



Australian Government
National Emergency Management Agency

Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience



WEBINAR

Getting ready for the higher-risk weather season



Acknowledgement of Country

AIDR acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which you all join us from today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this event.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters across Australia.



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Housekeeping

- You will remain muted and your camera will not be activated for the duration of today's event.
- Today's event will be recorded and made available after the event.
- Please enter questions for our speakers in the Q&A function, not the chat box.
- Please use the chat box to share any thoughts or reflections during the presentation
- Please be respectful to each other when posting your comments or questions.





What does this content mean for you?

How could you apply your learnings to your role?

One action you feel inspired to take.





Welcome

John Richardson

Executive Director

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR)



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Disaster Resilience





Speaker Introductions

Felicity Gamble

Technical Lead, Extended Prediction

Bureau of Meteorology

Lynette Bettio

Technical Lead Climate Risk

Bureau of Meteorology



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High Risk Weather Season Outlook

Briefing to AIDR Webinar

Felicity Gamble
Technical Lead, Extended Prediction

Dr Lynette Bettio
Technical Lead, Climate Risk

30 September 2026



There when it matters most



Emergency management

Direct support to all levels of government for their emergency preparations and disaster mitigation



High-risk-weather briefings

To help prepare and respond



Embedded experts

Critical to support decision-making in national and state situation rooms.

Enables a coordinated response to protect lives and property.

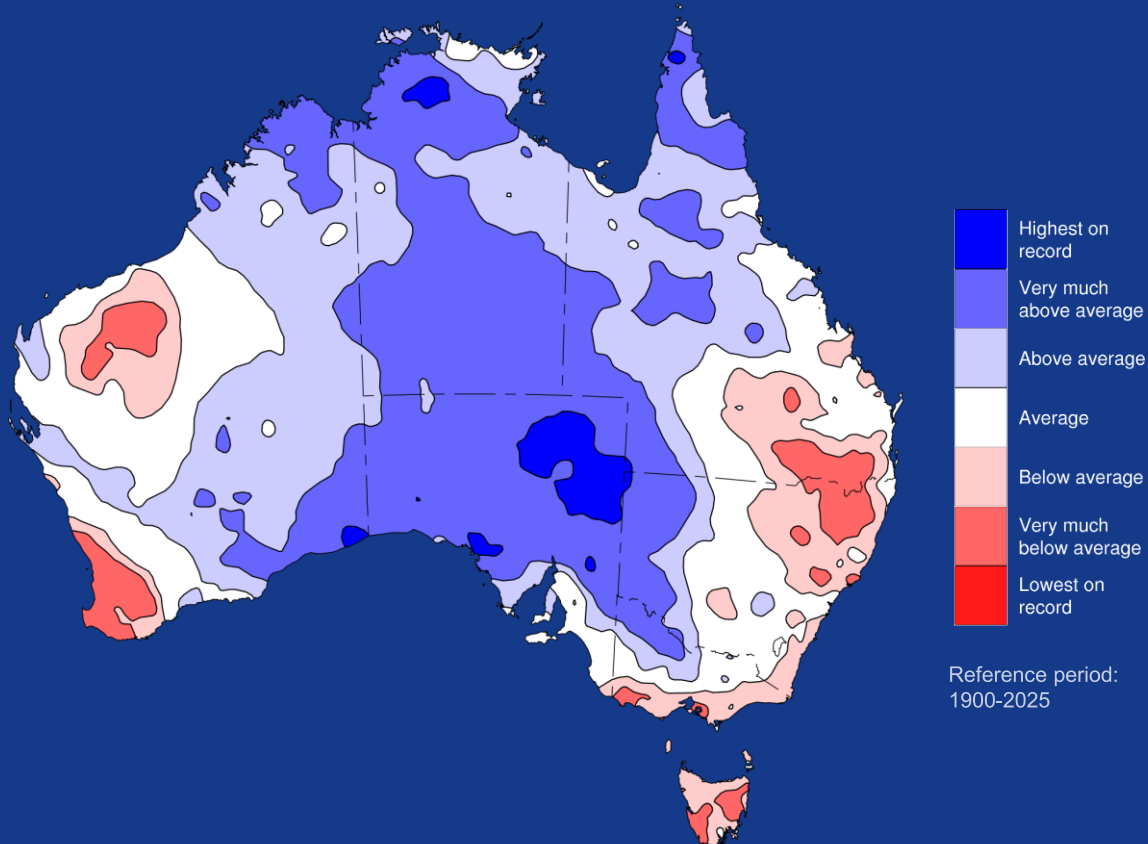




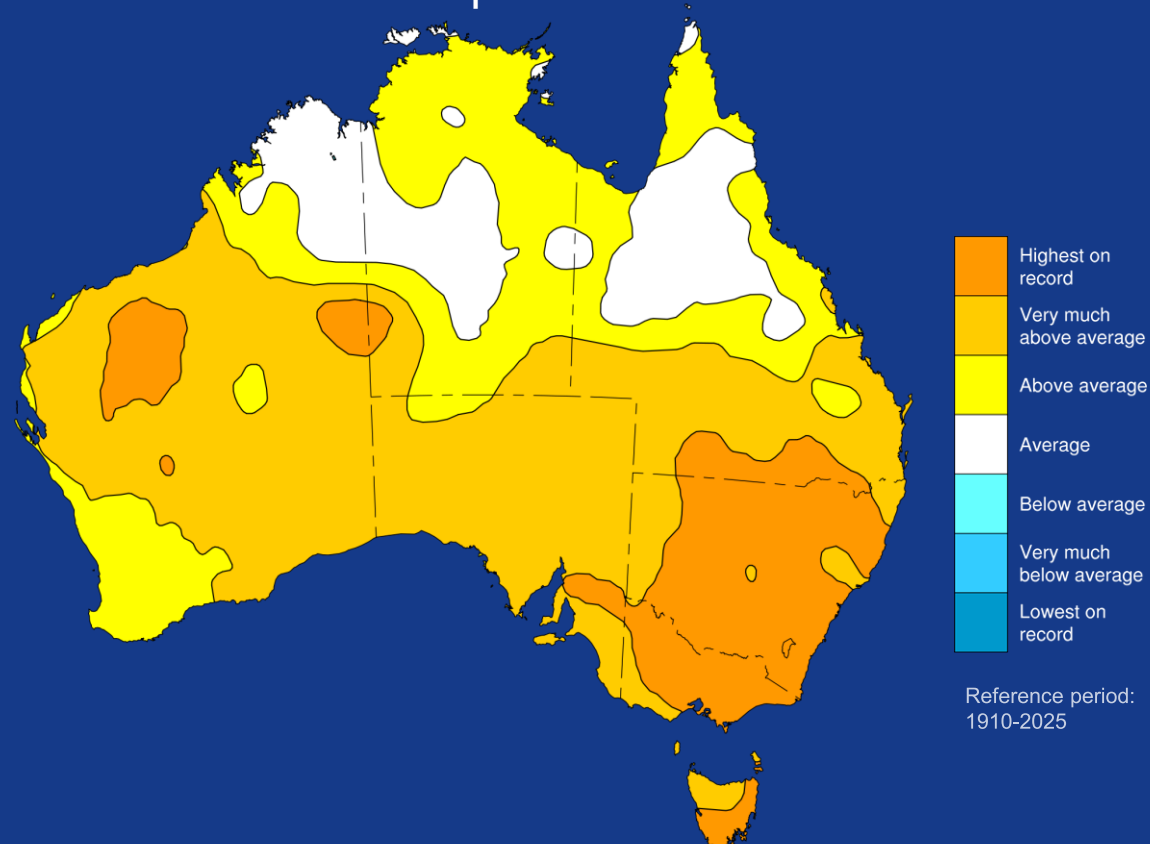
Rainfall and temperature

Year-to-date: January–September 2026 (preliminary)

Rainfall deciles



Mean temperature deciles

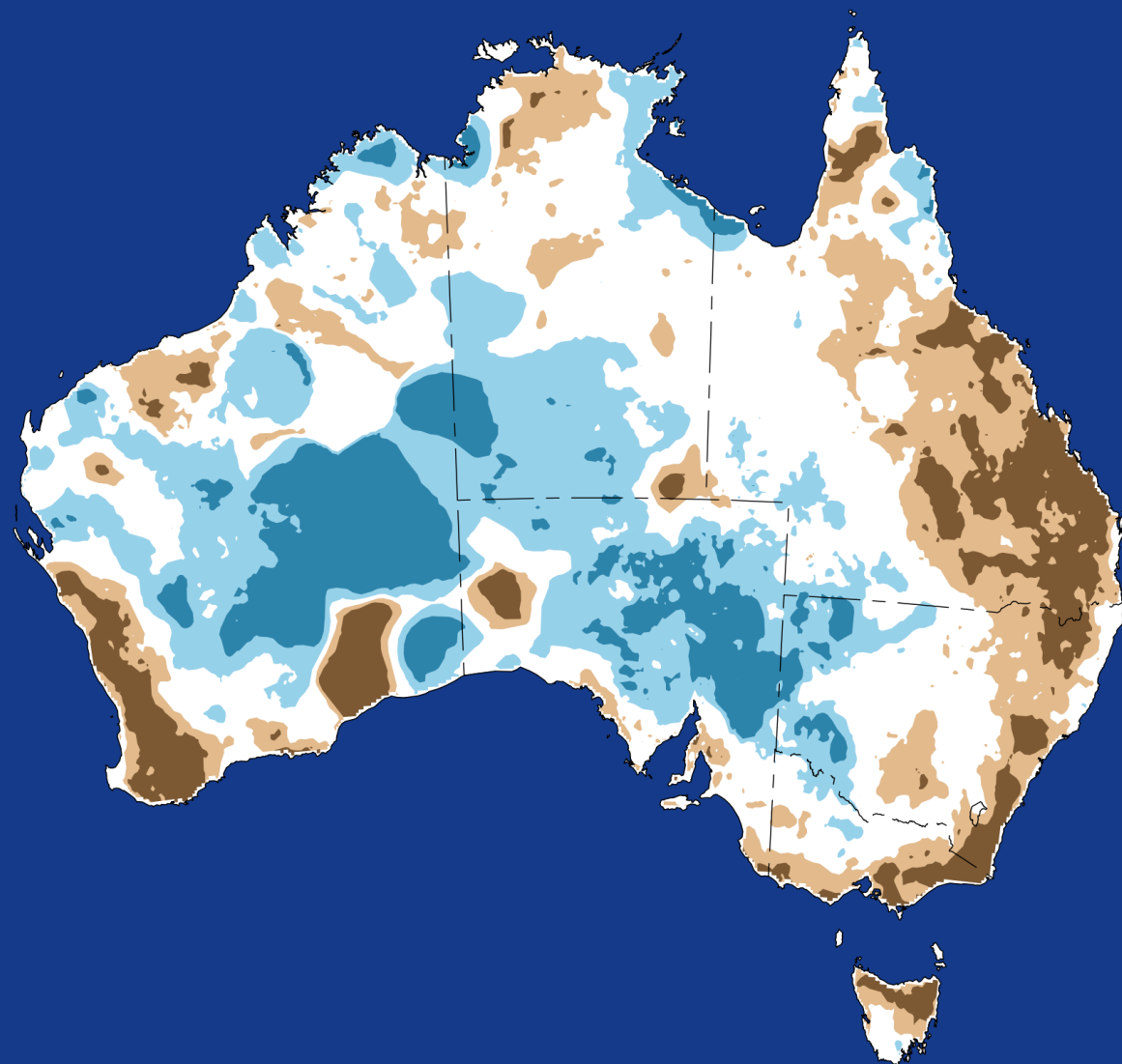
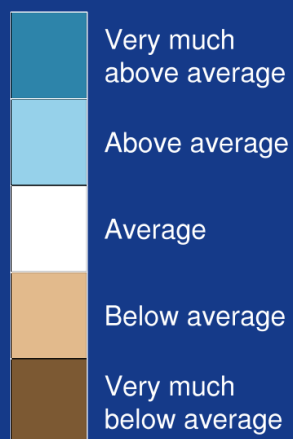


- For much of Australia, 2026-to-date has been wetter than average – supporting increased vegetation growth.
- Drier than average conditions in the east and west, combined with warmer temperatures, have contributed to below average soil moisture. NSW, Victoria and Tasmania have recorded their warmest winter on record.



