



Emergency Management Course 2012

## Emergency Management - Heatwave

With the summer months and warmer weather fast approaching, it is an opportune time to review heatwave plans, re-engage with key stakeholders and prepare for the coming summer. The following information has been provided by Joanna Gaston at the Department of Health.

Heatwaves can affect anybody however some people are more at risk of heat related impacts than others. This includes people who are 65 years and over, those with a chronic medical condition or disability, or who live alone.

Heat associated impacts can range from fainting and heat cramps to heat exhaustion or heatstroke, which may be fatal. Heat can also exacerbate pre-existing symptoms and conditions.

In extreme events, essential services such as utilities and public transport systems may also be affected, resulting in disruption to normal living.

To stay healthy in the heat, the department has developed four key messages for agencies and service providers to educate people on actions that can be taken to minimise risks associated with heatwaves. They are:

- Look after yourself and others
- Drink plenty of water
- Keep cool
- Stay out of the sun.

The department has developed the Heatwave plan review tool to assist and support local councils during the review process for their heatwave plans.

The review tool can be found at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwave/agencies/projects.htm>.

Further information and resources are available on the departments' website:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwave/index.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwave/index.htm)



## Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Certified Professional of Environmental Health (CPEH) Schemes Beginning 1st January 2013

**Author: Dr. Jim Smith and Jeremy Draper**

Over the last month or so EHPA has been developing and refining the CPD Scheme for members. CPD is defined as "the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skill, and the development of personal qualities necessary for the competent execution of professional and technical duties throughout a professional's working life". CPD is an important feature of being an Environmental Health Professional. Participation in the Scheme will require members to obtain 80 points from a range of professional development activities over a two year cycle. As points are obtained from professional development activities each member will be able to log in and lodge them on the EHPA website and keep their activities and points current and, of course, be able to view

them at any time. A CPD Certificate will be awarded to participants. It is intended that the CPD Scheme will commence on January 1, 2013.

Environmental health professionals (EHPs) should be able to demonstrate their skills and competence to current and future employers, customers/clients, other professionals, and the community at large, and by doing so be formally recognised by EHPA. To this end EHPA is establishing a professional certification scheme consisting of the Certified Professional of Environmental Health (CPEH) and the Certified Technician of Environmental Health (CTEH) certifications. Members who participate and pass the assessment criteria will be entitled to the post-nominals CPEH or CTEH.

## Public and Environmental Health News at Swinburne University of Technology 2012

**Author: Louise Dunn**  
**Swinburne University of Technology**

The following is a brief update of what has been happening at Swinburne.

I am pleased to report that enrolments for the Bachelor of Health Science (Public and Environmental Health) undergraduate program are currently very strong. Thank you to all those who have referred potential applicants to the program, please keep doing so! Referrals from industry are a significant contribution to course enrolments and importantly assist in promoting a career in environmental health.

The larger intake of students (with opportunities to enrol at either the beginning of the year or mid-year) has created a need for more Industry Based Learning placements. The university is currently seeking an additional 10 placements for 2013 and 2014. If you are interested in offering an IBL placement or would like further information regarding the program please contact me as soon as possible.

The undergraduate program continues to benefit from industry representatives undertaking teaching and guest lecturing roles. Over the last few years, Mira Antoniou ( Food Safety Victoria) has been teaching within our Food Safety subject, particularly in the area of the application of food safety legislation . Nick Lund , Callum Morris, Ingrid Makowski, Karen Lailor, Michele Cullen, Joanne Bobbit and representatives from the Emergency Management Special Interest Group continue to provide expertise from their respective specialist practice areas. This is a valuable contribution in not only assisting to maintain currency within the curriculum but ensuring industry best practice initiatives are shared with students.

