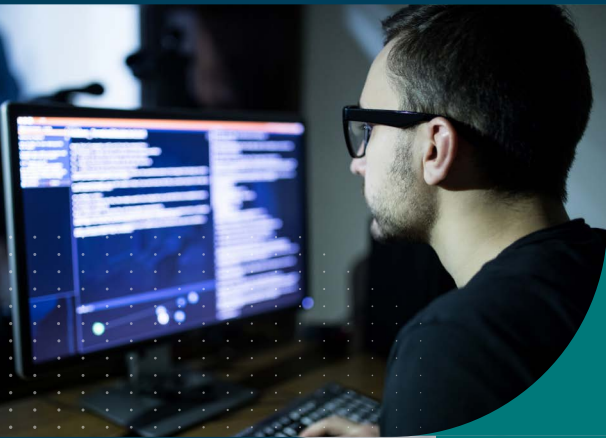**Australian Government**

National Emergency Management Agency

Statement of Strategic Intent

2023

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians throughout Australia and acknowledge their connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge those who have lost loved ones, homes, businesses and livelihoods in disasters across Australia.
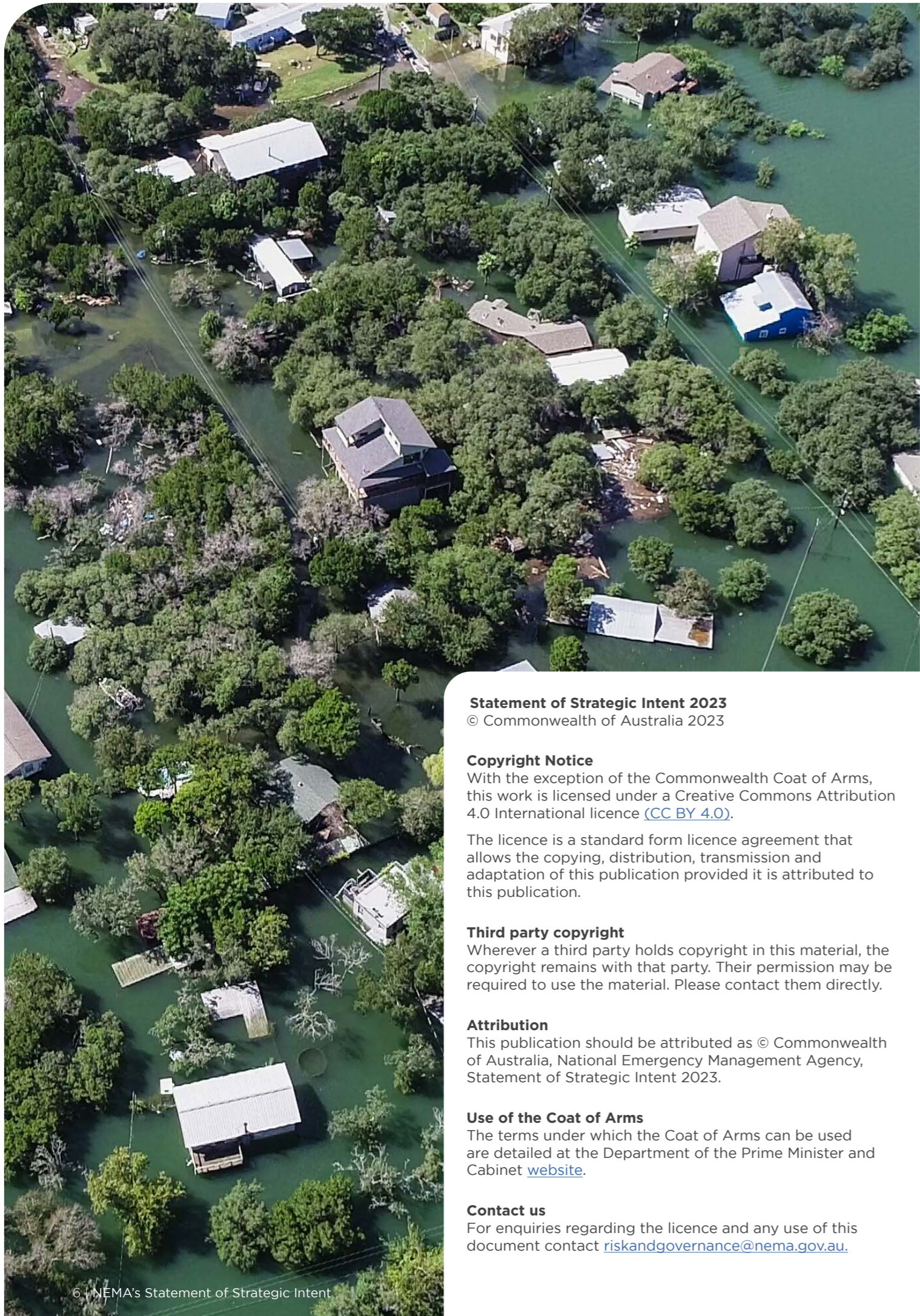
We acknowledge the dedication of emergency workers, front line service providers and volunteers who work tirelessly to provide safety and relief.