Soil moisture

23 September 2026



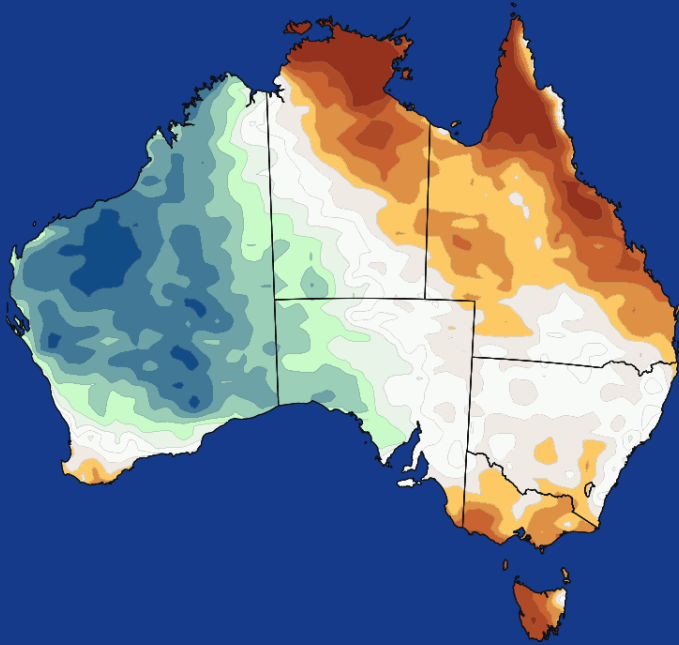
- Root zone soil moisture is above average across parts of southern and central Australia
- Soils continue to dry in the east and west – priming the landscape for fire



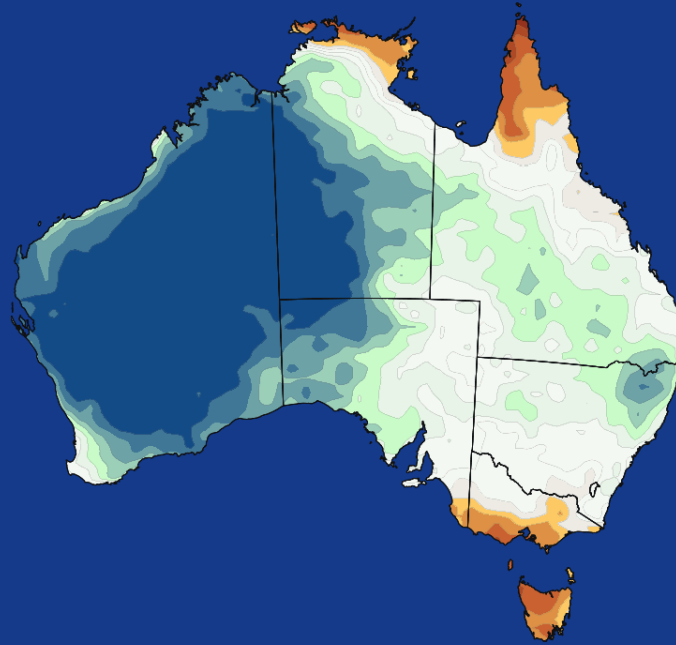
Rainfall: Chance of above median

October, November, December 2026

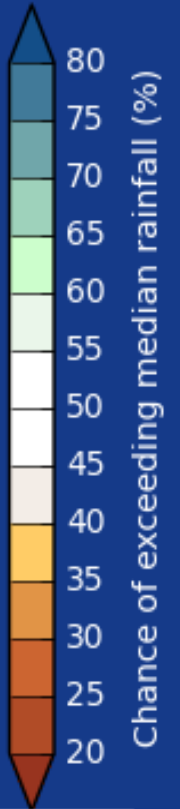
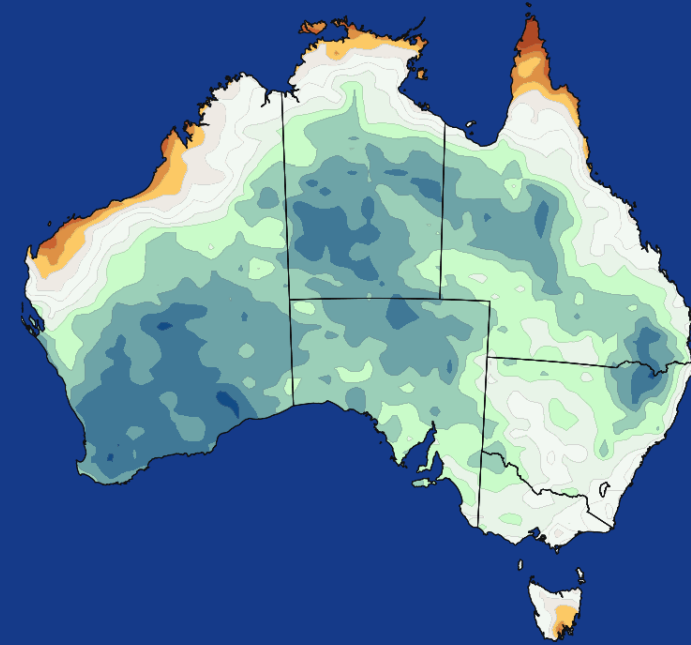
October



November



December



Reference period: 1981-2018

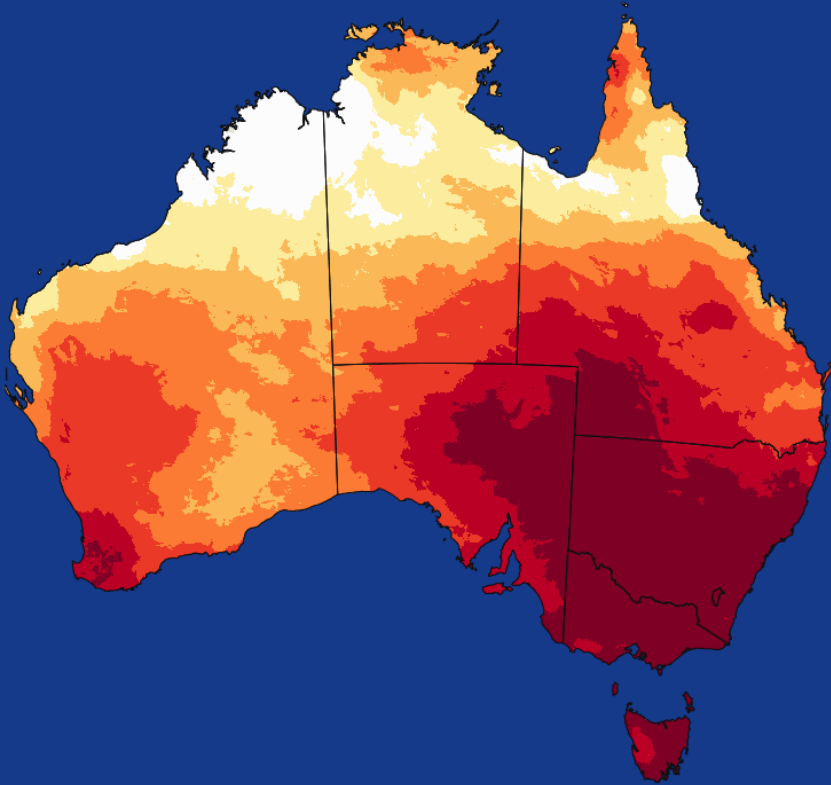
- October rainfall is likely to be below average across parts of the south-west and south-east, as well as for much of Queensland and parts of the NT. Much of WA is likely to be wetter than average.
- The wet signal strengthens and expands in November and December, increasing chances of above average rainfall for parts much of the country.
- However for parts of Tasmania and the far tropical north, dry conditions are expected to continue throughout.



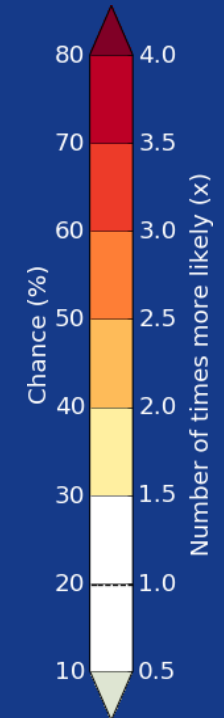
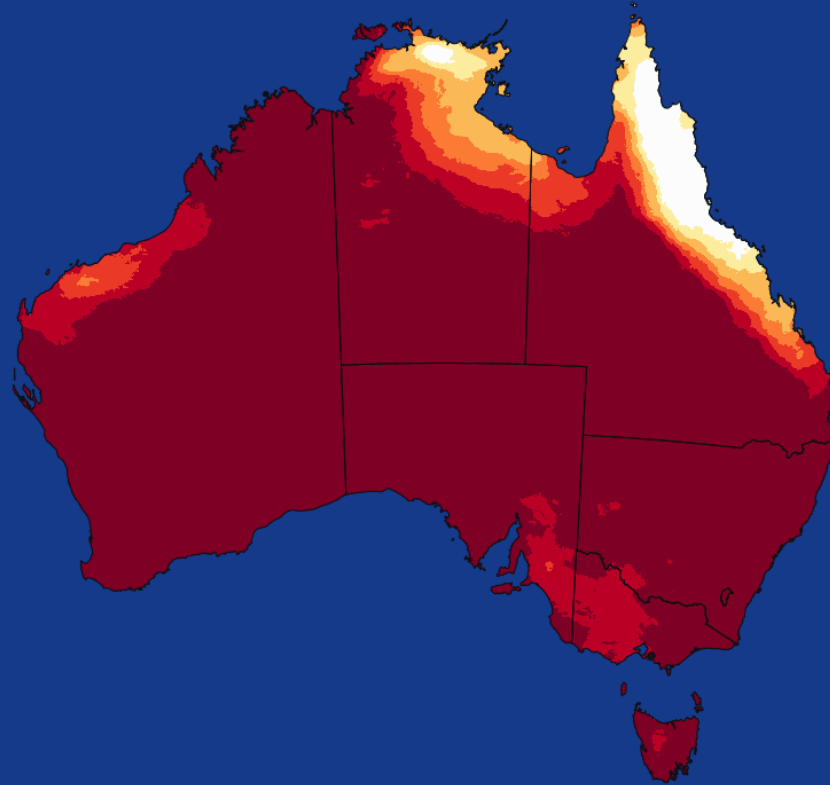
Maximum temperature: Chance of unusually warm

October–December 2026

Maximum temperature



Minimum temperature



--- Usual

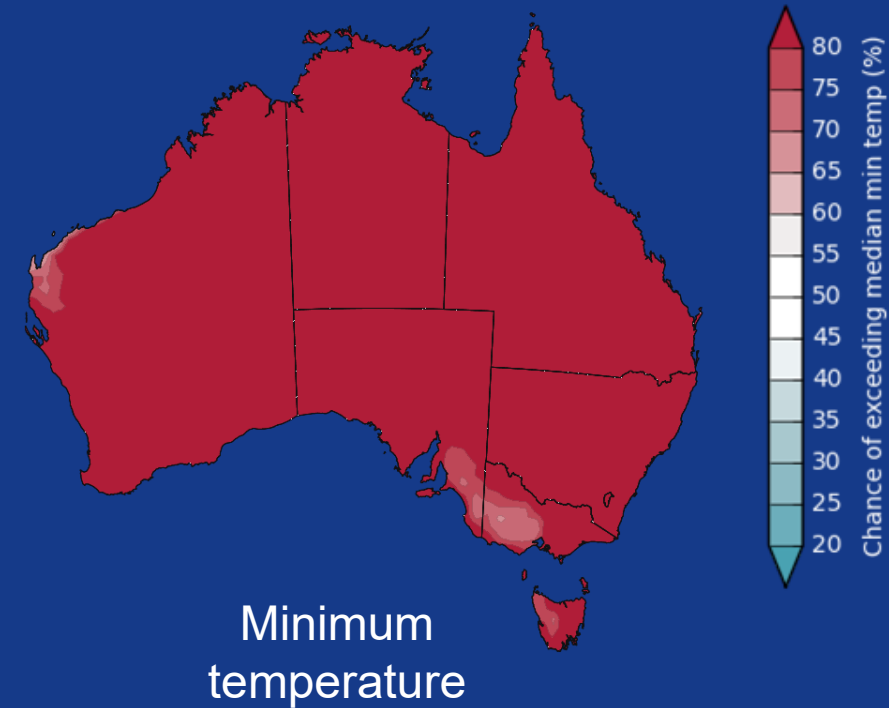
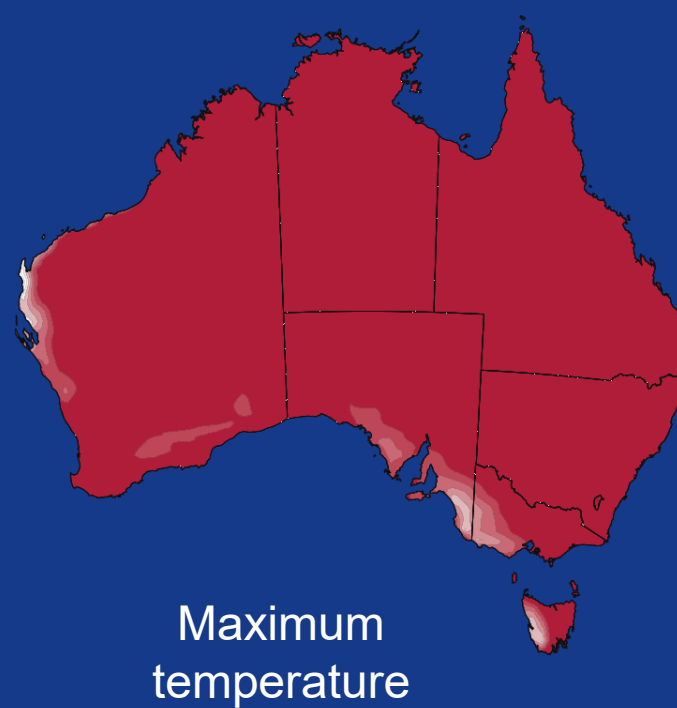
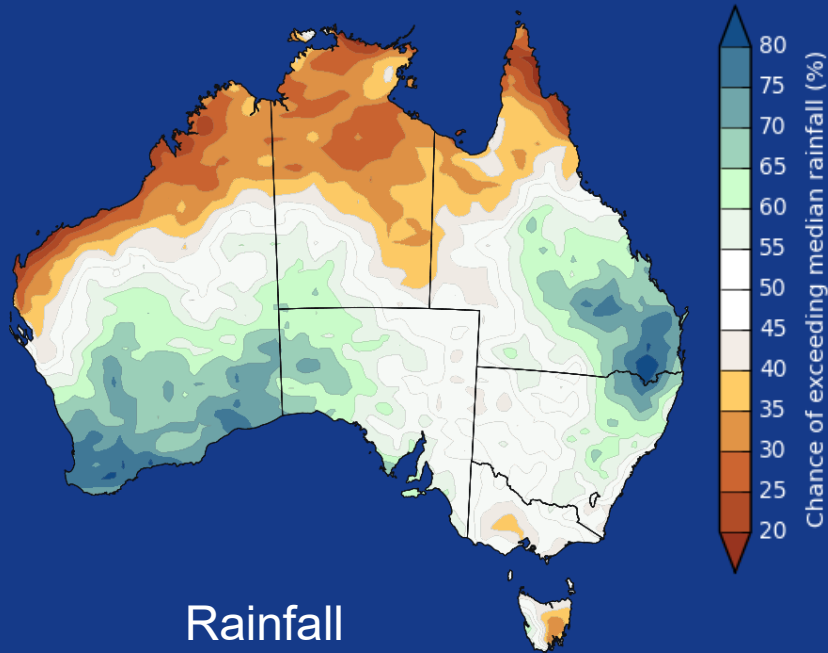
Reference period: 1981-2018

- Increased likelihood of unusually warm maximum temperatures (in the top 20% of the historical range) across the southern two-thirds of Australia and almost nation-wide for minimum temperatures.
- Warm overnight temperatures also contribute to heatwave risk.
- Extreme heat will be a major climate risk in the coming months.



Looking ahead to next season

Chance of above median rainfall, maximum temperature and minimum temperature
December 2026–February 2027



- Below average summer rainfall in the north – wetter than average in parts of WA's south, NSW and Queensland.
- Warmer than average days and nights are very likely across the country.
- Check back in as the season approaches: www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks (updates weekly)

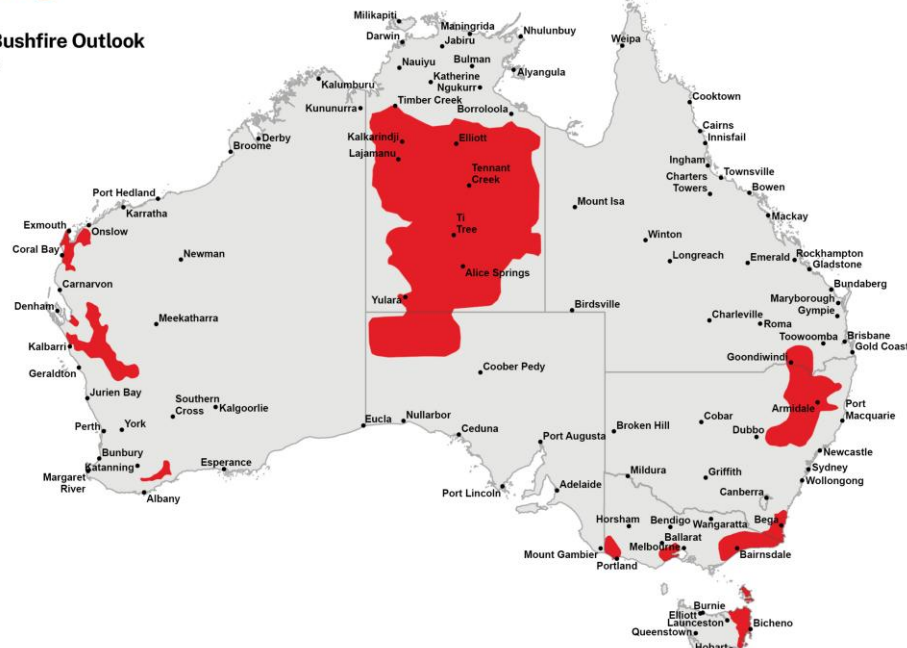


Bushfire outlook

September–November 2026



Seasonal Bushfire Outlook
Spring 2026

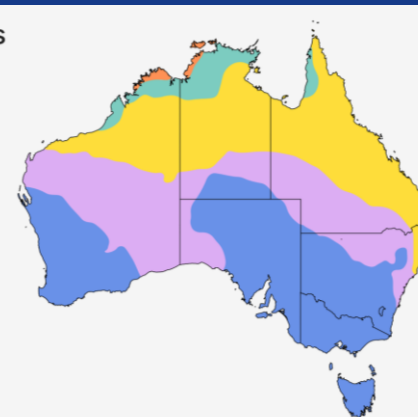


Increased risk of fire

- Spring represents peak fire season for northern Australia.
- This outlook reflects a combination of dry conditions in the east and parts of the west, and increased fuel loads through parts of central and northern Australia.
- Seasonal fire risk is based on fuel levels, vegetation status, recent mitigation, water and resource availability, as well as the Bureau's long-range forecast.

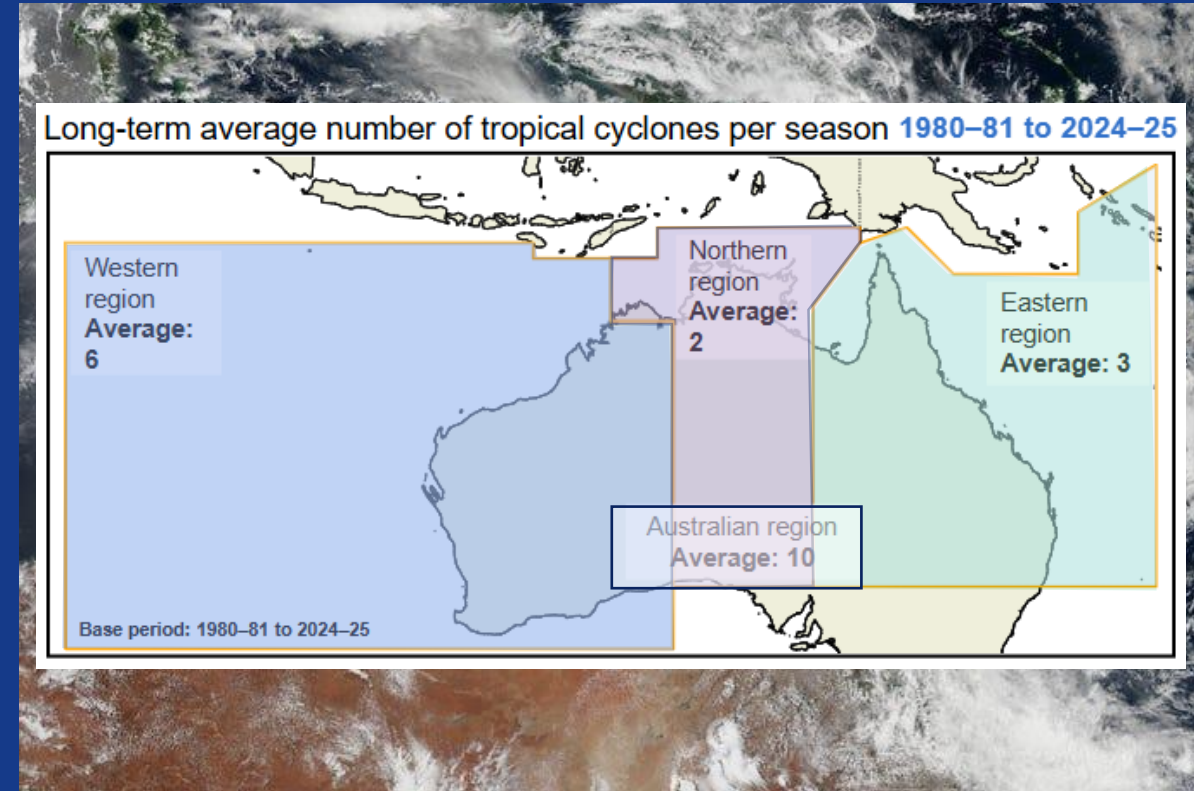
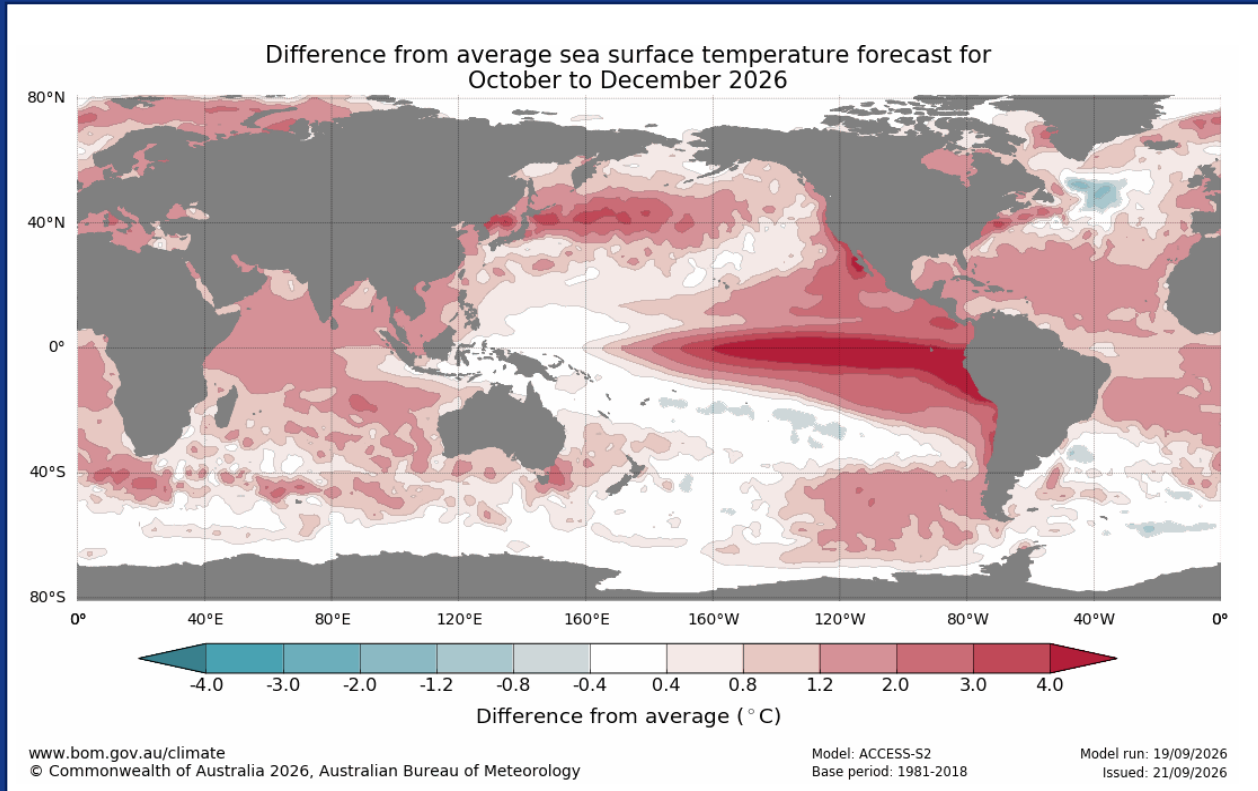
Peak fire danger seasons