A renewal of the content of the Health and Environmental Law

subjects offered within the program has recently taken place. Significant changes to legislation in this area, including changes to the Food Act 1984, Evidence Act 2008 and replacement of the Health Act 1958 with the Public Health and Well-being Act 2008, resulted in the university providing a \$10,000 grant to review the teaching and learning materials within these subjects. This project was undertaken in conjunction with Kylie Walsh (who is now the principle lecturer for these subjects) from Maddocks Lawyers, Nicola Collingwood, Barrister and a range of industry representatives. The law subjects continue to provide opportunities for students to understand, interpret, and apply legislation, including analysis of case studies, attendance at a court hearing and participation in a moot court. If you have been involved in an investigation that could be used as a case study in the program , I would be pleased to hear from you.

On a final note, I am very pleased to announce that Sarah McLean was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy earlier this year. Sarah is a graduate of the Public and Environmental Health undergraduate program at Swinburne University, and the first student to complete a doctorate from this program with the university. Sarah completed her honours year at Swinburne , prior to undertaking the doctorate. During the honours year, Sarah worked part-time as an EHO with the City of Maroondah. Sarah's project was entitled "Isolation and characterisation of bacteriophages for the biocontrol of Enterococcus faecalis and Escherichia coli on surfaces and in milk". Sarah has recently accepted an Academic teaching position at Swinburne. Congratulations Dr Sarah McLean!

Thank you for your continued support of the program. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to make a contribution to the program as mentioned above.

Louise Dunn Idunn@swin.edu.au 9214 8770

## Convictions Register

For more information visit [www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/regulatory\\_info/register.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/regulatory_info/register.htm)

Orsini Restaurant	Garry Boniface	205 Camberwell Road, Hawthorn East 3123	City of Boroondara	23 January 2012
Orsini Restaurant	Meerkat Hospitality Pty Ltd	205 Camberwell Road, Hawthorn East 3123	City of Boroondara	23 January 2012
Jerry's Fish Shop (aka Jerry's White Hills Fish Shop)	Nicholas Tantanis	507A Napier Street, White Hills 3550	City of Greater Bendigo	24 January 2012
The Portarlington Bakehouse	Terry Christofi	48-50 Newcombe Street, Portarlington 3223	City of Greater Geelong	28 March 2012
Moza Corner	Kamal Dharmet	1/151 Carinish Road, Clayton 3168	City of Monash	8 March 2012
Cargills Food and Groceries	Jayasiri Hewagedon	1/30 Stud Road, Dandenong 3802	City of Greater Dandenong	8 March 2012
Tea House on Burke	Tea House on Burke Pty Ltd	911-913 Burke Road, Hawthorn East 3123	City of Boroondara	23 April 2012
Warrantyte Retreat	Stoush Pty Ltd	104 Melbourne Hill Road, Warrantyte 3113	Manningham City Council	7 May 2012
O'Heas Bakery and Deli	Arena Brothers (Vic) Pty Ltd	203-205 O'Hea Street, Coburg 3058	City of Melbourne	9 May 2012
Alma Village Supermarket	Jeeds Pty Ltd	358-362 Orrong Road, Caulfield North 3161	Glen Eira City Council	6 June 2012
Ho Mei Chinese Fast Food Inn	Augusta Lik Sina Lau	1/261 Blackburn Road, Doncaster East 3109	Manningham City Council	4 June 2012
The Bistro Deli	Alex Alexander	8 Centreway Arcade, Bendigo 3550	City of Greater Bendigo	14 June 2012

## Conviction Case - City of Greater Bendigo

**Author: Patricia Pool**  
**Environmental Health Officer, City of Greater Bendigo**

The City of Greater Bendigo recently prosecuted a local café business T'Hooft Pty Ltd, located in the CBD. The charges related to contravention of a Food Act order and numerous breaches of the Food Act and Food Standards Code.

In October 2011 Environmental Health Officers attended the premise T'Hooft Fine Foods in response to a customer complaint regarding cleanliness and food handler hygiene. The premise is very unique and claims to have a "bohemian feel" which includes a caravan inserted into the front serving section (without council approval), the inside of a piano hanging from the wall and retro furniture. Upon entering the premises it was found to be in an unclean state with critical cleanliness, food storage, temperature control and maintenance issues. Staff food safety knowledge and the premises food safety program were also concerning.