We celebrate the strength and resilience of all of those who have been affected by disasters.

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FOREWORD FROM COORDINATOR-GENERAL

Australia is facing more challenging hazards than ever before. Bushfires, floods, cyber-attacks and a pandemic, among other hazards, are not isolated incidents. There is an increasing hazard convergence, where overlapping and interrelated events have an impact greater than the sum of their parts.

The world is changing at pace. Significant issues like climate change, technological disruption, and social and economic polarisation are having major implications at all levels of society. Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth, for example, are projected to increase with global warming.

Such challenges place enormous pressure on emergency planning and managing disaster risk. Coordination at a national level is critical, and it's a key reason why the Australian Government established the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in September 2022.

NEMA is here to develop, lead and coordinate Australia's connected approach to emergency management. For all hazards that may reach national significance, we are here to support preparedness, response, recovery and risk reduction.

This Statement of Strategic Intent sets out NEMA's vision and objectives. It is designed to build a common understanding about our role, our capabilities and how we help. It covers the growing challenges shaping the emergency management ecosystem in Australia and the region, and the importance of strengthening efforts to prevent, prepare and build resilience within our communities.

Without preparation and mitigation, our communities, our economies, and our systems will not to be fit to face what is in front of us: a future filled with more intense and frequent emergencies.

The best outcomes for communities are achieved when response, recovery and risk reduction is community-led, state-coordinated, and federally supported.

True partnership and collaboration with all levels of government, community, not-for-profits and industry is therefore essential. Demands are increasing and resources are finite, so we need to understand the best ways to coordinate and make the most of our collective resources and capabilities.

We need to create greater clarity on the ways we complement each other as well as identify ways to build new capabilities together. And we also need to empower communities and other stakeholders by building evidence, intelligence and insights to make effective decisions.

We have met with stakeholders from across the country to gather their views on our role and the value we provide, both now and in the future. We have used these insights to identify priority areas of our future roadmap.

I look forward to engaging more of you in the development of this roadmap and putting our vision into action – working through meaningful partnerships, to build Australia's capacity for disaster resilience and support our communities where they need it most.

Brendan Moon AM
Coordinator-General
National Emergency Management Agency

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

Disasters cost the Australian economy

$38B

per year on average, with the cost estimated to reach at least $73 billion per year by 2060.
(Deloitte Access Economics, 2021)

Australia's GDP saw a

$158B

cumulative loss over the first 2.5 years of the COVID-19 pandemic and over 13,000 deaths.
(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022)

For every $1 invested through resilience initiatives such as the Disaster Ready Fund, there is an estimated $9.60 return on investment.
(Insurance Council of Australia, 2022)

Since the start of 2022, the nation has experienced 65 disaster events that have impacted 334 Local Government Areas with a collective population of over 18 million people.
(NEMA data, 2022)

70%

of Australians live in a Local Government Area that was subject to a disaster activation in 2022.