- June to August
- Mid-July to mid-October
- September to November
- Mid-October to mid-January
- December to February





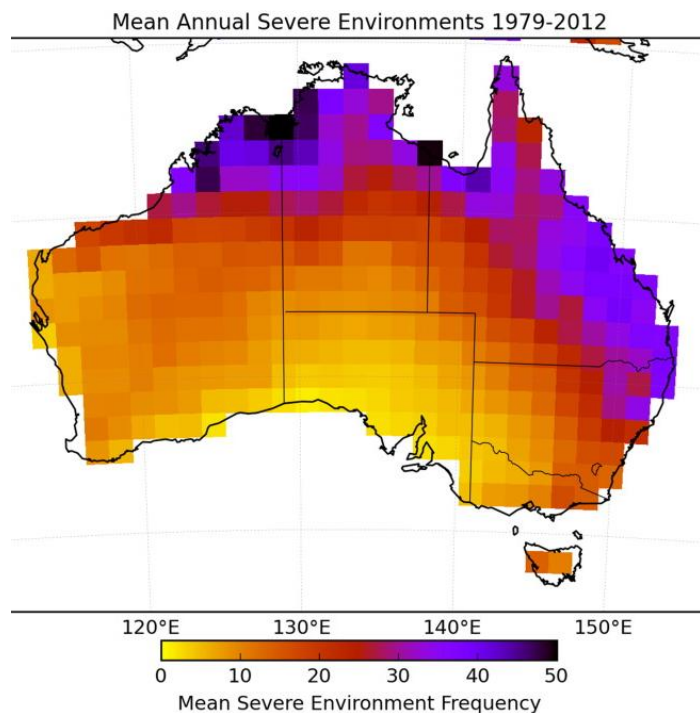
Tropical cyclone seasonal guidance



- Australia's tropical cyclone season runs from November to April.
- On average, there are 10 cyclones in the Australian region each season, with 3–4 making landfall.
- There has always been at least one tropical cyclone impact the Australian coast each season.
- The predictive value of El Niño and La Niña on tropical cyclone activity has declined in recent decades.



Severe thunderstorms



Severe thunderstorm occurrence

- **October to January** is the peak period for severe thunderstorm formation
- North-east NSW / south-east Queensland typically see the most severe storms during this time
- Warm ocean temperatures (currently off south-east Australia) can increase atmospheric moisture and energy, fuelling storms

Severe storms need to have one or more of the following:



Heavy rainfall



Damaging wind gusts



Large hail



Tornadoes



• The qualitative assessment of the listed hazards is based on an understanding of climatology, antecedent conditions and relevant forecast guidance.

• The hazard level risk is relative to long-term climatology; it is unrelated to potential impacts resulting from hazardous weather.

• The position of the hazard icons displayed on the maps roughly correlates to locations assessed as having an increased risk for the particular hazard.

• Hazardous weather may also occur at locations where icons are not displayed.

● Near-average risk

↑ Above-average risk

↓ Below-average risk

Future changes in weather and climate hazards



OCEAN WARMING
Oceans surrounding Australia are expected to become more acidic (*high confidence*) and warmer with more frequent and longer marine heatwaves (*high confidence*).



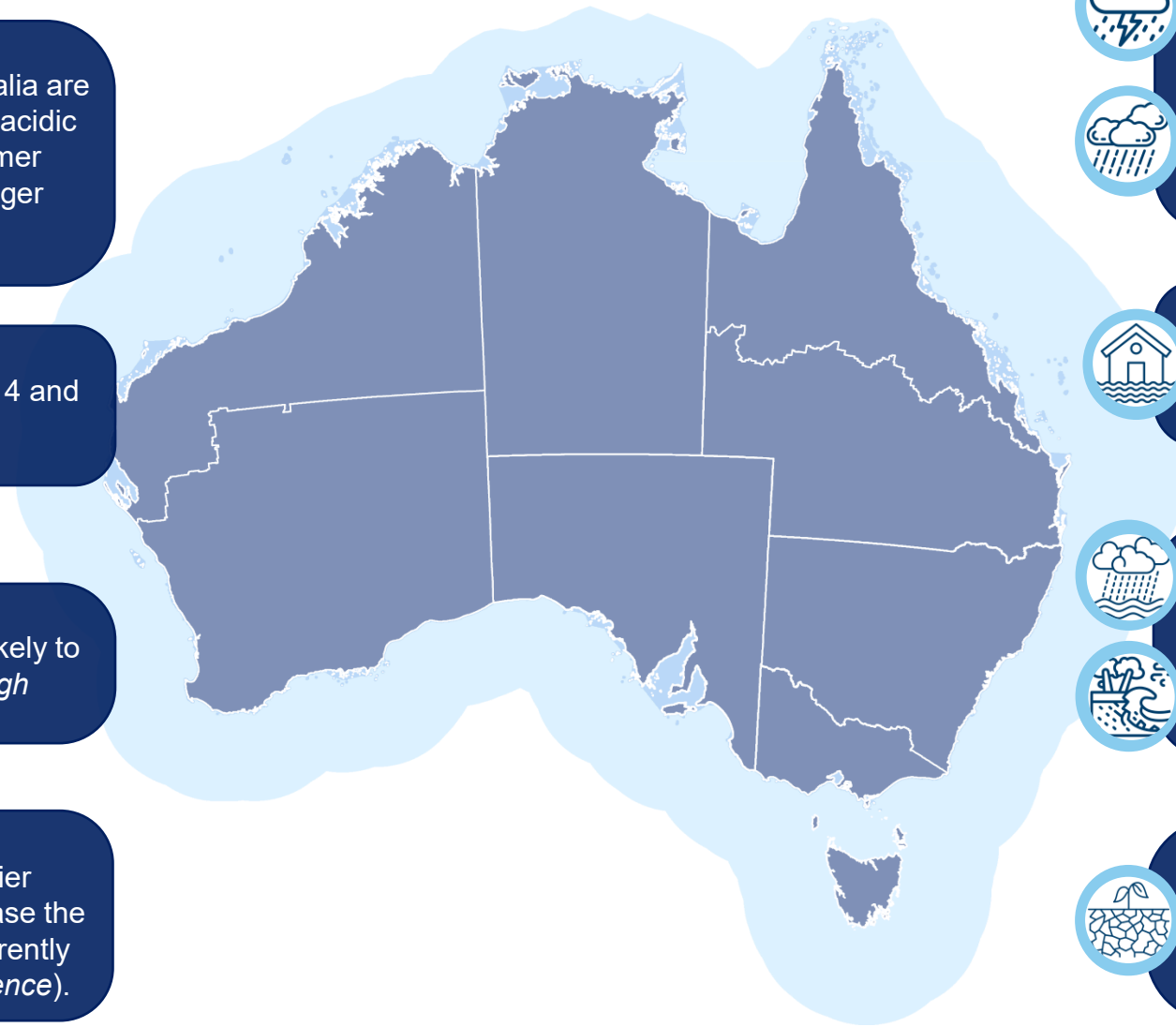
TROPICAL CYCLONES
The proportion of category 4 and 5 events may increase (*low/medium confidence*).



HEAT
Extreme temperatures are likely to increase nationwide (*very high confidence*).



BUSHFIRE
Higher temperatures and drier conditions will initially increase the risk of bushfires in most currently forested areas (*high confidence*).



STORMS
Extratropical storms (including east coast lows) may have greater impacts when they occur (*medium confidence*).
Storms producing large hail may increase in the east and occur further south (*low confidence*).



RIVERINE FLOODS
When floods do occur, they are likely to be higher due to more intense rainfall.



COASTAL HAZARDS
As sea levels rise, coastal flood events are projected to become more frequent, accompanied by greater levels of coastal erosion and shoreline change.