After consideration of history of non-compliance at the premises, a Section 19 Order was issued detailing 48 items to be rectified.

Environmental Health Officers attended the premises on expiry of the order and found that 34 of the original 48 items were outstanding. Additionally, critical food storage and temperature control issues were identified leading to two further inspections of the premise over the next 24 hours.

A formal record of interview was conducted with the proprietor of the food premises and the premises Food Act registration was

revoked. A total of 9 inspections were undertaken from 25 October 2011 to March 2012. Most items had been completed one month after the Order had expired, legal proceedings had already commenced.

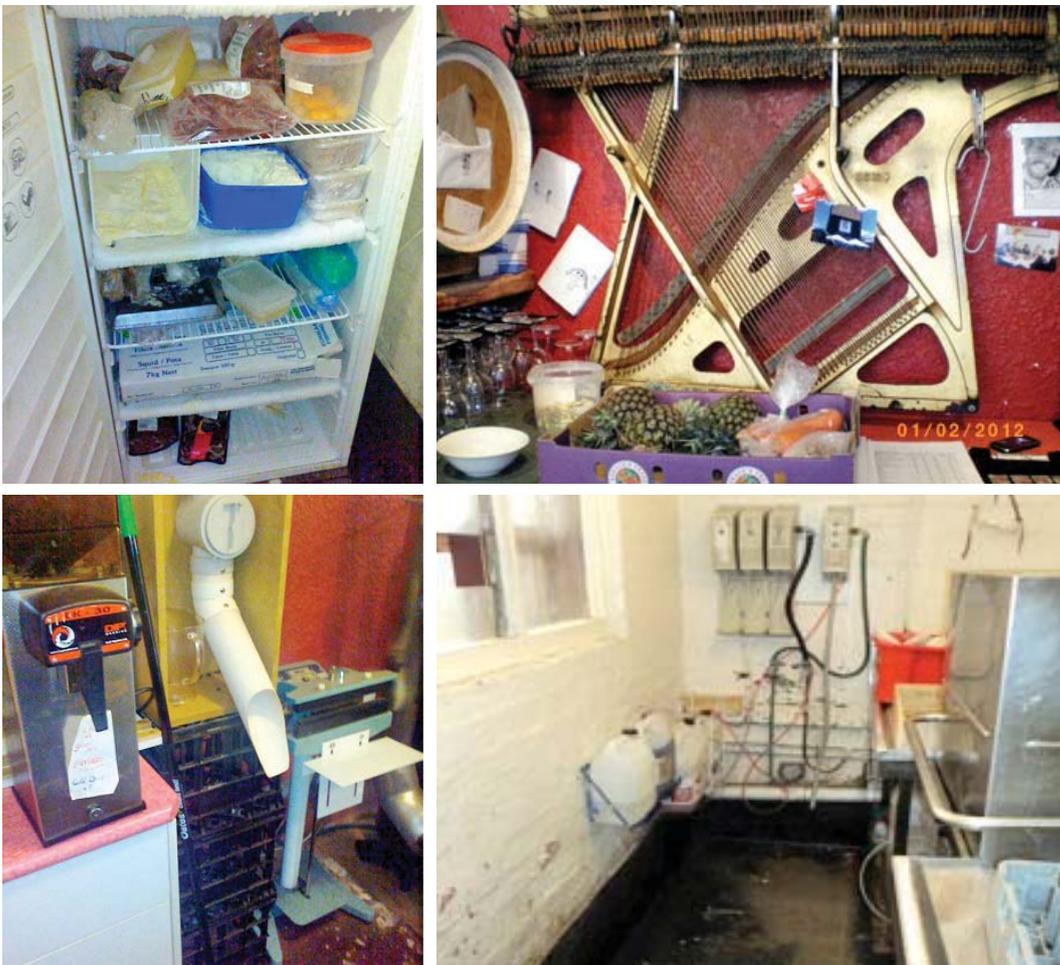
Preparation for prosecution included collating all information into a detailed brief of evidence and conferring with councils lawyers Macpherson+Kelly Lawyers (M+K) regarding charges and summons. During the time leading up to the prosecuting hearing date council was contacted through M+K who advised that Maddocks Lawyers would be representing the accused, T'Hooft Pty Ltd.

