Australian Emergency Management Arrangements
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History of the Australian National Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection

The first publications in the original Australian Emergency Manual Series were primarily skills reference manuals produced from 1989 onwards. In August 1996, on advice from the National Emergency Management Principles and Practice Advisory Group, the Series was expanded to include a more comprehensive range of emergency management principles and practice reference publications.

In 2011, Handbooks were introduced to better align the Series with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. Compiled by practitioners with management and service-delivery experience in a range of disaster events, the handbooks comprised principles, strategies and actions to help the management and delivery of support services in a disaster context.

In 2015, the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) was appointed custodian of the handbooks and manuals in the series. Now known as the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection, AIDR continues to provide guidance on the national principles and practices in disaster resilience in Australia through management and publication of the Collection.

The Handbook Collection is developed and reviewed by national consultative committees representing a range of state and territory agencies, governments, organisations and individuals involved in disaster resilience. The Collection is sponsored by the Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department.

Access to the Collection and further details are available at www.knowledge.aidr.org.au.


Handbook 1  Disaster health
Handbook 2  Community recovery
Handbook 3  Managing exercises
Handbook 4  Evacuation planning
Handbook 5  Communicating with people with a disability – National Guidelines for Emergency Managers
Handbook 6  National Strategy for Disaster Resilience – community engagement framework
Handbook 7  Managing the floodplain: a guide to best practice in flood risk management in Australia

    Guideline 7-1  Guideline for using the national generic brief for flood investigations to develop project specific specifications
    Guideline 7-2  Technical Flood Risk Management Guideline: flood emergency response classification of the floodplain
    Guideline 7-3  Technical flood risk management guideline: flood hazard
    Template 7-4  Technical project brief template
    Guideline 7-5  Technical Flood Risk Management Guideline - flood information to support land-use planning
    Guideline 7-6  Technical flood risk management guideline: assessing options and service levels for treating existing risk
    Practice Note 7-7  Considering flooding in land-use planning activities
Handbook 8 Lessons management  
Handbook 9 Australian Emergency Management Arrangements  
Handbook 10 National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines (plus supporting guideline)  
   Guideline 10-1 National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines: practice guide  
Handbook 12 Spontaneous volunteer management

Australian Emergency Management Manual Series

The most recent list of publications in the Manuals series includes 46 titles. The manuals have not been reviewed since 2011 or earlier and the Manual Series is undergoing a review which will see relevant Manuals move into the Handbook Collection. Current and past editions of the Manuals will remain available on the AIDR Knowledge Hub at www.knowledge.aidr.org.au.


Manual 2 Australian Emergency Management Arrangements (superseded by Handbook 9)  
Manual 5 Emergency risk management – applications guide (superseded by Handbook 10)  
Manual 6 Implementing emergency risk management – a facilitator’s guide to working with committees and communities (superseded by Handbook 10)  
Manual 8 Emergency catering (2003, archived)  
Manual 12 Safe and healthy mass gatherings (1999)  
Manual 14 Post disaster survey and assessment (2001)  
Manual 15 Community emergency planning (1992)  
Manual 17 Multi-agency incident management (replaced by AIIMS)  
Manual 18 Community and personal support services (1998)  
Manual 19 Managing the floodplain (superseded by Handbook 7)  
Manual 20 Flood preparedness (2009)  
Manual 21 Flood warning (2009)  
Manual 23 Emergency management planning for floods affected by dams (2009)  
Manual 24 Reducing the community impact of landslides (2001)  
Manual 30  Storm and water damage operations (2007) (information may not be appropriate to all situations)
Manual 34  Road rescue (2009)
Manual 36  Map reading and navigation (2001)
Manual 37  Four-wheel-drive vehicle operation (1997)
Manual 38  Communications (1998)
Manual 40  Vertical Rescue (2001)
Manual 41  Small group training management (1999, archived)
Manual 42  Managing Exercises (superseded by Handbook 3)
Manual 46  Tsunami (2010)
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This handbook is available on the Australian Emergency Management Knowledge Hub (www.emknowledge.gov.au).