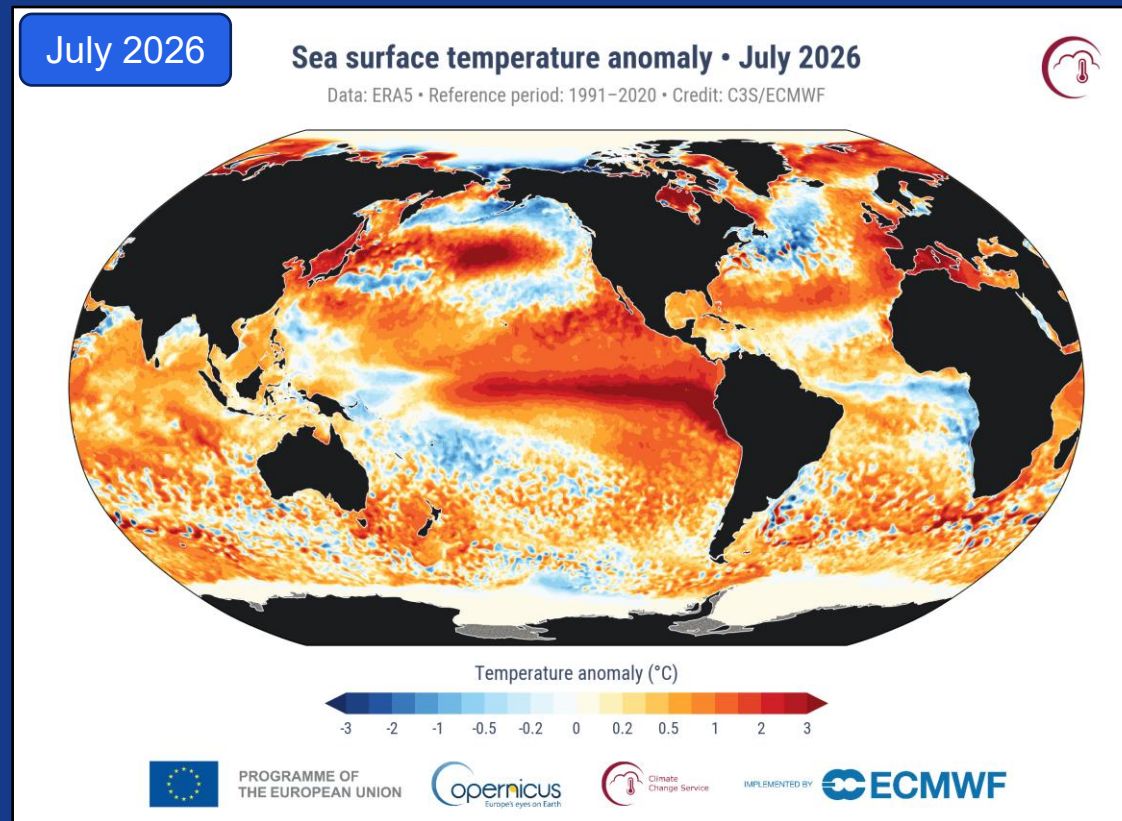
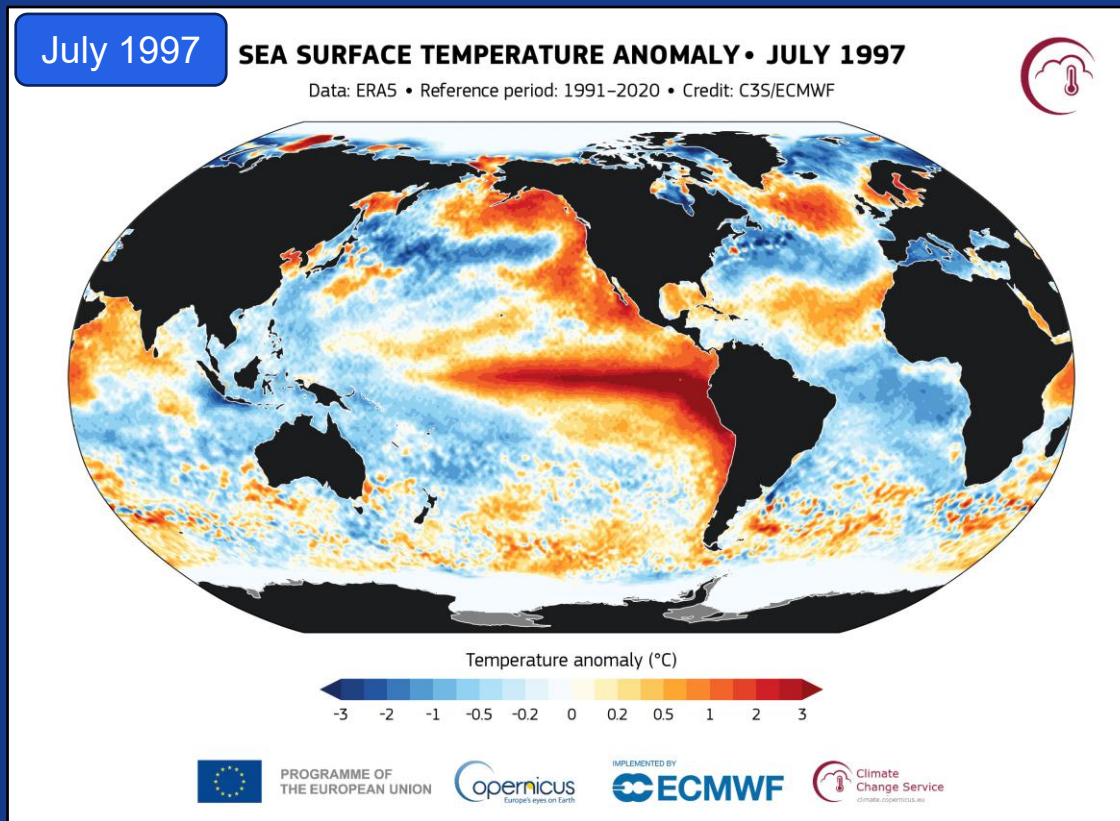


DROUGHT
Time spent in drought is likely to increase across most of the country (*low to medium confidence*).





El Niño is operating in a rapidly warming planet

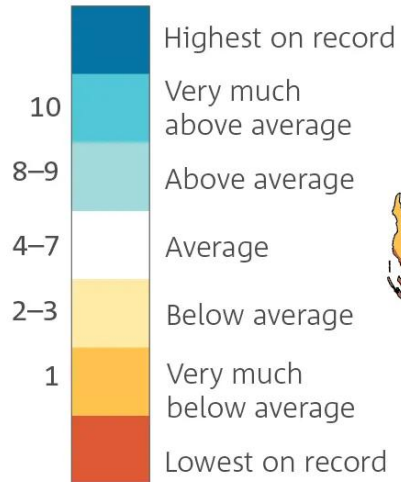


- El Niño amplifies warming - global-averaged sea surface temperatures are tracking warmest on record. August 2026 was the joint warmest month ever recorded globally (equal with July 2023). Rising temperatures are accelerating the global hydrological cycle, with:
- more extreme rainfall and more extreme droughts.
 - more rapid swings from one to the other – climate 'whip-lash', and less recovery time between events.

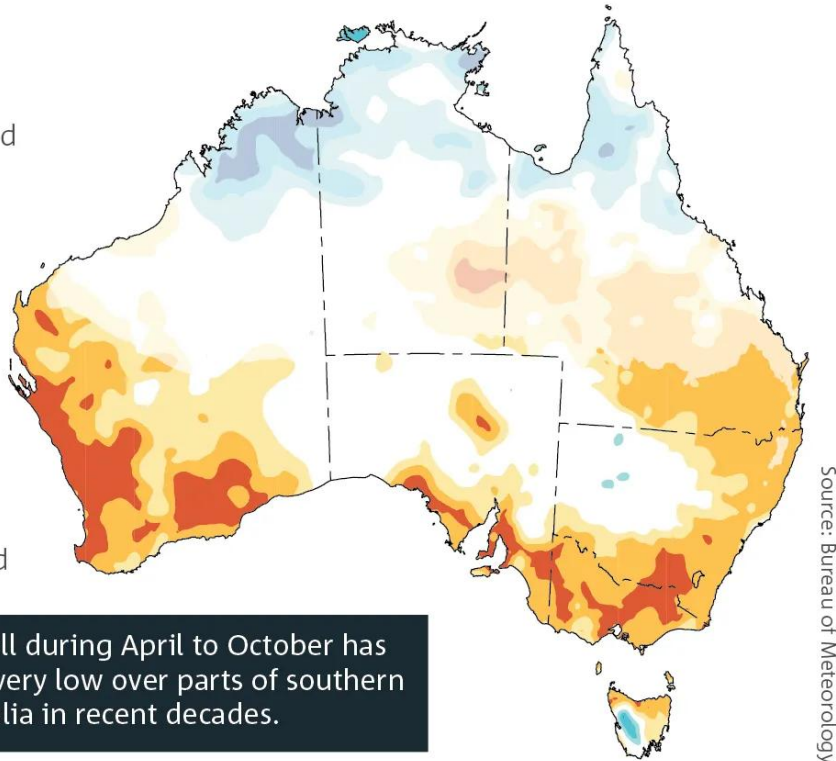


Recent trends: State of the Climate

Rainfall decile ranges



Rainfall during April to October has been very low over parts of southern Australia in recent decades.



Source: Bureau of Meteorology

- Southern Australia has become drier in recent decades, with more frequent periods of below-average rainfall.
- Australia has warmed significantly since 1910, with an increase in extreme heat events.
- The number of extreme fire weather days and the length of the fire season has increased across large parts of Australia since the 1950s. This has led to larger and more frequent fires, especially in southern Australia.
- These trends are projected to continue in coming decades as greenhouse gas concentrations increase.

April to October rainfall deciles for the 30 years from 1994 to 2023 compared to all years since 1900



Insights from National Climate Risk Assessment

The highly variable conditions forecast, combined with unusually warm minimum and maximum temperatures over much of the country, has the potential to exacerbate or accelerate many of the risks identified in the national climate risk assessment



- Risks to health:

- Increased risk of vector borne diseases
- Increased mental health impacts with ecosystem damage especially significant for Aboriginal health and wellbeing



- Risks to agriculture and horticulture

- Increased risk of crops stress and reduced yields



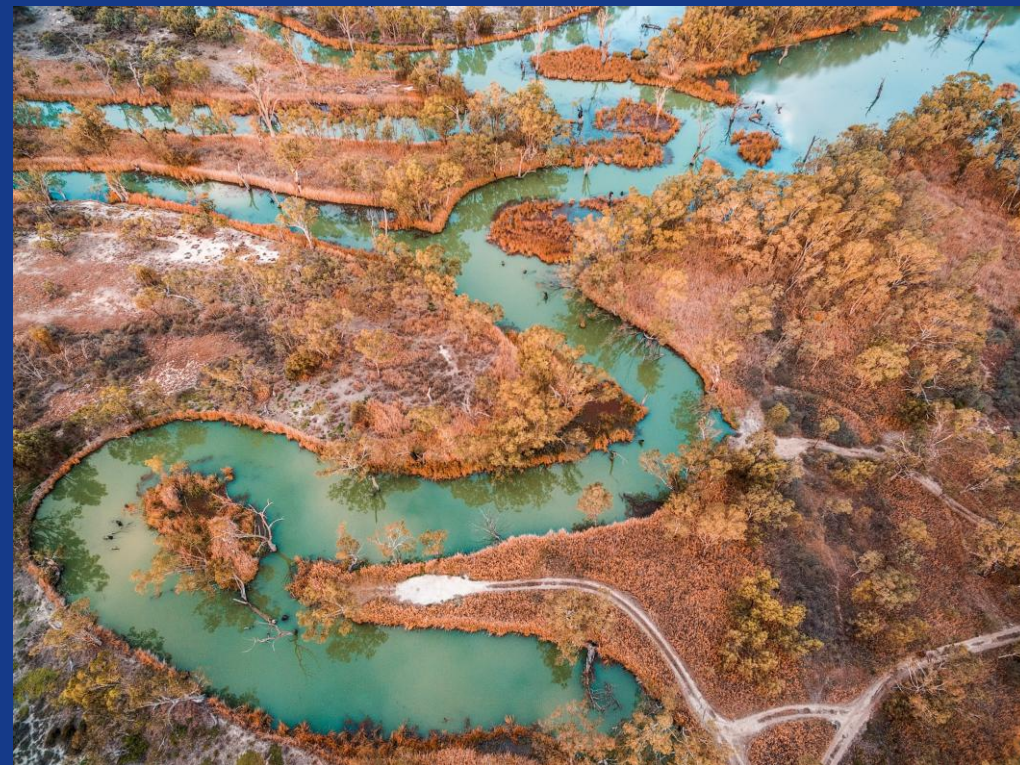
- Risks to the forests and ecosystem environment

- Increased risk of stress to freshwater environments with potential for enhanced growth of cyanobacteria and algae blooms.
- Increased risk of water contamination.



- Risk to marine environment and fisheries

- Increased vulnerability of wild-catch fisheries and aquaculture
- Increased risk of biodiversity loss and migration of species



Not a forecast: changes may not be visible or abrupt, but will contribute to ongoing impacts

Connect with us

Stay up to date with the latest
forecasts and warnings

bom.gov.au

and the BOM Weather app





Q&A with Bureau of Meteorology

Don't forget to put your questions in the Q&A function.



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AIDR resources

John Richardson

Executive Director

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR)



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AIDR Planning Resources



Australian Disaster Resilience Handbooks



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I found this handbook
on exercise....

That's not the
exercise I was
thinking of

Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub

AIDRKnowledge HubEducation for Young People

AIDRKnowledge HubEducation for Young People



Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub

Website

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All Collections ▾ 

Knowledge Hub: Collections

The Knowledge Hub is a national platform that supports and informs policy, planning, decision making and contemporary good practice in disaster resilience.

Explore the collections below to get started.