Over

60%

do not believe their community learns from past experiences.
(Fire to Flourish National survey, 2021)

65
disaster events

334
Local Government Areas

18 million people

Between 2000 and 2019, economic damage to developing countries in Asia ranged from 1% to 6% of national GDP. In the Pacific, economic damage from disasters cost 7% of national GDP, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
(Asian Development Bank, Disaster Resilience in Asia, 2021)

Cybercrime against Australian government agencies, businesses and citizens is being reported on average every

7 minutes

(Australian Cyber Security Centre: Annual Cyber Threat Report, 2021-2022)

It has been estimated that an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease would cause an economic impact of

$80B

over ten years.
(Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, 2022)

Globally, demand for water will increase by

40%

and for energy by

50%

The world's economic model is pushing beyond the limits of the planet's ability to cope.
(National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds)

DRIVERS AND TRENDS SHAPING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Hazard convergence

Compounding disasters may be caused by multiple disasters happening simultaneously, or one after another. Some may involve multiple hazards. For example, in the last 12 months there were heatwaves and bushfires, followed by severe storms, flooding and a pandemic. Some have cascading effects – threatening not only lives and homes, but also the nation's economy, critical infrastructure and essential services, such as our electricity, telecommunications and water supply, and our roads, railways and airports.

Biosecurity threats

Biosecurity risks are growing and increasing in complexity. These risks can devastate native wildlife, impact our agricultural, seafood and forestry industries and compromise our clean air, water and land.

Geostrategic uncertainty

Australia and other nations face heightened threats to their security and prosperity. These threats pose significant risks in relation to disruption of supply chain and critical infrastructure, while also impacting our ability to rely on assistance from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and overseas emergency management capabilities.

CLIMATIC SHIFTS

More frequent, intense and longer-lasting hazards

Natural hazards are increasing in duration and intensity and are occurring concurrently or consecutively, expanding traditional hazard seasons to 365-day threats. Local emergency management resources are increasingly overwhelmed, while national and international sharing of resources becomes more difficult as hazard seasons overlap.

Geographic expansion of threats

Climate change is driving particular hazards in locations where they were not previously common. This not only includes droughts and bushfires, but also biosecurity threats and human diseases. Regions across Australia need to develop local capabilities to address these challenges.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Data-driven decision making

Advances in data and technology are presenting new opportunities for emergency response, resilience, and recovery organisations to better predict, prepare and respond to hazards. For example, deployable sensors and autonomous capabilities can help avoid putting people into high-risk situations and further harm. Or better data can inform land use planning and agriculture.

Proliferation of social media

Social media enables emergency management organisations to directly communicate, in both directions, with the community in real time. It does, however, also present challenges through its ability to facilitate the rapid spread of unverified and unauthorised information between individuals, with potential for miscommunication.

Criticality of digital infrastructure

Our society is now heavily dependent on digital networks. The connectivity these networks bring is invaluable. However, our reliance on them also brings new risks. Compounding these risks is the rise in cybercrime. Building resilience to hazards across digital infrastructure (telecommunications networks, key government and corporate systems, digital-enabled supply chains), and recovering this infrastructure following crises is vital.

EVOLVING EXPECTATIONS

A shift towards prevention and preparedness

Governments and communities are increasingly recognising the importance of emergency preparedness, recovery and betterment. As demand for emergency management services increases, getting more people involved and better harnessing communities is becoming more essential. The establishment of new resilience and recovery-focused agencies across many Australian states and territories emphasises this evolution.

Balancing national coordination with local delivery

The rise in the frequency, intensity and complexity of hazard events means that preventing, responding to and recovering from these events is beyond the capacity of individual jurisdictions. A national approach to coordination, resource sharing and propagating best practice will support governments at all levels.

Greater expectations of emergency support

Communities often desire greater self-determination. They want services that recognise their local expertise and effort. They also want support that will help get them back to normal as quickly and safely as possible. This includes First Nations communities where deep expertise and knowledge can be harnessed for more effective emergency response, resilience and recovery services. Australians increasingly expect to feel safe and secure. As these expectations grow, so does the risk of failing to meet them.

