



Saving Australia's Heritage – MayDay call goes out

Australia's archives, galleries, libraries, museums and heritage places are gearing up for the national MayDay campaign in a bid to protect the nation's heritage from avoidable disasters. The campaign – beginning 1 May 2011 – is organised by Blue Shield Australia.

Dr Jonathan Sweet, chair of Blue Shield Australia, said: "We are urging all people involved in cultural organisations to think disaster-preparedness during the month of May. People can get involved by taking at least one step to prepare for disaster response."

"Bushfires and floods have been devastating for Australian communities but recent events in Japan are a reminder that disasters may have regional or global consequences. The tragic losses of life and cultural property emphasise the importance of disaster preparedness. Not enough of Australia's cultural organisations have up-to-date disaster plans that will help to prevent the devastating loss of significant cultural property—putting at risk the things that embody the memories and values that help make up community identities."

"MayDay is a campaign designed to encourage people to get to know their local fire-fighters and police in a bid to get pointers on safety and preparedness, to take time out to eliminate hazards such as blocked fire exits, improper storage of paints and solvents, or to update a neglected disaster plan."

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Notes for editors:

- The MayDay concept originated with the Society of American Archivists in 2006.
- Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of Red Cross, and works to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters.