Editorial

This issue of *Historic Environment* is devoted to risk preparedness and the work of ICORP, the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness.

The fundamental objective for disaster reduction is to ‘reduce loss of life, property damage and economic disruption from natural disasters through concerted international actions, especially in developing countries’. This can be achieved by raising community awareness with regard to risk preparedness and response, education about vulnerability to specific hazards, implementation of mitigation strategies and development of partnerships between community, organisations and governments and between nations, to provide sufficient resources and expertise.

Internationally much work is carried out under the auspices of UNESCO and its various programmes. ICOMOS through its international scientific committee on risk preparedness (ICORP) and the International Committee for the Blue Shield (ICBS) also plays a significant role. Nationally many countries have well-developed emergency management organisations which address risk at all levels of social organisation. However, to date there has been little formal recognition of the importance and special needs of cultural heritage within the broad arena of disaster preparedness from the national level down. Preparedness relating to cultural heritage in developed countries has mostly relied on the individual efforts of cultural repositories and places to prepare themselves for disasters. In less developed countries, and often the most vulnerable to natural disasters, there is little preparedness at all.

While a number of these issues are variably addressed by the contributors to this issue there is much more which can and should be said to raise awareness and preparedness for when disaster strikes.

Dinu Bumbaroo provides an overview of the international activities of ICOMOS in relation to risk preparedness and a co-operative approach with other organisations charged with cultural heritage management.

Robyn Riddett gives an overview of typical hazards encountered in Australia, discusses some key strategies in risk preparedness and addresses future actions.

Geoffrey Down provides an example of a co-operative model planning process pointing out the advantages of such an approach.

Tamara Lavrencic details disaster plans and the approach taken to risk preparedness by the Historic Houses Trust of NSW.

Chris Smith sets out a risk management approach to cultural heritage and illustrates this with a practical case study.