Availability of the ADF only as a last resort

Australia faces urgent geostrategic risks, as underlined by the 2023 Defence Strategic Review. Due to the need for the ADF to be positioned to respond to regional contingencies, the substantial contributions that the ADF has made to domestic disaster relief efforts in recent years is unlikely to continue in the same form. The ADF is likely to serve only as a force of last resort, assisting only in the most extreme circumstances.

Implications for emergency management

New and emerging risks

Concurrent and consecutive hazard events increase the pressure on exposed and vulnerable communities. Each subsequent hazard event can add to the scale of the damage caused by a previous hazard event. We need to be able to quickly leverage and deploy resources from different parts of the system to manage hazard convergence.

Climatic shifts

We need to challenge ourselves on where and what we build, how we manage our natural resources and the shape of our industries to ensure our future sustainability in the face of a changing climate.

Digital connectivity

We need to use data better to preempt and be proactive in investment. We need to harness digital solutions to reduce risk of harm to people, including volunteers and emergency services personnel.

Evolving expectations

We need to rethink the way we mobilise our workforce and our investment. We need to recognise the critical role the community already plays - as our first line of defence and the first line of response and recovery. We need to plan for a future with decreased ADF support for disaster operations.

CREATING SHARED VALUE

Limiting the impact of disasters now and in the future requires a coordinated effort across and within many lines of effort including land use planning, water policy, agricultural innovation, biosecurity strategies, supply chain management, transport infrastructure, social policy and digital security.

State and territory governments have primary responsibility for emergency management under Australia's Constitution.

The Australian Government plays a critical leadership role in support of the states and our communities; bringing critical capability and investment; providing significant recovery funding support through the joint state-Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements; data, researching and global leading practice; coordination of cross-sector and cross-jurisdictional responses and the delivery of crucial support across our Asia-Pacific region in times of humanitarian crisis.

"NEMA has to be the organisation addressing the national capability gap. We literally do not have line of sight beyond our borders."
State-based emergency management department

"We have the same obligations at a state level, but we need to be joined at the hip all the way through if we are truly going to deliver good service to the community."
State-based emergency management department

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON NEMA'S VALUE AND OPPORTUNITIES

01 Building clarity around NEMA's all-hazards role, and what this role practically means across the emergency management continuum.

02 Addressing capacity challenges that have constrained the nation's ability to invest more heavily in disaster prevention and preparedness.

03 Ensuring organisations and workforces throughout the emergency management ecosystem are adequately supported and equipped, right across the emergency management continuum – not just in times of crisis.

04 Driving a connected Australian emergency management ecosystem by improving integration points for responses across federal, state and local levels.

05 Providing the right data and insights needed by decision-makers across Australia.

SETTING A CLEAR DIRECTION

PURPOSE

To enable more secure, stronger and resilient communities before, during and after emergencies.

VISION

Working through meaningful partnerships, we will build Australia's capacity for disaster resilience and support our communities when they need it most.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

01 Leading and coordinating national action and assistance across the emergency management continuum.

02 Building scalable, coordinated emergency management capability for nationally significant, cross-jurisdictional and international crises.

03 Building evidence, intelligence and insights to empower communities, leaders and stakeholders to make effective decisions.

04 Contributing to saving lives, reducing harm, and maintaining public trust to mitigate the consequences of disasters and build back better through investment in people, capabilities and communities.

VALUES

Impartial
Provides the government with advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on the best available evidence.

Committed to service
Professional, objective, innovative and efficient, and works collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and the government.

Accountable
Open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of Ministerial responsibility.

Respectful
Respects all people, including their rights and their heritage.

