



The Emergency Services Minister, Director-General, Commissioners and the Joint Operations Group were given a tour of the USS Ronald Reagan while it was in Brisbane.

US warship visit a success

By Kathryn Ryan

As lead agency of Queensland's State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG), Counter Disaster and Rescue Services is involved with a diverse range of operations, from planning for and responding to natural disasters, through to coordinating multi-agency responses to terrorist attacks.

But another major role of the SDCG and CDRS was highlighted recently when the USS Ronald Reagan docked in Brisbane for a five-day scheduled port visit.

While the Australian Government is responsible for agreeing to visits by Nuclear Powered Warships of foreign allied countries, it is a federal requirement that

contingency arrangements be in place in each State and Territory in the event of an accident resulting in the release of radioactive material into the environment.

In Queensland this responsibility lies with CDRS.

As lead agency for the Nuclear Powered Warships Visits Committee, CDRS had been involved in numerous nuclear powered warship visits, dating back to the 1970s.

Since then, nuclear powered submarines and cruisers belonging to France, the United Kingdom and the United States have regularly docked in Australian ports without incident.

However, the USS Ronald Reagan was the first nuclear powered aircraft carrier to ever berth alongside a wharf in Australia.

CDRS Deputy Executive Director Stephen Young is Chair of the Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee and has been involved with three warship visits since he started with the division early last year.

As chair of the committee much of the responsibility for the overall coordination of this landmark visit by the USS Ronald Reagan rested with him.

"My role as chair of the committee is to make sure all functional agencies have the plans in place to



emergency services,” Stephen said. “Where a nuclear reactor is involved there are so many facets to consider, from safety to site management and radiation level monitoring, so a successful stay requires local, state, national and international coordination between government and private sector agencies.

“It’s vitally important that all of the agencies pull together and move through the process in a coordinated manner so we can ensure no part of the process is missed.”

While the coordination aspect between functional agencies is essential, the Department of Emergency Services also invests significant time and resources into conducting training exercises to ensure the relevant people in each of its divisions know their responsibilities.

Iain MacCulloch, CDRS Senior Operational Officer and Executive Officer to the Chair of the Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee, said the department conducted at least one training exercise each year.

“One of my tasks as the Executive Officer is to prepare and conduct training exercises,” Iain said.

“Whether the exercises are run as table-top scenarios, based at

headquarters, or full field exercises, all agencies are generally involved, and they’re based on the worst case scenario, so we can be sure everyone fully understands their role in the operation.”

The coordinated approach taken by the committee, and the training and planning that had been undertaken prior to the USS Ronald Reagan’s visit to Queensland, ultimately led to a successful visit in January.

“The visit to Queensland well and truly exceeded the expectations of the US Navy and it’s quite likely that they will be returning to Brisbane because of the success of the visit,” Stephen said.

During their stay, Captain Terry B. Kraft, Reagan’s Commanding Officer, praised the efforts of all who had made the visit possible.

“Australia has always been a favourite port for American sailors,” Captain Kraft said.

“Being the first aircraft carrier to visit Brisbane is an honour, and highlights all the work that the good people of Brisbane have done to prepare for our visit.

“It is fitting that this stop marks the first foreign port of call for this warship.”

ensure a smooth and safe visit,” Stephen said.

“Aircraft carriers are exceptionally well designed and well built, so the chances of something going wrong are almost negligible, but I need to know that all the planning and background work has been done prior to arrival.”

With 20 agencies directly involved with the visit of a nuclear powered warship, this coordination role is essential.

“CDRS, Queensland Fire and Rescue, Queensland Ambulance and the SES all have roles to play during the visit, but the committee extends much further than



A radiation health officer checks a volunteer for contamination at the last nuclear powered warship scenario “Exercise Sparkle”, held in Brisbane in September 2005.