[More about the Knowledge Hub](#)

Australian Disaster Resilience Conference



Australia's premier disaster resilience conference

Australian disasters



Historical disaster events that have affected Australia

Australian Journal of Emergency Management



Australia's premier journal for emergency management

Climate and disasters



Learn about Australia's climate, climate change, natural hazards and disasters



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National Resilient Australia Awards 2025



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National Resilient Australia Awards 2024



National Resilient Australia Awards 2023



Contact the RAA Coordinator

For more information about the Resilient Australia Awards program, please contact our RAA Coordinator at raa@aidr.org.au

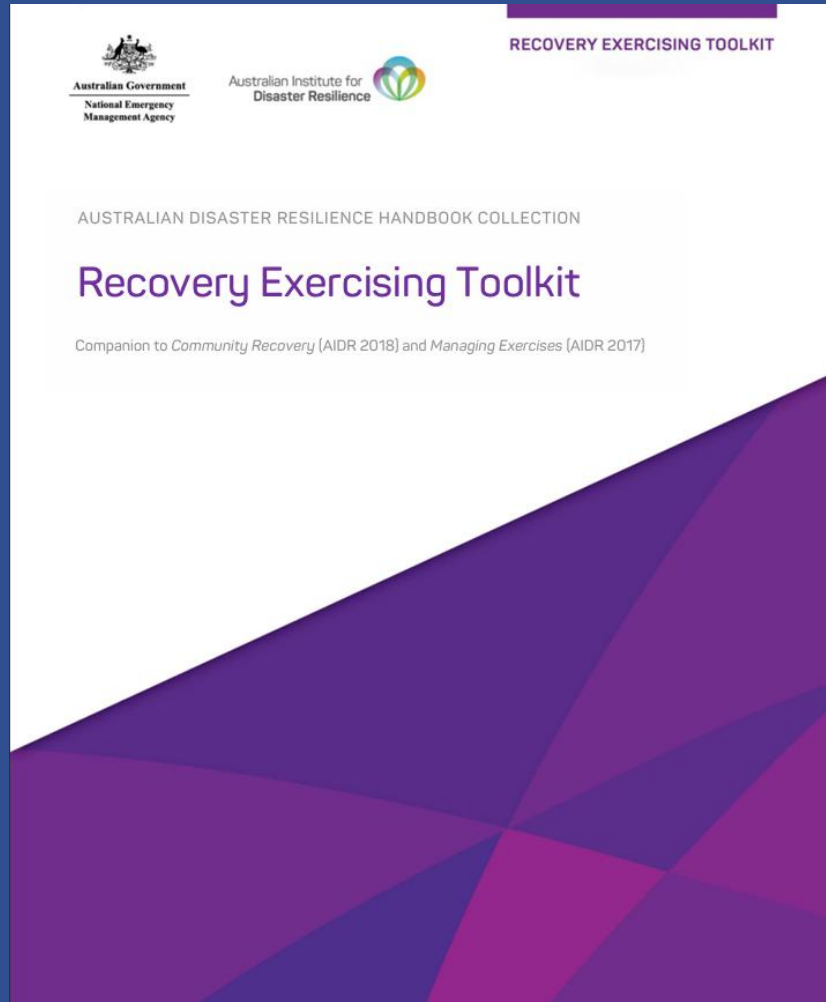
Australian Journal of Emergency Management feature articles

Each year, finalists for the Resilient Australia National Awards are featured in the Australian Journal of Emergency Management (AJEM).

- [2025 winners in AJEM](#)
- [2024 winners in AJEM](#)
- [2023 winners in AJEM](#)
- [2022 winners in AJEM](#)
- [2021 winners in AJEM](#)
- [2020 winners in AJEM](#)
- [2019 winners in AJEM](#)



Recovery Exercising Toolkit



- Toolkit
- Facilitator Guide
- Slide Deck
- Core modules



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A photograph of Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson in a scene from the movie 'Jaws: The Reckoning'. He is wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt and has visible blood on his forehead and hand. He is holding a mobile phone to his ear. A blue speech bubble is overlaid on the image, containing the text 'Madam Mayor, I think we need to do some planning for evacuations'. In the background, a man in a black jacket with 'CPD' on the sleeve is writing on a notepad. Other people in uniform are visible in the distance.

Madam Mayor,
I think we need to do
some planning for
evacuations



Speaker Introductions

Mel Osborne

Business Development Manager

Gender and Disaster Australia (GADAUS)



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Australian Government

National Emergency
Management Agency

Funding for this project was provided
by the Australian Government's
**National Emergency Management
Agency (NEMA).**

Creating Safe Shelter Spaces



**Gender
and Disaster
Australia**



How This Work Was Done



Community-led evidence base:

- Surveys and stakeholder discussions
- GADAus and partner research
- Lived experience insights
- Partnerships

Voices included:

- Women and children (Women's Health networks and UWS research – BiBs study)
- DFV specialists
- LGBTIQASB+ people (organisations and research)
- First Nations (We Al-li)
- Multicultural communities (surveys & MEMP partnership)
- People with disability (organisations and research)
- Young Australians
- Older Australians

Key Take-Aways

SAFETY IS GENDERED

Women, children and gender-diverse people experience emergency evacuation centres differently, with distinct privacy, safety and dignity needs. ***Build relationships with support agencies before disaster.***

SAFETY IS NOT JUST ABOUT PROTECTION FROM PHYSICAL HARM

If people do not feel psychologically, culturally or socially safe, they may avoid evacuation centres altogether, increasing their risk during a disaster. ***Build relationships with support agencies before disaster.***

SAFETY IS BROUGHT TO LIFE THROUGH EVERYDAY ACTIONS

Safety depends on how staff behave in real time: offering privacy, using respectful language, and responding to people's needs with care, consistency and trauma-informed practice. ***Build relationships with support agencies before disaster.***





Speaker Introductions

Rachel O'Reilly

Centre of Excellence, Young People and Disasters



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Getting Ready for the Higher-Risk Weather Season

Young People and Evacuation Centres
Rachel O'Reilly

Key Points

- Youth needs in evacuation centres: Communication, safety, privacy, connection and support.
- Youth as active participants: Recognising young people's skills, perspectives and contributions.
- Youth involvement in preparedness: Meaningfully involving young people in emergency planning and decision-making.

Resources

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. (2020). *Our World, Our Say: Australia's largest youth survey on climate change*. <https://www.aidr.org.au/news/our-world-our-say-australia-s-largest-youth-survey-on-climate-change/>

Colwell, S. (2021). Evacuation centres are lifeboats, not cruise ships: Managing expectations and prioritising improvements. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 36(4), 11–12. <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-october-2021-evacuation-centres-are-lifeboats-not-cruise-ships-managing-expectations-and-prioritising-improvements/>

Centre of Excellence: Young People & Disasters. (2026). *Centre of Excellence: Young People & Disasters*. <https://ypdcentre.org.au/>

Gender and Disaster Australia. (2026). *Creating Safe Shelter Spaces*. <https://genderanddisaster.com.au/creating-safe-shelter-spaces/>

Macedon Ranges Shire Council. (2018). *Children and young people emergency plan*. <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Our-Council/Strategies-Plans/Children-and-Young-People-Emergency-Plan>



Speaker Introductions

Richard Ogetii

CEO, Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council (AWACC);

Co-Chair, Multicultural Emergency Management Partnership (MEMP)



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INCLUSIVE EVACUATION CENTRES: Multicultural community considerations

Richard Ogetii – CEO Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council &
Co-chair Multicultural Emergency Management Partnership (MEMP) - Victoria



Key message

In an emergency planning, inclusion is not a tick-box exercise/ an additional service – it is part of the safety system.

If people cannot:

- Understand the warning
 - Trust the messenger,
 - Reach the evacuation centre,
 - Use it safely and with dignity,
- then the plan has not fully reached them.



Communication

Communication must be accessible – beyond websites – “websites could be a place to ‘hide’ information”

Early and channels used by communities – e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook

Clear and plain language

Multilingual

Use modern pictograms and audio visual

Repeat important information

Explain what will happen next



Trust

Trust affects whether people act. Build relationships early.

Issues

- Unfamiliarity with Australian emergency services
- Concern about government authorities
- Uncertainty about available assistance and eligibility

~~Work with~~ Involve multicultural organisations, faith communities and settlement services before emergencies

Trusted partners can help shape messages, explain local concerns and share accurate information in a timely manner.

It takes time to build trust – start early



Physical and social environment

Protect dignity

Cultural safety – ensure no harm while seeking safety

Consider privacy – sleeping, changing, breastfeeding, prayer, and personal care

Consider family composition – keep people together where possible

Food – culturally and religious appropriate

Ensure that the systems at the centre are easy to navigate – e.g. registration, complaints and feedback

Staff should ask respectfully and avoid assumptions



Involve community early

Know your communities before the emergency

Include them in the design of the evacuation centres

Involve multicultural communities in the planning, exercises, and review

Ask community representatives what barriers they see, invite them to test evacuation-centre arrangements and show how feedback has changed the plans

During evacuation – create a simple way for communities to raise emerging issues and to receive a timely response.



Thank You!



To learn more about MEMP

<https://www.memp.org.au/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/multicultural-emergency-management-partnership>



Speaker Introductions

Bastien Wallace

Senior Policy Officer

People With Disability Australia



Australian Government

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Improving outcomes for people with disability in disasters and emergencies

- Roadmap for Improving Outcomes for People with Disability in Disasters and Emergencies
- Accessible resources
- <https://pwd.org.au/improving-outcomes-for-people-with-disability-in-disaster-management/>

How do I plan?

- How do I know when to leave?
- Where do I evacuate to?
- How do I get there?



pwda

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY
AUSTRALIA

Accessible facilities



- Step free
- Power
- Accessible information and social stories
- Accessible area to rest
- Assistance animal provision
- Quiet area



Speaker Introductions

Bridget Tehan

Senior Advisor – Humanitarian Diplomacy

Australian Red Cross



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Speaker Introductions

El Carter

Manager – Emergency Coordination

Australian Red Cross



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Supporting First Nation Peoples in Evacuation

Humanitarian Charter:

All people have a right to life with dignity and respect, and the right to receive humanitarian assistance appropriate to their needs

- Engage and consult at the earliest opportunity
- Know the communities that you are helping
- Ensure community leaders have a seat around the table and have voice and agency in decisions that affect them
- Understand cultural practice and governance arrangements and what it means in an evacuation context, including:
 - Leadership and hierarchy structures and practice
 - Connection to country
 - Family and kinship connections
 - Men's and women's business
 - Sorry business
 - Avoidance and Poisoned relationships



Practical Steps for Support



Work with community leaders and support organisations, to consider:

- the development of community evacuation plans that are specific to community need and reflective of cultural practice and norms
 - how an evac centre should be set up and laid out to best facilitate continuity of cultural practice
 - Gender inclusive rostering
-

Engage with First Nations and community-based service providers to understand:

- what supports and services might be required and how they can be delivered in a culturally safe and appropriate way
- what continuity of care for sick or vulnerable people in community looks like