Ethical
Demonstrates leadership, is trustworthy, and acts with integrity, in all that it does.
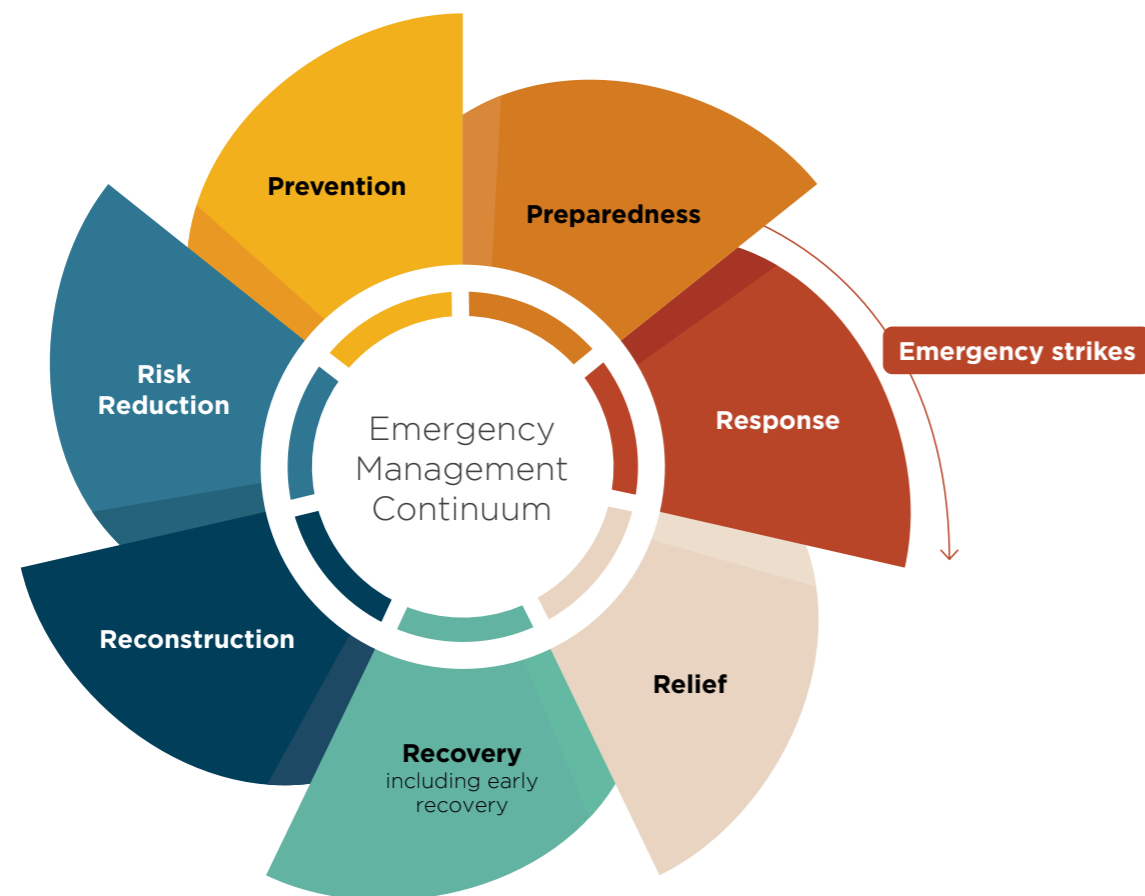
STRENGTHENING THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONTINUUM

The establishment of NEMA on 1 September 2022 was driven by the desire to create a single, enduring, end-to-end agency to better respond to emergencies, help communities recover, and prepare Australia for future disasters.

Our broad role, spanning all-hazards and the full emergency management continuum (the continuum) – from prevention to reconstruction – strengthens the Australian Government's ability to provide end-to-end support in the face of disasters of all kinds.

Striking the right balance of investment across each stage of the continuum remains a challenge for NEMA and governments at all levels. While we may not be able to prevent a cyclone or bushfire, in a climate of increasingly intense and frequent disasters, we need to work out better ways to get ahead of the curve and reduce our vulnerability and exposure.

THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONTINUUM

Emergency Management Continuum: Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Relief, Recovery (including early recovery), Reconstruction, Risk Reduction. Emergency strikes (between Preparedness and Response).

KEY ACTIVITIES

PREVENTION / RISK REDUCTION
- In partnership, we collect and analyse climate and other geospatial risk data.
- We use scenario analysis and modelling to inform and influence evidence-based approaches to investment in prevention and risk reduction initiatives across our communities and regions. This also involves supporting all sectors to better understand disaster risk and building governance to reduce systemic vulnerability.

