

Canberra Emergency Warning Invention Wins National Resilience Award

A Canberra emergency warning invention, the YellowBird **ALERT** (Automatic Linking to Emergency Radio Transmissions) system, has won the prestigious Insurance Council of Australia's Annual National Community Resilience Award.

Invented by Canberra obstetrician, Dr Stephen Robson, YellowBird is a simple modification to standard AM/ FM radio circuitry that allows a tone, broadcast during routine radio transmissions, to automatically switch on the radio to receive emergency warnings.

YellowBird was invented by A/Professor Stephen Robson after his own experiences in the catastrophic Canberra bushfires of 2003. During the fire threat, his family had no power and the only source of emergency warnings was a car radio.

"For the safety of my own and all other families, I felt there had to be a simple answer," Dr Robson said. "YellowBird is a low cost option for the public, it is a reliable/ robust system designed to enhance the existing suite of emergency warning systems. When a radio is activated, a loud siren and flashing lights immediately precede the emergency warning message."

Dr Robson welcomed the Insurance Council's recognition which aims to increase community resilience in times of extreme natural and human caused catastrophic and emergency events.

"One of the most direct and immediate threats to Australian communities is through natural disasters," Dr Robson said. "And perhaps the single greatest factor leading to loss of life in such situations is the inability of authorities to disseminate urgent warnings about impending threats.

"Experiences of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and many other recent events such as heat waves, droughts, famine, wildfires, floods and mudflows, all point to significant inadequacies in existing early warning systems."

Dr Robson said that State/ Territory emergency authorities, non-government organisations in the Pacific Island Region, as well as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) all see value in having immediate trials of YellowBird which should compliment Federal Government commitment on emergency warnings as a result of the current Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission into the 2009 disaster.

"YellowBird has had strong support and ongoing advice from the former Director General of Emergency Management Australia, Mr David Templeman, who sees it as having national and international application in community prevention arrangements through the dissemination of consistent and reliable information," Dr Robson said. "Being able to provide clear and timely communication to the public about emergency threats still is a significant gap in national emergency warning arrangements. YellowBird will greatly enhance and overcome some of the current shortfalls. It is a simple, easy solution, a bit like the Russian astronauts telling NASA to use pencils to write while in space, and not waste millions trying to invent a biro!"

YellowBird is unique in that it has little or no infrastructure cost since existing AM and FM radio stations provide adequate coverage to more than 98% of the Australian population, and more than 90% of the population in the Asia-Pacific region. The only additional overhead for emergency management authorities would be the cost of one telephone call to radio stations to activate the YellowBird tone.

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About LX Innovations:

LX Innovations, the electronics design company who developed Yellow Bird, is an award winning Australian electronics design house specialising in the wireless and low power electronics designs. LX offers clients a range of professional solutions designed to take a new product idea from concept through to production. LX Innovations' team takes an innovative approach to developing each project to ensure it gets to market fast with the best possible features. For more information about LX Innovations' services, please visit www.lx-innovations.com.au.