After researching the possibility of conflict of interest, as Maddocks often represents Local Government on a range of compliance matters it was found that there was no conflict of interest with Bendigo Council and the case proceeded.

There were many requests from Maddocks Lawyers in relation to providing proof of our delegations, qualifications and justifications for decisions made. It was a vigorous test of our processes and systems at Council which uncovered some errors in relation to renewing and revoking registrations. Processes have now been put in place to ensure these errors do not occur in the future.

On 7 August 2012 legal proceedings were undertaken in the Bendigo Magistrates Court for nine charges to which the company and proprietor pleaded guilty. The magistrate found the company guilty with conviction and imposed a \$8,000 fine and awarded costs of \$4,000. The magistrate also fined the proprietor \$2,000 without conviction.

Photos from food premises T'Hooft Fine Foods



### The Royal Society for Health Diploma for Health Inspectors (Circa 1970)

**Author: David Thomas  
Environmental Health Officer**

January 1969 and I was working afternoon shift as an Electrical Fitter at Kelvinator Australia's Woodville North plant in Adelaide. After being forced to leave school at the end of 1956, a month before my sixteenth birthday, for the first time in my working life I had spare time on my hands.

Being forced to leave school at the end of year ten was not unusual in 1956. In most cases only the children of the rich or the very talented, fortunate enough to pick up a rare scholarship stayed at school until year twelve or made it to university. Gough Whitlam's "fee free" university policy was still sixteen years away. Once out of the Secondary School system, the only way you could further your studies for any vocation was by way of distance education coupled with night school.

I first heard about the "Royal Society for Health Diploma for Health Inspectors" from a plumber named Ray Day. I worked with Ray doing electrical maintenance Jobs at the Memorial Hospital North Adelaide. Ray was in his final year of the course and much of what he told me about food science and meat inspection I had already studied in Agricultural Science at Secondary College.

Having spent the seven years since finishing my apprenticeship working for myself on various enterprises including almost going broke on a dairy farm in the worst drought on record in the Adelaide Hills in 1967 I decided in January 1969 it was time I did something with my life.

Being on afternoon shift and with my mornings free to do whatever I liked I thought OK, I will just drop into the College of External Studies

in Halifax Street one morning and enrol for the Health Inspectors course. Well that is what I thought.

The person I spoke to had other ideas. I was told in no uncertain terms, before I commenced a Diploma course, I would need to prove to the College I was capable, as a mature aged student with a young family, of studying any part time course. The outcome of our discussion was that I agreed to study English and Geography at year eleven level and I was told again, in no uncertain terms, to get busy, the first assignments were due next week. A friend, my age, told me recently that when he decided to study to be a Meat Inspector he was also required to do two year eleven subjects before commencing the Meat Inspectors course.

I passed the English exam with a High Pass and the Geography exam with a Credit. Little did I know at that stage, certain principles of what I learnt in the Geography course would prove to be of benefit to me in later years when I worked as a Town Planning Officer for Local Government.

January 1970 I fronted the College of External Studies Halifax Street Adelaide with my year eleven Certificates for English and Geography. At twenty nine years of age I was permitted to enrol for the Royal Society of Health Diploma for Health Inspectors. What followed in the next five years was be some of the most challenging years of my life.