PREPAREDNESS
- We coordinate national research, exercising and training. This ensures contemporary, seamless and well practised responses with our partners.
- We work with all levels of government, industry and the community sector to ensure a coherent suite of plans, legislative authorities, capabilities and stockpiles.
- We coordinate a national preparedness program to ensure we are prepared to manage the risks of the seasonal outlook provided by the Bureau of Meteorology.
- We mobilise people and assets across our communities and regions.

RESPONSE / RELIEF
- We have systemic institutional capacity to surge our operating model and share capability to manage events.
- We serve as the source of expert advice and near real-time information and insights to support effective decisions.
- We are the gateway and coordinator for requests of Australian Government Assistance including ADF support to states and territories.

RECOVERY / RECONSTRUCTION
- We provide program design, prioritisation, governance and assurance to support impacted communities with their most immediate needs.
- We help communities rebound and recover, sustainably, in line with their pre-defined economic development needs and objectives.
- We work with states, insurance, community, private and philanthropic sectors to maximise and measure collective impact.
- We work in partnership with states and territories to deliver targeted recovery assistance packages to disaster-impacted communities through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

MANAGING CRISES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Disasters are expected to become more complex, more unpredictable, and more difficult to manage. NEMA's focus is to provide support for disasters on a national scale with far-reaching consequences.

As the scale and intensity of a disaster consequence increases, the effectiveness of risk treatments correspondingly decreases. NEMA plays a key role in providing effective leadership, governance and any decision support to overcome these limitations.
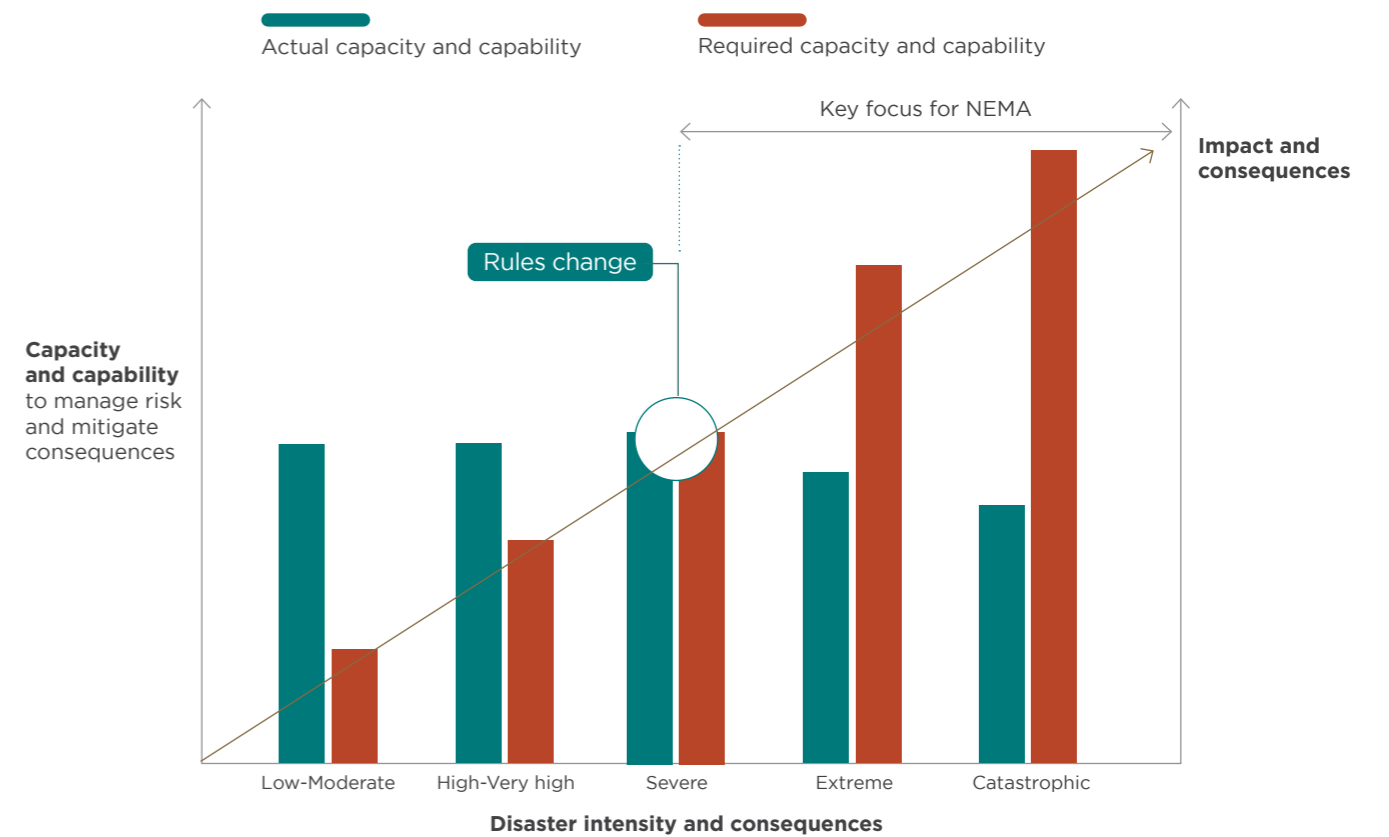