This handbook will be updated in soft copy, so any proposed changes or other relevant publications can be brought to the attention of the editor (email empublications@ag.gov.au with the subject ‘Australian Emergency Management Arrangements’).

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Australians expect their governments at all levels to do their best to ensure that their communities are as well protected from emergencies and disasters as is reasonably possible, and that where emergency situations occur, communities will be well served by effective response, relief and recovery arrangements.

Under Australia’s constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for emergency management within their jurisdiction. However, all levels of government acknowledge that the impact of some emergencies could be particularly severe or widespread, and exceed the capability of a single state or territory.

Australia’s emergency management arrangements bring together the efforts of all governments, and private and volunteer agencies to deliver coordinated emergency management across all hazards. These arrangements are also based on a high level of trust and cooperation between the community and emergency managers, as the result of common experiences dealing with disasters.

More recently, the Council of Australian Governments has focused on a resilience-based approach to natural disaster policy, aimed at enhancing disaster resilience so that Australians are more self-reliant, and better able to withstand and recover from disasters.

In the international arena, Australia is increasingly forming strategic partnerships to mitigate or reduce the impact of emergencies globally, particularly in Australia’s region of interest.

1.1 Purpose of the Arrangements

The purpose of the Australian Emergency Management Arrangements (the Arrangements), is to provide the Australian public with a high-level overview of how Australia addresses the risks and impacts of hazards through a collaborative approach to the prevention of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from emergencies.

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1 The terms ‘emergency’ and ‘disaster’ are used nationally and internationally to describe events that require special arrangements to manage the situation. Emergencies or disasters are characterised by the need to deal with the hazard and its impacts on the community.
The Arrangements outline the principles, structures and procedures that support national coordination of emergency management in Australia and its offshore territories. These principles, structures and procedures also support Australians affected by emergencies overseas and allow us to assist (if requested by) foreign governments affected by emergencies. The Arrangements outline the collaboration necessary to address the nature and scale of different emergencies. Smaller states or territories may need assistance at a lower threshold of impact than a larger state or territory.

1.2 Keeping the Arrangements current

The Australian Emergency Management Arrangements will be completely reviewed and reissued every three years, or more frequently for major changes. The Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee will oversee reviews and revisions, and consult with all relevant agencies and organisations.

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2 The use of the term ‘national’ throughout the Arrangements refers to the collective efforts of the Australian, state, territory, local and regional governments; non-government organisations; industries; and the community.
Under Australia’s constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for emergency management within their jurisdictions. However, the *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements* are based on partnerships between the Australian, state, territory and local governments; businesses and industry; non-government organisations; community groups; emergency management volunteer organisations; and the community.

These partnerships aim to:

- build disaster resilience by minimising vulnerability to hazards
- protect life, property and the environment
- minimise adverse social impacts during emergencies, and
- facilitate recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Australia’s approach to the management of emergencies and disasters is:

- **comprehensive**, encompassing all hazards and recognising that dealing with the risks to community safety requires a range of activities to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from any emergency, and
- **integrated**, ensuring the engagement of governments, all relevant organisations and agencies, the private sector and the community.

The goal of all such arrangements and programs is to contribute to the development and maintenance of an emergency-ready Australia.

### 2.1 National Strategy for Disaster Resilience

The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (the Strategy) was adopted by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2011.

The Strategy provides the foundation for governments to shift the traditional emphasis of emergency management efforts from response and recovery from natural disasters to preparedness and prevention. It relies on shared responsibility between governments, business and industry, non-government organisations, community groups, emergency management volunteer organisations and the community. It acknowledges that all levels
of government (Australian, state and territory, and local) have a role in driving systemic change for a more disaster resilient Australia.

### 2.2 Governance

The Law, Crime and Community Safety Council (LCCSC) is the ministerial council that provides national leadership on emergency management and disaster resilience policy. LCCSC is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Strategy.

The governance structure for the *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements* is shown in Figure 1.

