



MB23-000033

### Information Request

To provide you with information relating to the National Aerial Firefighting Fleet.

### Response

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) manages the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC), which administers the national aerial firefighting fleet and leases aircraft on behalf of all jurisdictions. The NAFC facilitates the coordination and procurement of highly specialised firefighting aircraft for use by state and territory emergency services and land management agencies.

The Government contributes approximately \$30m per year to AFAC via a grant under the National Aerial Firefighting Program. This grant funds:

1. A National Large Air Tanker (LAT) including procurement, contract management, lifecycle management and standing costs.
2. Standing costs for a wide variety of aircraft types under contracts procured through the NAFC procurement processes.
3. Research and development activities in NAFC at the discretion of the NAFC Strategic Committee and in consultation with NEMA, including research into:
  - the efficacy of retardants manufactured in Australia;
  - cost benefit analysis of aerial firefighting; and
  - the most effective strategies and delivery.

State and territory governments co-fund the NAFC fleet. The annual funding required varies significantly reflecting the projected bush fire risks and aerial resources identified by each jurisdiction as necessary to mitigate those risks.

With the exception of the LAT it is NAFC, with state and territory operational Fire Chiefs and Commissioners that determine the composition of the fleet each season. In regards to the LAT, those Fire Chiefs and Commissioners decide where it is based on risk and at the moment it is based in Western Australia.

As at 31 December 2022, the NAFC Fleet comprises 151 aircraft, including:

- 6 large fixed wing air tankers;
- 12 large rotary wing aircraft (referred to as 'Type 1');
- 66 medium and small rotary wing aircraft (referred to as 'Type 2 and 3');
- 50 fixed wing firebombers; and
- 17 light fixed wing firebombers.

In addition, New South Wales has purchased its own LAT and this is not funded by NAFC.

### Background

These national aerial firefighting arrangements provide flexibility for the state and territory Fire Chiefs and relevant Commissioners in accessing the right strategic mix of aircraft and location to



**Australian Government**  
**National Emergency Management Agency**

effectively manage the seasonal fire risk posed. Consistent with the NAFC National Aerial Firefighting Strategy 2021-26, leasing aircraft remains the most cost-effective and efficient option for the national fleet.

Larger helicopters are most often used for firebombing and crew transportation, whilst smaller helicopters are more often used for command and control, mapping and aerial ignition. Fixed-wing aircraft that are used for firebombing tend to be of the larger agricultural-style, specially modified for firebombing. Light fixed-wing aircraft are also regularly used for fire detection, reconnaissance, command and control.

The NAFC, with state and territory operational Fire Chiefs and Commissioners, continue to review Australia’s aerial firefighting needs on an ongoing basis.

**Community/Stakeholder Implications**

Aerial firefighting provides critical support to minimising the impacts of bushfires on communities and the environment.

<b>Cleared By:</b>	Andrew Chandler
<b>Position:</b>	First Assistant Coordinator General
<b>Division:</b>	National Coordination and Operational Support
<b>Date:</b>	19/1/2023
<b>Phone:</b>	s 22



Australian Government

National Emergency  
Management Agency

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

Senator the Hon Murray Watt  
Minister for Emergency Management  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

s 22 [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

s 22 [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

s 22 [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

s 22 [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]





Australian Government

National Emergency  
Management Agency

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

**HRWS Preparedness Program**

Preparation for the Higher Risk Weather Season (HRWS) Preparedness Program (The Program) is continuing. Emergency Management and Response Group is preparing a Ministerial Submission for your consideration which will outline the scope and objectives of the Program with a two-day national HRWS Summit as the centrepiece of the Program. The objectives for the Summit will be to re-launch the HRWS Preparedness Program following the creation of NEMA; ensure inclusive preparedness across the full National Disaster Management and Recovery Continuum, integrating response and recovery matters; exploration of preparedness through a scenario-based exercise that is based on the seasonal outlook; and expanded attendance to deliver broad awareness of the 2023-24 HRWS across the Australian community. The Program will continue to deliver targeted key leadership briefings to state and territory response and recovery agencies, industry briefings, preparation of a Disaster Reference Booklet for Members of Parliament, and briefings to Ministers. Following the conclusion of Summit, NEMA will develop a Preparedness Statement which will report on the seasonal outlook and national, state and territory capabilities which could be considered by Ministers ahead of the 2023-24 HRWS Higher Risk Weather Season.

s 22 [Redacted]

[Redacted]

s 22 [Redacted]

Yours sincerely

Brendan Moon AM  
Coordinator-General  
23 June 2023



Australian Government  
National Emergency Management Agency

Submission

For decision  
PDMS Ref. Number: MS23-001218  
Date of Clearance: 12/07/2023

**To** Minister for Emergency Management  
**Subject** Higher Risk Weather Season 2023 - 24 Summit  
**Timing** Please consider by Tuesday, 26 July 2023.

**Recommendations**

That you:

- 1. **agree** to the proposed 2023–24 Higher Risk Weather Season Preparedness Summit; agreed / not agreed
- 2. **note** the broadened target audience of the Higher Risk Weather Season Program; noted / please discuss
- 3. **agree** to invite representatives of regional National Disaster Management Organisations to observe the Summit; agreed / not agreed
- 4. **agree** to address the opening of the Summit; and agreed / not agreed
- 5. **agree** to invite mainstream media to attend the opening of the Summit agreed / not agreed

**Minister for Emergency Management**

Signature.....