Diagram adapted from: Crosweller M, Tschakert P. (Climate change and disasters, 2019)

DELIVERING BENEFITS FOR ALL

Achieving our vision will see us collectively deliver a range of benefits across a connected emergency management ecosystem.

STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Streamlined access to federal government on all matters relating to disaster and crisis management through a single entry point.
- Alignment at all levels on risk priorities, planning and investment decision.
- Strong connections across the continuum that help to facilitate seamless integration, leverage strengths and share capabilities.
- A structured and adaptive ability to scale to crises through convening, connecting and coordinating Australia-wide efforts.
- Mitigation of supply chain and workforce disruptions.
- Enhanced governance and understanding of risk, enabling better decisions.
- National capabilities, such as stockpiles, the National Messaging Service and the Australian Fire Danger Rating System Supported, which support and align state and territory capability.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND REGIONS

- Detailed understanding of local strengths, social structures, vulnerabilities, and dependencies, including critical assets, evacuation routes and supply chains.
- Technical and surge support for planning, dynamic responses and significant mitigation and recovery initiatives.
- Recovery approaches driven by local needs, development imperatives and long-term sustainability.
- Established proactive mitigation priorities.
- Planning and response supported by the right voices and local capacity.
- Channels for raising and escalating requests for assistance and barriers to progress.

PRIVATE SECTOR AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Well-understood risks, exposure and dependencies across networks, inputs, workforce and supply chains.
- Robust business and supply chain resilience strategies, to respond to disruption.
- Integrated prevention, planning, responses and recovery with government/s.
- Channels for raising and escalation requests for assistance and barriers to progress.
- Streamlined, seamless relief and recovery assistance.

PHILANTHROPIC AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

- Integrated planning and response with government/s at a local, state or national level.
- Collaboration and informed planning and capability development.
- Advice and assurance on planning and recovery decisions and expenditure.
- Channels through which stakeholders to easily engage and escalate risks and issues.

RESEARCH AND ACADEMIA

- Research funding and support to drive and deliver emergency management best practice.
- Channels through which the emergency management ecosystem can access and share expertise and learnings.

COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE

- Clear, consistent information on risk across all hazards and where to get help.
- Platforms and frameworks for delivery of integrated, early warning and evacuation advice.
- Tools that help reduce risk exposure and inform improved decision making.
- A positive impact on insurance.
- Streamlined, seamless relief and recovery assistance.
- Communities empowered to make informed decisions and plans.
- Easy and seamless channels for citizens to engage – "tell us once".
- Structured and unstructured volunteering opportunities.
- Supports are provided to meet the wellbeing and mental health needs of communities and people.
- People who may be more at risk, vulnerable or marginalised are provided with the assistance they need.

SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS
SINCE WE FORMED

Convened 532 meetings through the National Coordination Mechanism (74 since Sept 2022), bringing together representatives from across sectors to coordinate preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Supported Australian Government commitments to cost share with the states $1.8 billion in financial support packages.