![Governance structure of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience](image)

**Figure 1:** Governance structure of the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*

### 2.3 Response and recovery arrangements

Personnel in the emergency services and other agencies at the local level are the first responders in an emergency. In most emergencies, state, territory and local resources provide the first line of emergency response and incident-management support. As the scale of impact and complexity of an emergency increases, intrastate or intraterritory arrangements escalate, states and territories have the option to request assistance from other states or territories, either through ad hoc requests for assistance, or by seeking assistance through pre-existing memorandums of understanding and/or from the Australian Government where coordination of national resources is required.
At the catastrophic end of the scale of impact, a level of enhanced national coordination may be implemented. In this case, national plans for specific hazards may be implemented where they exist.

Examples of a catastrophic disaster may include:

- a natural disaster of catastrophic proportions
- a significant or extended loss of power or supply to a highly populated area
- a highly pathogenic and prolonged pandemic
- a major animal or plant health emergency, and
- an accidental or deliberate act that is initiated by people.

Figure 2 summarises the features of emergencies of different intensities, from minor to catastrophic.

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<thead>
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<th>INTENSITY</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
<td>Incident that may involve more than one state or territory, and that severely disrupts economic wellbeing, social functioning and critical infrastructure. Extensive support from beyond the affected state(s) or territory(ies) is required.</td>
<td>Whole-of-government coordination arrangements operate at state and territory, and Australian Government levels. The prime minister, state premiers and territory chief ministers consult to coordinate the response to, and recovery from, the emergency. National emergency plans may be implemented. International assistance may be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incident that impacts a significant area and/or population centres, and/or for an extended time.</td>
<td>Multi-agency command and control arrangements linking to state- or territory-wide strategic arrangements, including activating plans. Emergency Management Australia alerted for possible Australian Government assistance, or arrangements for special assistance considered by the Australian Government, and affected state or territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>Incident that is localised and/or of short duration.</td>
<td>Local emergency command and control arrangements are activated. Individual state or territory can handle the incident using its resources. State or territory emergency management agencies are alerted for possible support to local areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Features of emergencies of increasing intensity
2.4 Roles and responsibilities of governments

Each level of government has different roles and responsibilities in emergency management. Australian, state and territory governments have established organisational arrangements and lines of reporting to undertake disaster mitigation and effectively prepare for and deal with emergencies. Local government involvement is an integral part of these arrangements.

Each level of government has responsibility commensurate with their capacity and local legislation – and within its own jurisdiction – for emergency planning, preparedness and prevention in relation to land, property and the environment, assets and infrastructure, agencies, and programs.

As a consequence, an effective national framework for emergency management requires a high level of collaboration and coordination within and across all levels of government, and with non-government stakeholders, including the community and private sector.

Decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level of authority, in accordance with legislative requirements, with coordination at the highest necessary level of authority. Local responders should be the building blocks of response on any scale.

2.4.1 Local governments

Local governments play a fundamental enabling role in emergency management because of their strong relationship with their local community networks and knowledge of locally available resources.

Where local government powers exist, local governments have responsibilities, in partnership with respective state and territory governments, to contribute to the safety and wellbeing of their communities by participating in local emergency management. In most circumstances, the principal roles and responsibilities of local governments may include:

- building and promoting disaster resilience
- undertaking cost-effective measures to mitigate the effects of emergencies on local communities, including routinely conducting emergency risk assessments
• systematically taking proper account of risk assessments in land-use planning to reduce hazard risk
• representing community interests in emergency management to other spheres of government and contributing to decision-making processes
• ensuring all requisite local emergency planning and preparedness measures are undertaken
• ensuring an adequate local emergency response capability is in place, including resources for the local volunteers
• undertaking public education and awareness to support community-preparedness measures
• ensuring appropriate local emergency warnings are provided
• ensuring appropriate local resources and arrangements are in place to provide emergency relief and recovery services to communities, and
• participating in post-emergency assessment and analysis.