Speaker Introductions

Karleen Gribble

Adjunct Professor

Western Sydney University



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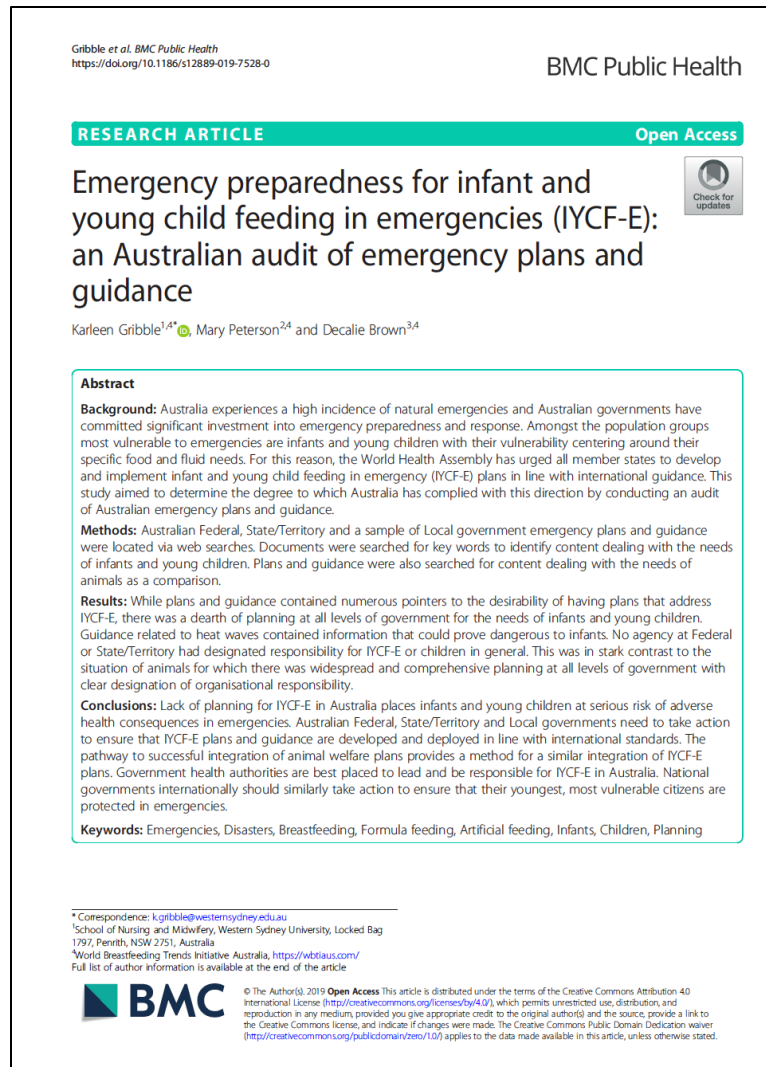
Planning to support families with infants and young children in emergencies

Karleen Gribble

School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University



Australia has lacked emergency planning for families with babies and toddlers

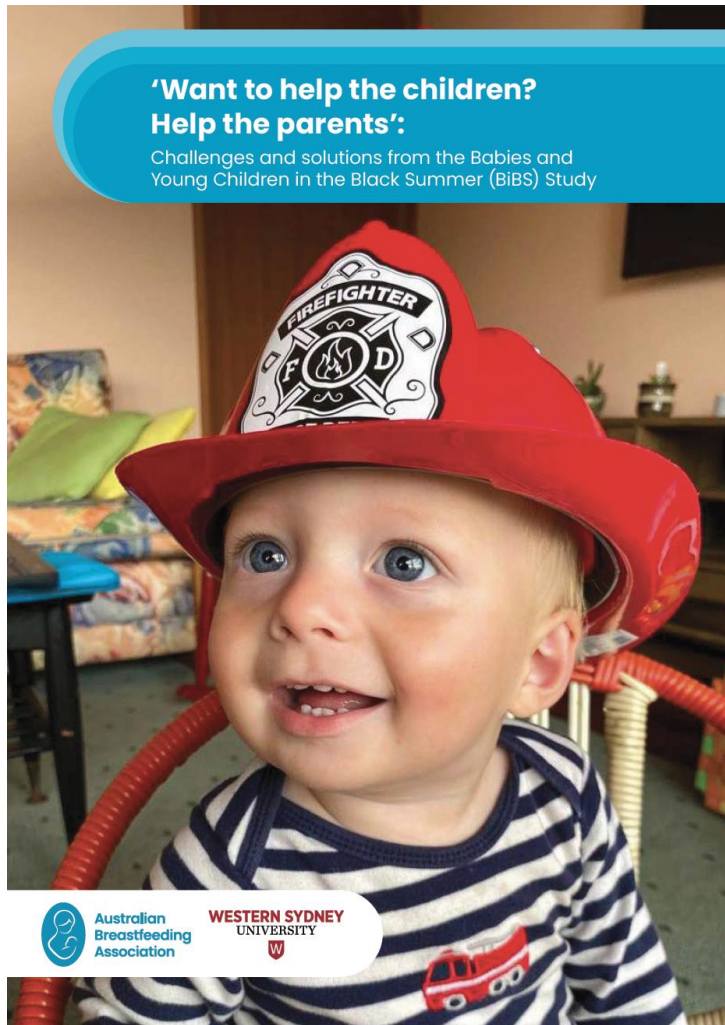


“Dearth of planning at all levels of government for the needs of infants and young children”

Animals are better accounted for than children:

- “infant” “baby” “babies” 124x
- “animal” “pet” >2300x

Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer (BiBS) Study



- 65% had no plan prior to the 2019-20 bushfires.
- Women who were pregnant as well were less likely to make an emergency plan.
- Evacuation centres were commonly dangerous for young children.
- Children were invisible in disaster recovery until they were in an institution and parents lacked support.
- Long-term effects on child development and mental health observed in communities.

Resources to support families




Australian
Breastfeeding
Association

FIRE + RESCUE NSW

Have you considered how
you could prepare your
family for disasters?

 Scan QR code for FREE
emergency planning
tools, including
evacuation kit lists.

Emergency planning tools



Planning for emergencies
A quick guide for families with babies and toddlers

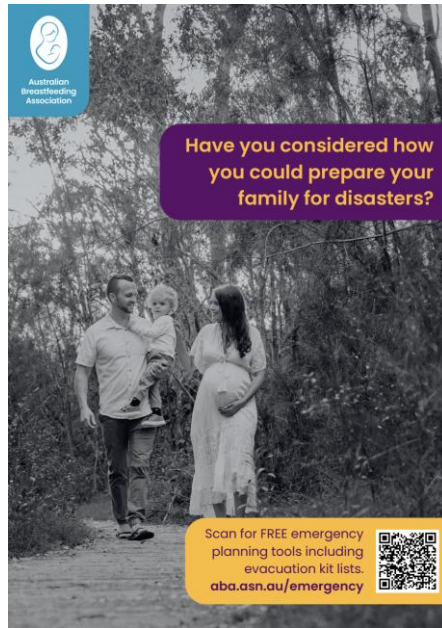
- 1 Plan to leave early.
- 2 Pack an evacuation kit for you and your children. Learn what to pack at aba.asn.au/emergency
- 3 Arrange to evacuate to a friend or family member's home, rather than an evacuation centre, if possible.
- 4 Decide how you will get to your place of evacuation.
- 5 Work out who you will contact to tell them you are leaving and that you have arrived safely.
- 6 Make a back-up plan. Identify other options for transport and safe places to shelter.

These recommendations are informed by the Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer (BIBS) Study. This research found that parents often had little time to evacuate and that packing items for children was difficult and time consuming. As a result, parents often evacuated later than they wanted to. They also often evacuated without things they needed to care for their children (such as food or nappies). Evacuation centres were difficult places for families, and even more so for mothers who evacuated on their own with their children. When asked what they would do differently, parents in the study said they would have an evacuation kit packed for their child and would leave earlier.

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Feb 2024

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Posters



Evacuation kit lists

Emergency evacuation kit list

What to pack for a breastfed baby

This evacuation kit list will help you prepare the items needed to care for your baby for three days, even if you have no access to clean tap water, electricity or gas.

Pack these items ahead of time:

Adjust the type and number of items for your own situation.

- 36 nappies
- 200 baby wipes (for nappy changes and wiping hands and face)
- 1 pack of breast pads (if used)
- 10 L water for mum to drink
- Snacks for mum (such as muesli bars, dried fruit)
- Baby sling (a light fabric sling can be used to carry or wrap your baby, provide shade, or as a breastfeeding cover)
- Clothes (basic items with at least one summer outfit and one winter outfit)
- Baby sleeping bag/suit
- 3 bibs
- Small blanket
- Toys (consider small items such as a soft toy, a book, a rattle, stacking cups)
- If your child usually uses a dummy, pack 2
- National Breastfeeding Helpline number (1800 686 266)
- Australian Breastfeeding Association fact sheet on **Breastfeeding in emergencies**

If your baby is 6 months or older include:

- 10 disposable bowls and spoons
- Food (such as dried fruit, tinned corn, baked beans, baby food pouches)

Add these items at the time of evacuation:

- Child health records
- Medicines (such as baby paracetamol and an asthma spacer if needed)
- Any comfort objects your baby uses
- A travel cot or pram (if you have room)
- Your preferred baby carrier
- Any breastfeeding aids normally used (such as nipple shields or a breastfeeding pillow)

Other things to consider:

Plan to evacuate early. Go to a friend or family member's home, rather than an evacuation centre, if possible.

If isolation in your home is possible you may wish to prepare to be without electricity. Store a gas stove, a full gas bottle and a kettle suitable for use on a gas stove.

Think about keeping some cloth nappies at home as supplies of disposable nappies may run low during and after a disaster.

Make sure the family evacuation kit includes a first aid kit.

Consider storing enough items for one week.



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Emergency responder resources

FREE

Disaster support
for babies,
toddlers and
their caregivers

An interactive eLearning module for
emergency workers and preparedness teams



Follow us [@ozbreastfeeding](https://www.instagram.com/ozbreastfeeding)

The Australian Breastfeeding Association is a Registered Training Organisation and receives funding from the Australian Government. ABN: 64005081523 RTO: 21659



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and enrol



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Safe sleep

- Ensure surfaces are firm and flat, and kept clear of toys and blankets.
- Look out for positions that make it hard for babies to breathe.
- Protect them against falls and being stepped on.



Feeding

Breastfeeding mums need:

- a private place to sit
- water and food
- reassurance about milk supply and expected baby behaviour.



Formula feeding families need:

- infant formula*
- clean water
- a clean space to prepare feeds
- hot water and detergent for washing, or
- single-use bottles or cups.



***Always assess need before providing infant formula.**

Older babies and toddlers need:

- safe solid foods
- snacks outside of mealtimes.



Hygiene

Ensure access to:

- nappies and wipes
- soap and water
- nappy disposal.

Supporting families with babies or toddlers in evacuation centres

Babies and toddlers have unique needs that place them at greater risk. You can support parents to meet these needs and keep them safe.



Play

Create a safe space for play and movement with suitable, clean toys.



Safety

Protect children from:

- animals
- hot water
- electrical outlets
- vehicles
- medications and drugs
- stairs and balconies.

Emotional wellbeing

Help protect young children from trauma.

- Support their caregivers.
- Provide a calm environment.
- Keep them away from very distressed adults.



RTO: 21659 Breastfeeding photo by Amanda Radovic Pēpi-Pod* sleep space photo by Vida Images, with permission of Professor Jeanine Young

Learn more

aba.asn.au/emergency



Scenarios for evacuation centre exercises

An emergency planning resource



Australian Breastfeeding Association

Infant and toddler scenarios for use during evacuation centre exercises

The scenarios in this resource were developed from the findings of the **Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer (BIBS) Study**. When included in your evacuation centre exercises, they will help to protect babies and toddlers in future emergencies.

Over the page you will find four scenarios to help identify whether training and planning have accounted for the specific needs of pregnant women and mothers (or caregivers) of young children:

- Safe environments and resources for infant feeding, sanitation and sleep.
- Proactive identification of individual vulnerabilities.
- Awareness of child protection and safety issues.
- Understanding of the physical and mental capacity and personal needs of caregivers.
- Registration and other processes that support mothers or caregivers to meet their child's needs.

Before participating in an evacuation centre exercise, emergency responders and volunteers may find it helpful to complete the 15 minute free eModule, *Disaster support for babies, toddlers and caregivers*. Enrol now at aba.asn.au/emodule-prepare

Key findings from the BIBS Study

- **As the primary caregivers of infants and young children, women were particularly vulnerable.** They often evacuated alone with multiple children, or were newly postpartum or heavily pregnant.
- **Women were concerned about the safety of their children in evacuation centres.** Preventing toddlers wandering was challenging. Dogs and other pets presented a threat. Child protection concerns and physical safety issues were raised by both mothers and emergency responders.
- **Mothers often did not ask for help.** They were too busy looking after their children, did not know who to ask for help, or did not feel confident asking for assistance.
- **Women prioritised their children's needs over their own,** and did not eat or drink as much as needed. Several pregnant women fainted while queuing because they were dehydrated.
- **Children's need for care continued unabated.** This made it difficult for women to seek assistance, access resources and attend to their own personal care needs, like going to the toilet.
- **Safe feeding and sleep presented challenges.** Mothers felt uncomfortable breastfeeding in public. Appropriate facilities and resources for safe formula feeding were not always available. Lack of safe sleep spaces for babies meant mothers tried to stay awake to protect infants from animals or strangers, or to prevent them slipping off pillows and other unsafe sleep surfaces.