Date:...../...../2023

## Minister's Comments

**Key Issues**

1. This submission seeks your approval to develop and deliver a two-day Higher Risk Weather Season (HRWS) National Preparedness Summit (the Summit) ahead of the 2023–24 HRWS.
2. The objectives of the Summit are to:
  - Re-launch the HRWS Preparedness Program following the establishment of NEMA.
  - Provide an inclusive program covering the full National Disaster Management and Recovery Continuum.
  - Expand attendance to ensure broad awareness of the 2023-24 HRWS across the Australian community.
3. It is proposed that the Summit will span two (2) days and will include:
  - delivery of the 2023–24 weather and climate outlook by the Bureau of Meteorology;
  - panels to focus on the key thematic areas to support greater preparedness for vulnerable cohorts;
    - topics of discussion will include: best practice approaches to preparedness, response and relief; vulnerable communities such as people living with disabilities and First Nations people; Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA); Crisis Appreciation and Strategic Planning; Australian Defence Force Support to states and territories; lessons management; cross border insights, and other topics identified by key stakeholders. Panel members will include respected leaders and experts within their field; and
  - a national discussion exercise informed by the 2023–24 outlook.
4. If you agree, mainstream media would be invited to witness the opening of the summit, which could include an opening address from you.
5. NEMA is working with the Australian Climate Service (ACS) to prepare the 2023-24 outlook which will be presented to participants.
6. To support the outlook, NEMA and ACS will design a scenario to be delivered on the second day of the Summit. The exercise will allow participants to consider preparedness for the expected HRWS ahead, provide an opportunity to review national priorities for response and recovery, consider thresholds for a National Emergency Declaration and examine national-level coordination for complex, compounding and cascading emergencies. An evaluation team will collect observations during the exercise to be included in a debrief session at the end of the Summit.

7. It is anticipated that up to 250 crisis management, response and recovery specialists from Australian governments, industry and the not-for-profit sector will attend the Summit. The primary audience for the Summit is Australian Government Senior Officials, jurisdictional Senior Officials including Chiefs, Commissioners, police coordinators and recovery leaders.
  - For the first time NEMA proposes to invite leaders from not-for-profits and industry, including the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council and members of the Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN) to participate in the Summit. It is hoped that these additional invitations will support a greater level of preparedness across the entire Australian community ahead of the HRWS.
8. A Gala Dinner will follow day one. NEMA will identify a key note speaker for this event. The dinner will provide an opportunity for senior emergency management officials to informally discuss the HRWS, preparedness, recovery and other emergency management themes.
9. To support regional preparedness, NEMA could explore issuing observer invitations to members of regional international National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMO). Attendance would provide an opportunity for NDMOs to observe Australia's preparedness program and strengthen ties between agencies. NEMA has in-principle support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and if you agreed to the proposal, would work with them on a potential invite list for your consideration.
10. Following the conclusion of the Summit, NEMA will prepare a report on the Summit which will include a summary of HRWS outlook, summary of topics explored at the Summit, and high-level insights identified through the national exercise. It is envisaged that the report will be provided to Ministers and Senior Officials for consideration ahead of the HRWS.
11. The Summit will be part of a broader 2022-23 Higher Risk Weather Season Preparedness Program, which will also include;
  - Key Leadership Engagement in every state and territory with Commissioners and Chief Officers, Recovery leadership of emergency management agencies;
  - Disaster Preparedness Reference Booklet for MPs;
  - Production of video content relating to the HRWS for further distribution; and
  - Other preparedness activities, including NEMA's DRFA roadshow, and leadership meetings between NEMA and states and territories in the lead up to, or post, the Summit.

## Background

12. The Commonwealth through NEMA and the former Emergency Management Australia, has delivered a High Risk Weather Season Preparedness Program (the Program) since 2009.
13. While NEMA is the lead agency, the Program is supported by Australian Government stakeholders including the Bureau of Meteorology, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Defence, Services Australia, and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
14. The Program has evolved over time to incorporate a broader audience, including state, territory and local governments; state and federal ministers; government departments; major industry sectors; community organisations; non-government organisation; and charities.

15. NEMA will establish a Steering Committee with key Commonwealth, state and territory agencies to guide the development of the Summit and broader HRWS Preparedness Program. At the working level, a series of Working Groups have been established to ensure broad stakeholder engagement with preparation for the HRWS.

### Consultation – internal/external

16. The CFO has been consulted.

### Consultation – Coordinator General / Deputy-Coordinator General

17. Deputy-Coordinator General, Emergency Management and Response Group, has been consulted on this proposal.

### Financial implications

18. The cost of the Summit and gala dinner has not been confirmed. However, NEMA has obtained quotes and estimates the total cost to be between \$200,000—\$250,000. NEMA is not proposing to pay for the travel or accommodation for all delegates attending the summit. However, we may consider subsidising some travel expenses for key participants if their participation is deemed to be essential to the successful delivery of the Summit.

### Attachments

19. Nil.

<p><b>Authorising Officer</b></p> <p>Cleared by:</p> <p>Brendan Moon Coordinator General National Emergency Management Agency</p> <p>Date: 12/07/2023 Mob: s 22</p>
--

**Contact Officer:** Joe Buffone PSM, Deputy Coordinator General - Emergency Management and Response Group,  
Ph: s 22, Mob: s 22.

**Cc**            **Home Affairs**  
Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security  
Secretary  
**MO**  
s 22  
s 22