2.4.2 State and territory governments

State and territory governments have primary responsibility within their own jurisdictions for emergency management in the interests of community safety and wellbeing. State and territory governments control most of the functions essential for effective emergency prevention, preparedness, response and recovery – for example, ensuring that relevant legislative and regulatory arrangements (within which various agencies, organisations and the community operate) are in place, and maintaining the government and statutory agencies that provide emergency services to the community [e.g. police, fire, ambulance, emergency, health and medical services]. This includes responsibility for:

• building and promoting disaster resilience
• developing, implementing and ensuring compliance with comprehensive emergency mitigation policies and strategies in all relevant areas of government activity, including land-use planning, infrastructure provision and building standards compliance
• strengthening partnerships with local governments and remote and Indigenous communities, and encouraging and supporting them to undertake emergency risk assessments and mitigation measures
• ensuring provision of appropriate emergency awareness and education programs
• ensuring warning systems and evacuation and refuge arrangements are in place
• ensuring community and emergency management agencies are prepared for, and able to respond to, emergencies
• maintaining adequate levels of well-equipped and trained career and volunteer emergency response personnel
• ensuring appropriate emergency relief and recovery measures are available, and
• ensuring post-emergency assessment and analysis are undertaken.

2.4.3 Australian Government

The roles of the Australian Government in emergency management are to help coordinate national efforts in disaster research, information management, and mitigation policy and practice to reduce the risks and costs of emergencies to the nation; to mobilise resources when state and territory emergency response resources are near capacity; and to provide national support for emergency relief and community recovery.

In particular, the Australian Government has a major role in:
• building and promoting disaster resilience
• coordinating national strategic emergency management policy, in collaboration with the state and territory governments and local government
• undertaking and supporting the conduct of natural disaster research of national significance
• identifying national priorities for disaster mitigation, in collaboration with other levels of government
• providing support for emergency risk assessment and mitigation measures, in conjunction with the states, territories and local governments
• supporting spatial and geographic information system services via Geoscience Australia
• supporting public information, such as public safety broadcasts
• providing severe weather, bushfire, flood and tsunami warnings via the Bureau of Meteorology
• coordinating and providing operational support for emergency response to the states and territories where their individual resources are overwhelmed
• providing a national emergency relief and recovery framework and resources on a cost-sharing basis with the other levels of government, and
• providing vital public warnings and information services such as meteorological, hydrological, geophysical and other geodata services that inform and underpin emergency management.

The Australian Government also has a continuing role in providing:
• national leadership on mitigation strategies and emergency risk assessment
• financial assistance to states, territories and local governments for cost-effective, prioritised emergency risk management
• financial assistance to states, territories and local governments to assist them in meeting their disaster mitigation responsibilities, leading to an overall reduction in damage and costs, thereby benefiting all Australians and all levels of government, and
• financial assistance in the form of cost-sharing arrangements for relief and recovery expenditure.

The Australian Government is responsible for emergency management arrangements in Australia’s territories of Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Jervis Bay, Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Coral Sea Islands, the Australian Antarctic Territory, the Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands, and Norfolk Island.

The Australian Government also has specific responsibilities in relation to national security and defence, border control, aviation and maritime transport, quarantine,
enforcement of Australian Government legislation, the safety and welfare of Australians overseas, international relations, and assistance to other countries.

2.5 Benefits of a shared approach

Dealing with emergencies is not simply a matter for governments. Individuals, families and the community as a whole play a role in determining how well communities are safeguarded from emergencies, and their ability to recover from them. The shared roles and responsibilities and associated benefits for key non-government stakeholders are summarised below.

2.5.1 Families and individuals

Families and individuals have principal responsibility for their own safety, and for safeguarding their property and assets through risk identification and mitigation measures, including having adequate property and contents insurance.

The collective actions, or inaction, of individuals and families can have a major influence on the severity of an emergency’s impact. In significant emergencies, emergency management career personnel and volunteers do not, and never will have, the capacity to simply ‘solve’ the emergency threat for every individual at risk. Nor do governments and charitable agencies have the ability or responsibility to fully offset the financial losses incurred by families and individuals in the course of an emergency.