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Scenario A

Mother Kate with baby Ruby (6 weeks) and toddler James (2.5 years)

- has not pre-registered
- evacuated without her partner
- has nowhere else to go
- has food for her toddler James
- needs a private space to breastfeed baby Ruby on arrival at the centre
- does not have a pram
- is concerned James has no fear of strangers and a tendency to run.

Scenario C

Mother Christina with toddler Cecilia (2 years) and preschooler Heidi (4 years)

- has not pre-registered
- evacuated on her own with the children suddenly
- has nowhere else to go
- does not have any supplies (including nappies for Cecilia or toys to keep the children occupied)
- is 8 months pregnant
- has pelvic instability due to her pregnancy and finds it difficult to stand and walk
- needs to go to the toilet frequently.

Scenario B

Mother Mei with baby Ling (2 months) and her mother

- has not pre-registered
- is a single mother
- has nowhere else to go
- only has enough infant formula for one feed and Baby Ling is fully formula fed
- needs a place to make up and wash bottles for baby Ling
- needs somewhere to put baby Ling to sleep.

Scenario D

Mother Kadija with baby Abul (3 weeks) and preschooler Sara (3 years)

- has not pre-registered
- has nowhere else to go
- recently arrived as a refugee without her husband
- does not speak English well and will not ask for assistance
- will not breastfeed in public
- is mixed feeding (breastfeeding and formula feeding) Baby Abul
- gave birth to Baby Abul via caesarean section and is still in pain from the surgery
- preschooler Sara is very anxious and will not leave her mother's side.

Evacuation centre safety



Checklist add-in for the safety of infants and young children and their caregivers in evacuation centre venues

Venue characteristic	Y/N	Comment
Set back or can be protected from busy roads and other hazards such as bodies of water		
Single level building (or if stairs and balconies are present, there are safety measures in place to mitigate the risk of falls)		
Absence of hazards such as machinery, chemicals, or unsafe fixed play equipment		
Childproof fencing or other barriers to hazards		
Several rooms available or the ability to divide large areas into smaller spaces to accommodate different groups of people		
A secondary kitchen facility with hot water for infant food preparation and washing		
Room available to provide privacy for breastfeeding (that is not in a toilet)		
Air filters in place for the whole venue or for a room within the venue		



In addition to these venue characteristics, how an evacuation centre is operated can mitigate risk to children.

Recommendations include:

- Gathering families with infants and young children and pregnant women together in a designated section of a larger room if a separate room is not available. Screens and barriers can assist in defining this space, which should be positioned as far as possible from potential hazards.
- Providing a temporary screened and signed area for optional use by women who require privacy for breastfeeding if a separate room is not available.
- Developing and implementing procedures to facilitate the safe washing of infant feeding items, including for evacuation centre staff to wash items if caregivers are not able to access kitchen facilities.
- Displaying temporary evacuation centre signage informing caregivers of where they can access resources, seek assistance, and mitigate risks (for example, displaying a 'Do not wash infant feeding bottles here' sign in the toilets).
- Offering proactive assistance to pregnant women and those caring for infants and young children, particularly sole caregivers.
- Ensuring that daily site hazard inspections are undertaken and include monitoring and management of hazards and risks posed to children and their caregivers.
- Ensuring that evacuation centre managers and workers are educated in and consider the needs of pregnant women, infants, young children and their caregivers, with all aware of their child protection responsibilities.
- Making sure that hazards such as machinery, chemicals and unsafe equipment are removed, secured or behind barriers. For example, using childproofing covers for power outlets, and taking measures to prevent children's access to electrical appliances, boiling water and other hot surfaces.
- Prioritising pregnant women, infants and young children for the least smoky locations.

Pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers should be prioritised to more appropriate evacuation locations where these are available.

Safe sleep for babies in evacuation

An emergency planning resource

UniSC Kidsafe Australian Breastfeeding Association

Supporting safer sleep for babies in evacuation centres

Babies need a safe space for every sleep. When planning, establishing or operating an evacuation centre, special consideration must be given to facilitating the safest possible sleep space for babies 0 to 12 months old. The recommendations in this resource will assist in creating safer sleep spaces for young families seeking shelter with the limited resources available in evacuation conditions.

Sleep is safe for babies when their airway is open and they can easily get oxygen into their lungs. The key safety principle is **'Easy to breathe, safe to sleep'**.

How can an airway become blocked?

Airflow can be slowed or blocked if a baby's air tube is:

- **Covered** – Face covered, for example with objects or another person's body
- **Pinched** – Nose pinched or squished in a gap
- **Bent** – Head and neck in chin to chest position
- **Pressed** – Pressure against a small chest that makes it difficult for baby's lungs to expand.

Covered

Pinched

Bent

Pressed

* The key safety principle 'Easy to breathe, safe to sleep' and the images above have been adapted from Through the Tubes and the Pēpi-Pod® Program by Change for our Children, New Zealand.

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Using a Pēpi-Pod®

A Pēpi-Pod® is a portable sleep space designed for use in shared sleep environments for babies not yet able to roll (up to 4 to 6 months). It is provided as part of a program of education with a safety briefing embossed into the base of the device.

- Follow the safety briefing on the device and the requirements for bassinets and cots.
- Set up on a flat, level floor or on a firm, flat, level mattress (see: [Sharing a sleep surface with baby](#)).



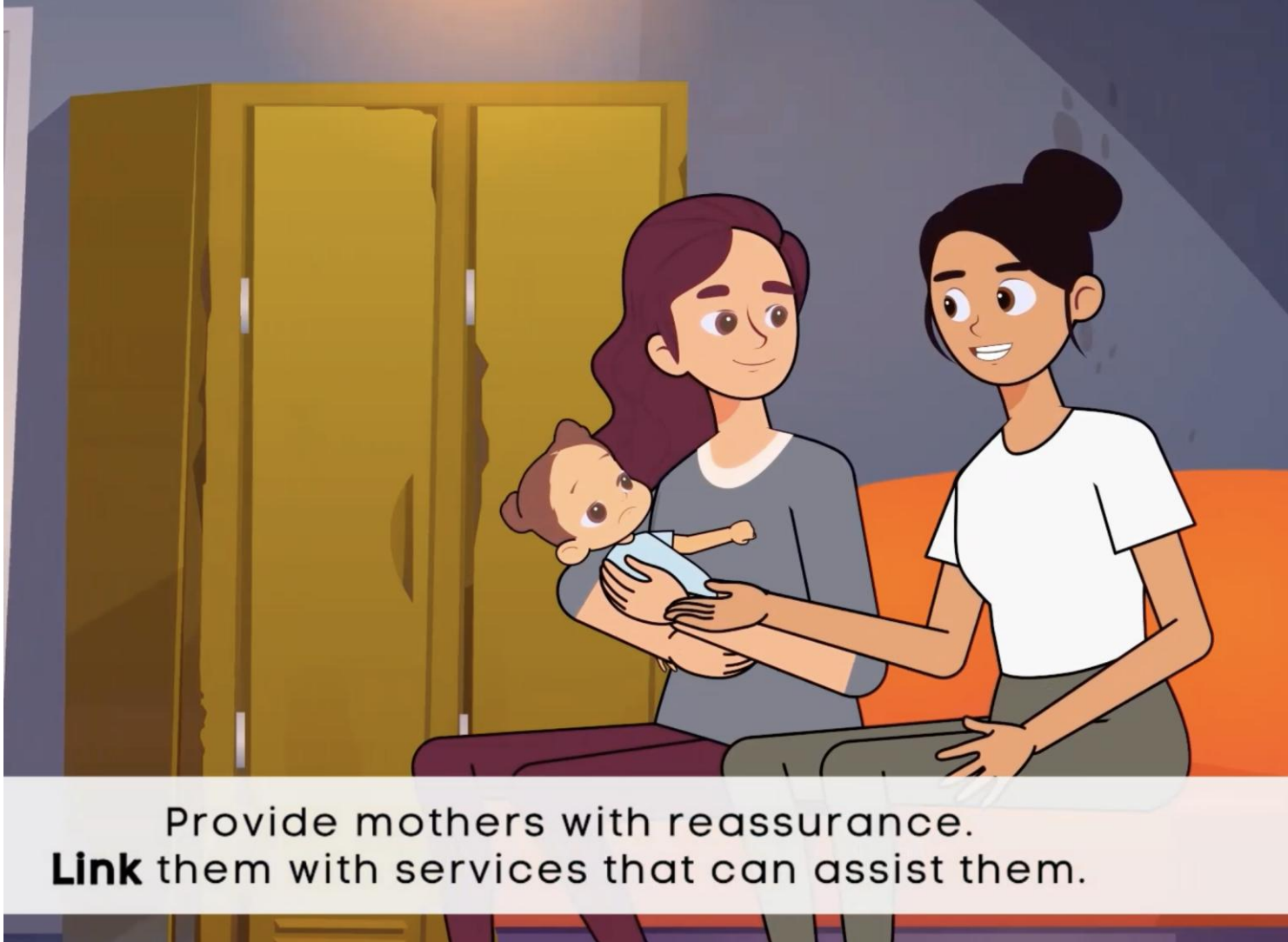
Using a drawer or box

A container (like a large drawer, or a cardboard or plastic box) can also be used to make a safe sleep space.

- A towel folded to exactly fit the base of the container can be used as a mattress. Do not use a pillow or cushion.
- The container can be placed on the floor away from traffic, or used on a shared sleep surface (see: [Sharing a sleep surface with baby](#)).



Psychological first aid



Recovery centre support



- Venue selection
- Layout and resources
- Operation

Recovery centre operation

Upon arrival, ask those caring for infants and toddlers if they have any **immediate needs** (for example, to change a nappy or to feed an infant). Inform them of resources available in the recovery centre to support them in caring for their children.

Ensure that **psychological first aid** is offered to all pregnant women and the caregivers of infants and toddlers.

Offer water (and if possible, food) to all pregnant women and those caring for babies and toddlers.

Provide **expedited services** to pregnant woman and families with infants and toddlers to avoid prolonged waiting.

Avoid queuing that requires people to stand and instead organise service provision using a number system or provide seated queuing.

Implement **trauma-informed care practices** that reduce the number of times individuals need to share distressing or traumatic experiences

Ensure that all **pregnant women are asked what health and other support they need** for themselves or their children as a part of the formal support service process.

Ensure that **referral pathways** include to services supporting pregnant women and those with infants and toddlers such as maternity services, family support services, domestic violence services, and infant feeding support.

Promoting safety with signage





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Managing infant formula donations, procurement and distribution in emergencies: model policies and guidance

- Model policies and accompanying guidance both for organisations distributing and not distributing infant formula.
- Endorsed by 27 health and emergency organisations



Mother-baby area guide for Australia

Taking care of mothers in disaster recovery so they can take care of their babies and toddlers



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Thank you



[https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au
/resources/feed-baby-emergency](https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/feed-baby-emergency)

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Q&A

Don't forget to put your questions in the Q&A function.



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National Emergency Management Agency



Event concludes

Thank you for attending today's webinar.

Next event:

Solar tantrums: Why space weather matters

Tuesday 6 October 2026,
1.00pm-2.00pm AEDT



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National Emergency Management Agency

Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience





You might also be interested in this online forum:

*Emergency Management Victoria:
Victorian emergency preparedness briefing
for community and not-for-profit
organisations*

Thursday 1 October 2026
1.30pm-3.00pm AEST



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WEBINAR

Getting ready for the higher-risk weather season