

In Memory of Laraine Hunter



Laraine Hunter passed away on February 11, fifteen months after she was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease.

After an early career as a nurse, in the banking industry, and as a mum, Laraine did Bachelors and Masters degrees in Mathematics and Climatology at Macquarie University. She worked in statistics at Sydney University for a bit and then joined a fledgling research group at Macquarie in the early 1990s, a group that became the Natural Hazards Research Centre and then Risk Frontiers. By 2004 Laraine had become the longest serving staff member at Risk Frontiers.

Laraine's early work was on an earthquake loss model built in a series of spreadsheets, refining it and then coding the model in Fortran. That we were proud of that model, the first home-grown earthquake loss model in Australia, owed much to Laraine's skills, dedication, and sense of order – she could always find the electronic files we had misplaced and make them run again years later, even after we had changed software three times. Laraine also played a central role in the development of PerilAUS, HailAUS and, more especially, FloodAUS where her GIS work was at the very core of its success. Laraine played a valued role in almost every successful project that Risk Frontiers has been involved in since the early 90s.

Just as importantly, Laraine was also the social glue in the first decade of the research centre, until Carol Robertson (Laraine's sister) joined Risk Frontiers and the pair of them charted a course of memorable morning teas, lunches and Christmas parties that were always fun, a couple of steps ahead of the competition, and an important part of the things that makes Risk Frontiers a great place to work.

No matter how busy Laraine was on her own work projects – and she was *always* busy, because she was so good at what she did – she always had time to help out her less tech-savvy colleagues with their problems, no matter how big or small. Her good-humoured, endless patience and her friendship were as wonderful and as valued as her expert advice. She really was part of the fabric of Risk Frontiers, inextricably linked to its proper functioning in every way. Laraine, we miss you.