It is the role and responsibility of families and individuals to attain the highest degree of physical and financial self-reliance – before, during and after an emergency. In particular, they should:

- be fully aware of the risk of hazards to their home and regular activities
- arrange, where available, for adequate home and contents insurance to cover likely risks in their area
- make plans and preparations for dealing with emergency situations likely to affect them
- minimise hazard risk factors in and around the home environs, and
- find out what local plans are in place in the event of an emergency.
2.5.2 Communities

Local communities can take a wide range of actions to become more emergency ready and, in particular, should:

- promote high levels of awareness of hazard risks in their community, and the collective preparations and actions that should be taken in the event of an emergency
- provide active support for government and community efforts to minimise the possible consequences of emergencies, such as hazard risk reduction measures, and
- promote a culture of support and recognition for volunteers.

2.5.3 Emergency management volunteers

Emergency management volunteers are a crucial component of community participation in preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies in Australia. Emergency management volunteers contribute a significant amount of time – before, during and after emergencies. Further, in support of these emergency management volunteers are thousands of employers who generously release staff for volunteer-related activities.

2.5.4 Non-government organisations

Non-government organisations (NGOs) play an important role in emergency management through mobilising resources, and providing support and advice to individuals and communities before, during and after emergencies. Through their strong community networks, NGOs also provide training and education that contribute to the building of disaster resilience.

Additionally, NGOs should make provision to protect/replace their own assets from the likely risks in their area, including arranging adequate levels of insurance.

2.5.5 Businesses and primary producers

Businesses and primary producers make a contribution to disaster resilience and emergency management by understanding the risks they face and ensuring they are able
to continue providing services during or soon after an emergency. Additionally, businesses and primary producers should make provision to protect/replace their assets from the likely risks in their area, including arranging adequate levels of insurance.

### 2.5.6 Land-use planners

Land-use planning that takes into account hazard risks has been identified as the single most important mitigation measure in preventing future emergency losses in areas of new development. The professions involved with urban planning and design have important roles and responsibilities. These include implementing best-practice planning, taking into account emergency risk reduction measures.

### 2.5.7 Design, building and construction industries

The resilience of the built environment to hazards is a vital factor in promoting human safety, reducing damage costs and allowing business continuity when emergencies occur. Developers, architects, engineers and the construction industry have vital roles to play in achieving improved disaster resilience:

- Developers have a responsibility to ensure that their projects do not compromise the long-term safety of those who will live and work in their developments, or increase exposure to hazards or risks for others in society.
- The architecture and engineering professions have roles in educating their members about hazard impacts on structures, through tertiary courses and continuing professional education, and promoting best practice and innovation.
- The building and construction industry has a role in promoting hazard awareness in the industry and a culture of compliance with building codes and standards.

### 2.5.8 Residential and small businesses

Insurance is a key element in building community resilience. Insurance provides financial protection in the event of loss through a process of aggregating premiums and spreading

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risk. Property owners – including home owners, occupiers and small businesses – are able to protect themselves financially from natural disasters by purchasing insurance. Having insurance for natural disasters does not reduce the number of deaths and injuries, physical damage and disruption to normal life. However, it provides readily available funds, following loss, through the insurance industry’s well-established delivery channels. Insurance, which is essentially risk transfer, allows the economy to manage risk more effectively, reducing financial uncertainty in the event of a disaster and allowing for a more efficient use of capital by individuals, business and government. Insurance assists individuals, business and the community more broadly to recover financially from disasters.

Insurance can also play a role in encouraging mitigation to reduce losses from future natural disasters. The price, or premium for, and availability of insurance provide signals about the level of risk from a range of hazards and provide some encouragement for risk mitigation and reduced vulnerability to loss.

2.5.9 Critical infrastructure owners and operators

Critical infrastructure underpins the delivery of essential services such as power, water, health, transport, food, communications and banking. Owners and operators of critical infrastructure are ultimately responsible for determining or discharging their own legal obligations and managing risks to their operations that might have a material, financial, legal or reputational impact on the organisation, or harm staff, customers or other parties. Owners and operators do this through appropriate risk management practice, including the development and review of business continuity plans, the provision of adequate security for their assets, and making provision to protect/replace their assets and business from the likely risks in their area, including arranging adequate levels of insurance.4

The occurrence of emergencies is one of the risks that any business enterprise should take into account in business planning. With regard to risk reduction, owners and operators should:

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• maintain an awareness of their operating environment
• actively apply risk management techniques to their planning processes
• conduct regular reviews of risk assessments, and security, emergency and contingency plans
• use any physical or logistical measures to protect or remove assets and stock from the effects of the hazard, to ensure that supply chains are maintained
• make provision to protect/replace their assets, stock and business from the likely risks in their area to minimise business interruption and loss of income (this could include arranging adequate levels of insurance)
• work with government through relevant jurisdictional arrangements to understand critical interdependencies, both on services whose continual operations the critical infrastructure operators rely and key community services that rely on the critical infrastructure service’s continued delivery, and
• partner with government and emergency service organisations through relevant jurisdictional arrangements to plan for and manage consequences arising from disasters and emergencies.

2.5.10 Broadcasters and other information mechanisms

Emergency managers rely on multiple modes of communication to the public. In an emergency, the response agency issues warnings and advice to the general community through warning mechanisms such as radio, television, websites, social media and the national telephone-based warning system, Emergency Alert. Management and updating of incident information is essential in communicating to the community. Emergency managers rely on publishers, including broadcasters, to disseminate information on preparation and mitigation strategies, for educating the community on understanding risk, planning and implementing action when an emergency occurs. Agreements exist with key organisations such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Commercial Radio Australia to ensure educational and warning messages are distributed as required.
3 PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

Prevention measures seek to eliminate or reduce the impact of hazards, and/or reduce susceptibility to them, and increase the resilience of the community subject to the impact of those hazards. Effective prevention covers a range of activities and strategies undertaken by governments, business and industry, non-government organisations, community groups, emergency management volunteer organisations and the community.

State and territory governments have the primary role in prevention within their respective jurisdictions. This role is supported by legislation and policy; however, government agencies at all levels undertake prevention programs as part of their day-to-day functions within the scope of their responsibilities.

Prevention strategies include:

- hazard-specific control programs, such as building flood levees, bushfire mitigation and installation of automatic sprinkler systems
- land-use planning and building controls in legislation and regulations
- quarantine and border control measures
- public health strategies
- community education and awareness
- hazardous material safety/security initiatives
- critical infrastructure protection
- resilience programs
- mass gathering safety/protection programs, and
- ensuring access to publicly available geologic and topographic mapping, and earthquake and tsunami monitoring services.
Preparedness involves actions to ensure that – when an emergency occurs – communities, resources and services are available and capable of taking appropriate actions for response and recovery.

Examples of preparedness activities include:

- stockpiling of essential items, such as generators and medicines
- education and training programs
- interoperability of systems across the country
- testing of procedures through exercise programs
- public communication arrangements
- warning systems for the public, including the national telephone-based warning system, Emergency Alert, and
- critical infrastructure resilience planning and cooperation, undertaken by all levels of government in partnership with the private sector.

Agencies within jurisdictions will individually and collectively prepare for known potentially dangerous conditions. This may include pre-positioning aircraft, establishing pre-emptive incident management teams and moving resources (including personnel) to locations where conditions are likely to become hazardous.

### 4.1 Emergency planning

Planning is a key element of being prepared and is facilitated by encouraging governments, business, non-government organisations and the community to make appropriate provision for their own preparedness.

A key element of the *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements* is effective emergency planning for all hazards. The existence of such plans allows all emergency managers and responders to understand the roles, responsibilities, capability and capacity of other organisations. These plans are tested through exercises and experiences to ensure they are current and appropriate to the task. This process also enhances relationship building between key personnel in different organisations. This is
critical because, in the urgency of a response when immediate decisions and actions are required, relationships between key personnel need to have already been established.

The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* and the *Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy* acknowledge that it is not possible to have a plan for every scenario. The concept of resilience recognises that we cannot plan for every risk, but building resilience to known hazards assists in addressing risks that are unforeseen or unexpected.
Emergency response involves actions taken in anticipation of, during and immediately after an emergency to ensure that its impacts are minimised, and that people affected are given immediate relief and support. The response to an emergency is managed first at the local level. Assistance from adjacent local areas, across the state or territory, other states or territories and/or the Australian Government, is provided according to the scale of the emergency.