### Council Profile - Yarra Ranges Shire

EHP Name	Role
Peter Wright	Executive Officer Health and Local Laws
Jessica Tindal	Team Leader Health Operations
Peter Edwards	Senior Environmental Health Officer
Ross Deacon	Senior Environmental Health Officer (on LSL)
Richard Vanderpol	Senior Environmental Health Officer
Bonnie Meiselbach	Senior Environmental Health Officer
Amy Chroucher	Senior Environmental Health Officer
Christy Davison	Environmental Health Officer
Aoife Kehill	Environmental Health Officer
Cathy Nickson	Business Support and Systems Development
Sarah Smith	Business Support Officer
Sue Woodward	Business Support and Project Officer



Jessica Tindal, Team Leader Health Operations

## Council Profile

### Council Location

The Yarra Ranges municipality is located on metropolitan Melbourne's eastern fringe. The municipality's population is currently estimated at 146,886 people and it covers an area of almost 2,500 square kilometres. The Yarra Ranges is the seventh largest local government area in Melbourne in terms of population size and the largest in area.

### Council Profile

The municipality balances a mix of urban and rural communities. Around 70% of the Yarra Range's population live in the 'urban' areas of the municipality that represent approximately 3% of its landmass. The rest of the population is distributed throughout the remaining area. There are over 55 suburbs, townships, small communities and rural areas, making it one of the most diverse of any municipality in the State. Yarra Ranges can be characterised as a 'young' municipality, with a higher than average proportion of the population aged between 5 and 17 years and more family households than typical across Melbourne. The median age of residents is 36.6 years. While cultural diversity is not as pronounced in the Yarra Ranges as it is in other municipalities, almost 10,000 residents of the Shire are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The municipality of Yarra Ranges Council can be divided into three zones:

- the undulating country to the west with suburban development;
- the forested hills to the east; and
- the valley of the Yarra River which runs east to west and is surrounded by agricultural areas and farmlands.

Suburban and township areas include the:

- western area includes Lilydale, Mooroolbark, Montrose, Kilsyth and Chirnside Park with a combined population of over 57,000;
- Dandenong Ranges includes Mt Dandenong, Olinda, Sassafras, Kallista, Ferny Creek, Selby, Belgrave, Tecoma, Upwey and Monbulk with a combined population of over 33,000; and
- Other township areas are less populated including Warburton, Millgrove, Yarra Junction, Healesville, Yarra Glenn and their surrounding areas.

Other features include:

- approximately two thirds of the municipality is dedicated National Park areas and general forest areas;

- approximately one third of the municipality is considered suburban;

### Current Issues (EH and Council)

We have been undertaking a number of major changes in the processes within the Environmental Health Team, including transferring data to a new registration system and the inspection schedule for food and public health premises.

We have also introduced tobacco test purchasing, health promotion and waste water management programs. Currently we are running a project chasing up septs being used without a finalised permit and properties that have sewer available and are not connected.

We issued infringements for premises operating unregistered (for 2012 registration) for the first time this year and are about to go to the next enforcement step with those who have unpaid fines.

### In the morning when I get to work

I have a coffee in hand and say good morning to the team, before turning my computer on for the days work (and at the moment turn the heating up).

### Environmental Health Practitioner Profile

**EHP's Name** Jessica Tindal

**EHP year's experience** 11 years

**Previous Councils** Banyule City Council and Western Region Department of Health

**Area of passion in EH** Legislation and a consistent approach to tasks within the EH profession.

**What am I working on at the moment** Standard Operating Procedures for inspections, wastewater applications/inspections & enforcement protocols. Newsletters for food and health premises and a municipal wide (all agencies) pandemic plan.

**In 50 years time the EHP will be focusing on** More environmental focused practices e.g. promoting the low energy equipment in food premises. Food safety and waste waster will still be issues along with infectious diseases. I think there will be more of a reliance on this field to help promote healthy lifestyle choices and campaigns.

**Likes and interests outside of EH** Exercise, Going to Live Concerts, Theatre & Movies. Catching up with friends and family over a nice meal or coffee and spending quality time with my partner.



