

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Russell Schedlich

As I sit here on a holiday long weekend, I am once again assailed by the news that ADF Health Personnel have been deployed to Bali to assist in the medevac and care of a number of Australians who have been severely injured as a result of terrorist bombings.

It is the nature of our military health personnel, both in the Permanent Forces and Reserves, that they are often required to make themselves available, and almost invariably do so willingly, at any time of the day or night to support these kinds of emergency operations.

Disaster relief operations seem to be coming more commonplace. We have had our own share in the Asia Pacific region, from Bali in 2002 to the devastating tsunami and earthquake over the last festive season. The US has recently suffered the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, with Rita following close behind, but fortunately not as destructive. In the UK a few months ago we had the Underground bombings.

These events remind us yet again of the need for our military health personnel to be as well prepared as possible for these events ... with personnel, training, materiel and operational planning and procedures well developed and readily available.

I believe that the Australian Military Medicine Association plays an important part in supporting the Defence health community in its efforts to remain at the forefront of preparedness and effectiveness.

This month's journal contains a wealth of articles, previously published, on weapons and munition effects – missile, blast, thermal and non-lethal. As such, in this time of increasing tension, it serves as a timely reminder of the fundamental role of health services in the military.

In a couple of weeks' time, we will be holding our Annual Conference, in Launceston. We have had a tremendous response, both in terms of papers (over 50 submitted) and delegates – over 110 already registered.

We have been honoured to have secured the Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, to deliver the keynote address. The newly appointed Surgeon General, Rear Admiral Graeme Shirtley RAN, will also address the delegates.

Captain Art Smith MC USN (Rtd) will be delivering a keynote paper on military health ethics. This will be followed by a panel discussion and open forum on ethics. Art will also be conducting a workshop on sea-based operational health support which I am sure will be thought provoking. The workshop will be held at the Australian Maritime College on Friday afternoon, and will be preceded by a tour of the College.

If you haven't registered for the conference ... do so now at www.amma.asn.au.

I look forward to seeing you all in Launceston.

Russell Schedlich