Responses may include:

- providing warning messages and public information
- evacuating people or communities
- firefighting
- hazardous materials neutralisation and containment
- providing medical support
- providing food, water and shelter
- searching and rescuing
- establishing coordination or evacuation centres
- animal/stock welfare, ie fodder drops, and
- assessing damage.

Each state and territory has its own emergency management legislation, structures, plans and procedures that can be used to respond to an impending or actual emergency. All states and territories have established groups of representatives from emergency agencies that coordinate all available resources.

These coordination arrangements are also in place at the national level to assist in those emergencies that are beyond the resources available from within an impacted state or territory, or where assistance is being provided to another country. The 2010–11 floods in Queensland and Victoria, the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and the 2011 Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand are examples of such emergencies.
It is not possible to prevent all emergencies. Therefore, recovery activities are needed to address reconstruction, rehabilitation and re-establishment demands across physical, social, emotional, psychological, environmental and economic elements. Recovery is, however, more than simply the replacement of what has been destroyed and the rehabilitation of those affected. The aim is to leave the community more resilient than before.

Planning for recovery is integral to emergency preparation, and mitigation actions may often be initiated as part of recovery. Recovery can start with the initial response and may continue for a long time – well after the physical damage has been repaired. It requires the collaboration of governments, business, non-government organisations and, most importantly, the community.

### 6.1 Recovery arrangements

As with our other emergency management arrangements, Australia has in place coordinated recovery arrangements across all levels of government. Recovery agencies are part of each state’s and territory’s emergency management committees to ensure continuity and consistency between response and recovery. This includes input from the community and non-government agencies. The arrangements in each state and territory are detailed in stand-alone territory- or state-wide plans, or as subplans of broader emergency management plans. Generally, these plans:

- outline the arrangements for managing recovery activities at local, and state or territory levels
- provide protocols for establishing and managing local evacuation, relief or recovery centres that offer support and advice
- provide processes for disaster relief and assistance measures
- detail arrangements for establishing and managing public appeals
- recommend approaches for providing continuing information to the affected population
- identify the types of activities that rebuild communities, and
• include the need to capture lessons learned, to improve recovery operations in the future.

The Australian Government has a range of recovery coordination arrangements to support the states and territories, communities and individuals during and after an emergency.

6.2 Recovery principles

Recovery management in Australia is based on the following six nationally endorsed principles:5

• Understanding the context: Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the community context.

• Recognising complexity: Successful recovery acknowledges the complex and dynamic nature of emergencies and communities.

• Using community-led approaches: Successful recovery is responsive and flexible, engaging communities and empowering them to move forward.

• Ensuring coordination of all activities: Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.

• Employing effective communication: Successful recovery is built on effective communication with affected communities and other stakeholders.

• Acknowledging and building capacity: Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on community, individual and organisational capacity.

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5 Endorsed by the Community and Disability Services Ministers’ Advisory Council.
7 CATASTROPHIC DISASTER

A catastrophic disaster is an extreme hazard event that affects one or more communities, resulting in widespread, devastating, economic, health, social and/or environmental consequences, and that exceeds the capability of existing state and territory emergency and disaster management arrangements. An event could be of sudden impact or sustained impact over an extended time frame.

Two defining features of a catastrophic disaster are that it will:

- not be possible to immediately meet the needs of those requiring assistance within the existing capability of an individual state or territory, or nationally, and
- take a considerable time from which to recover.

A significant factor in responding to a catastrophic event is the extent to which emergency response and recovery capability is significantly affected by the disaster. There will be a need to prioritise response actions, and the deployment of resources to meet economic, social, environmental, infrastructure and/or medical needs.