Yarra Ranges Shire Council Office

### Horrific Hoarding

**Author: Travis Fitch**  
**Coordinator Environmental Health, Manningham City Council**

The Health and Local Laws Unit recently responded to complaints from concerned neighbours regarding odours, refuse and a large number of rats originating from a property in Manningham.

On investigating the matter, officers identified that the single male occupant had a serious hoarding problem and was living amongst putrescible waste and with a large number of rats. On questioning the resident on his general health he replied that he had not been unwell however, complained about the rats disturbing his sleep at night when they ran across his bed.

Waste had built up to approximately 1.5 meters in each room and had apparently accumulated over some 20 years.

During subsequent visits to the property, rodents were observed moving around the house without fear of human activity. In one instance, several rats presented at the window when we knocked on the front door.

The Cleanup was quoted at \$26,000 and on agreement with the occupant, Council arranged for cleaning contractors to remove the waste whilst he was away on holiday. The cleanup took 3 days using shovels, wheelbarrows and a front end loader. Over 180 cubic meters (approximately 30 truck loads) of refuse was removed including goods considered contaminated and unable to be recovered.

During the cleanup, cleaners disturbed the main nest and hundreds of rats began running up the walls and the cleaners - windows had to be broken to allow the rodents to escape.

On returning to his home, the occupant was upset that his belongings had been disposed of and he refused to pay the clean up bill of \$30,000. Council referred the matter to the magistrate's court and was successful in its application to recover costs of \$23,500. This amount was paid in four instalments by the land owner.

Neighbours were very understanding of the situation and were aware of the potential increase in rodents to the local area following cleanup operations.

The occupant was offered support in various forms including a referral from the Salvation Army who offered him assistance in addressing his hoarding issues. He refused on all counts.

Several weeks following the cleanup, a visit to the property revealed food waste and other items had begun re-accumulating.

An improvement notice was issued and, in summary, required the removal of all refuse and putrescible waste; maintain the dwelling in a clean and sanitary condition; remove excessive vegetation; engage a qualified pest control operator, and continue to maintain the property so that it no longer constitutes a threat to public health and wellbeing.

In response, the occupant engaged a tradesperson and complied with the notice. He also replaced deteriorated floor boards, carpets, walls and ceilings at considerable expense. The front garden was cut back and the rose bushes planted.

To date, no complaints have been received from neighbours. Without professional assistance, the occupant is likely to return to hoarding tendencies and Council may be required to look at alternative measures to address the issue.



Materials stored outside



Condition of living room prior to clean up



A large rat residing in the curtain of the front window



Condition of refrigerator which was unable to close



The cleaning contractors removing waste



Windows had broken to allow hundreds of rats escape from the main nest located in this room during cleanup. They were apparently running up the walls and the cleaners.



30 truck loads of waste removed over 3 days



Large amount of rodent faeces exposed during cleanup



Post clean up

## Do You Know?

As Environmental Health Professionals in the field we are constantly improving our knowledge and coming across situations that may require further explanation or assistance from other EHP's. The "Do You Know" section is designed to let EHP's share information about situations they may encounter in the field or ask for assistance if they are having difficulties finding answers. It may be of particular assistance to EHP's working in rural or remote areas and for regional groups to share information.

## Do you have answers to these questions?

Issues	Contact Details
The food SIG are working on a food premises closure policy and procedure for Councils. We are looking for existing policy or procedure documents that we can compile; please forward them on if you are willing to participate.	Suzanne Walker s.walker@bendigo.vic.gov.au

## Contributions or issues raised.

Issues
If a Food Act registration is revoked any fees paid must be refunded.

Please ensure your contributions include a heading about the article and contact details of the author. Please keep article size to around 500 words and include pictures if available. If your article does not feature in the next edition it will be retained for future publications.

## Thank you for your contributions.

Edition	Article Deadline
April	February 28
August	June 30
December	October 31

## Funny and Interesting Photos