A catastrophic-level disaster may be characterised by one or more of the following:

- reduced ability of a government to function
- a serious impact on a significant population size and/or area
- large numbers of casualties and/or displaced people, possibly in the tens of thousands
- large numbers of people left temporarily or permanently homeless, and possibly requiring prolonged temporary housing and other assistance
- a need for broader national coordination of interstate and international assistance
- destruction of, or significant disruption to, critical infrastructure, such as utilities (water, gas, electricity, fuel), medical and health facilities, food supply, and telecommunications, and/or
- a detailed and reliable operational picture of the impacts not being achievable for some time.
While Australia has faced few events that would be considered catastrophic, the need to be prepared for such events is recognised. Existing emergency management arrangements are well understood, are well practised and work. These arrangements have been applied to address new challenges, such as those presented by the 2002 bombings in Bali, the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan, severe acute respiratory syndrome and equine influenza outbreaks, the 2011 Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand, and the severe flooding in Queensland and Victoria in 2010–11. In the past, Australia has dealt with the destruction of Darwin by Cyclone Tracy in 1974 and the Black Saturday Bushfires in Victoria in 2009.

Existing plans and arrangements will continue to apply in a catastrophic disaster. Clearly, however, a catastrophic disaster will require enhanced measures, mainly in the area of strategic leadership and high-level coordination to ensure the maximum good for the maximum number of people. Arrangements to address these requirements, where they are not already addressed by national hazard-specific plans, are detailed in the Model arrangements for leadership during emergencies of national consequence (see Appendix).

Priorities in a catastrophic disaster will be to provide food, water, shelter, medical assistance and access to financial services, as well as communicating with the public. The manner in which these services are provided will depend on the nature of the catastrophe.
APPENDIX       MODEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR LEADERSHIP DURING EMERGENCIES OF NATIONAL CONSEQUENCE

1. Introduction

On 3 July 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the Model arrangements for leadership during emergencies of national consequence (‘the Arrangements’).

These Arrangements represent how Australian governments would work together to coordinate the response to, and recovery from, emergencies of national consequence. These are defined, for the purposes of these Arrangements, as emergencies that require consideration of national level policy, strategy and public messaging or inter-jurisdictional assistance, where such assistance is not covered by existing arrangements.

In endorsing these Arrangements, leaders agreed that they should replace the National Emergency Protocol of February 2006.

2. Purpose

The Arrangements are designed to guide national efforts in coordinating the response to, and recovery from, emergencies of national consequence. They provide clarity about how Australian governments would work together to coordinate national response and recovery assistance to an affected state or territory.

In endorsing these Arrangements, leaders agreed that they are to be used:

- to inform the response to, or recovery from, emergencies of national consequence for which no national plans currently exist
- to inform the development of any new national plans for responding to, or recovering from, emergencies of national consequence, and
- as guidance in any revision of existing plans for responding to, or recovering from, emergencies of national consequence.
3. **Roles and responsibilities**

In adopting the Arrangements, leaders acknowledged the following roles and responsibilities:

- **states and territories have primary responsibility for the management of emergencies within their jurisdictions**
- **when emergencies occur, the Australian Government provides certain forms of physical and financial assistance to states and territories, when requested to do so and may also provide financial and other assistance to individuals directly affected by an emergency**
- **the Australian Government also has specific responsibilities in relation to national security and defence, border control, aviation and maritime transport, quarantine, astronomical and meteorological observations, enforcement of Australian Government legislation, and international relations, and**
- **each jurisdiction is responsible for determining its own internal coordination mechanisms to give effect to these Arrangements.**

4. **Coordination arrangements**

As depicted in the attached diagram, these Arrangements provide that, in the event of an emergency of national consequence:

- **the prime minister and the affected first minister(s) will consult as necessary to coordinate the response to, and recovery from, the emergency including in relation to policy, strategy and public messaging, in support of an affected state or territory**
- **the prime minister and the affected first minister(s) will consult on, and deliver the key leadership messages to be conveyed to the public**
- **there will be communication, as appropriate, with all other states and territories to enable the sharing of key information and public messages across jurisdictions, and**
- **all jurisdictions will coordinate the development of public messages through established public information coordination arrangements.**
Updated contact arrangements will be maintained to ensure the efficient and effective communications between leaders in the event of an emergency of national consequence.

5. **Review**

These Arrangements will be reviewed by the Australian, state and territory governments, in consultation with the Australian Local Government Association, after three years, or earlier as agreed.

The Arrangements may be amended by agreement in writing between the parties at any time.

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**Figure A1:** Model arrangements for leadership during emergencies of national consequence