Supported the response to major flooding and bushfire events across all states, the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island.

Delivered Australia's mid-term review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Continued support for recovery, reconstruction and resilience projects in Queensland and the Northern Rivers following the 2022 floods.

Supported DFAT for the Türkiye post-earthquake response, including establishing a Crisis Coordination Team (CCT) and deploying a 76-person Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team and NEMA liaison officer.

Supported the successful search efforts for the lost radioactive capsule in Western Australia.

Launched the Governance Review and Independent Review into Australia's funding arrangements.

Established the Hazard Insurance Partnership (HIP) to support collaboration between government and insurers on insurance affordability and availability issues.
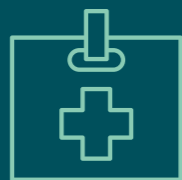
Established and launched round one of the Disaster Ready Fund to support infrastructure and systemic risk reduction initiatives.

Supported the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) through the National Coordination Mechanism to manage data breach consequences.

Coordinated through our partnership with the National Resource Sharing Centre, a 27-person disaster assistance team as a response to Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle.

CASE STUDIES - NEMA IN ACTION

PARTNERING TO BUILD GREATER RESILIENCE AND REDUCE RISK

Natural hazard risk is increasing in many areas of Australia, which is driving up the cost of insurance and creating underinsurance issues. Poor insurance coverage makes it harder for households and communities to fully recover if hit by a natural disaster.

Managed by NEMA, the Hazards Insurance Partnership (HIP) and strategic insurance projects are helping communities be better prepared for disasters. HIP is a single touchpoint between the Australian Government and the insurance industry to engage on issues of disaster risk reduction and hazard insurance. The establishment of this partnership was made possible because of the enduring function that NEMA holds.

The HIP itself is about partnership and data sharing. It fosters cooperation between the Australian Government and the insurance sector. It creates a forum to discuss the role that both the government and the insurance sector can play in, creating shared value for Australians. It sees us shift from transactional to strategic relationships, where we solve together.

Alongside the Department of the Treasury, and the Australian Climate Service (in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Bureau of Meteorology), NEMA is delivering several strategic insurance projects to further our understanding of disaster insurance issues, and how to address these. For example, developing a national private mitigation measure knowledge base and exploring options for advising on the impact of specific mitigations on insurance affordability and availability.

Collectively, these projects aim to address core concerns raised by the government, insurance industry, and the public surrounding hazard risk and insurance. These are ongoing streams of work, with progress being pursued by Australian Government partners and in collaboration with the insurance industry through the HIP.

NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISM (NCM)

The NCM was initially conceived to manage the non-health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. It proved to be a successful model and it is now part of the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework, coordinating the national response to all hazards.

Supporting consequence management arising from COVID-19

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the transport of food across the supply chain was severely disrupted. Close contact rules were halting supermarkets' ability to stock shelves. If things didn't change immediately, within two weeks, shelves would be empty.

A National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) rapidly stabilised the situation by drawing on the Commonwealth's convening power to bring the right people together, in the same room, to define the problem, share situational awareness and build a coordinated response. This NCM brought together representatives across peak industry bodies, manufacturing companies, food retailers, supermarkets, the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

Existing mechanisms of government were briefed, recommending priority vaccination of distribution workers and exemptions to close contact rules for some priority workers. This resulted in policy decisions which enabled ongoing staffing of food distribution and ensured food security during the pandemic.

This same mechanism also saw the successful management of a range of other COVID-related consequences, including movement of emergency personnel across borders during lockdowns, management of Rapid Antigen Testing and the provision of defence assistance to the civil community.

The NCM successfully managed the non-health related consequences during the pandemic and has since become a key part of the Commonwealth's fundamental architecture for consequence management of all hazards throughout the continuum.

WHY THE NCM WORKS

- Agile and responsive to the needs at hand.
- Draws on the convening power of the Commonwealth.
- Looks at the consequences beyond the immediate disaster.
- Invites participants based on their role and expertise.
- Creates joint ownership, developing shared problem definitions and aiming to stabilise a situation through common understanding and cooperation.
- Maintains momentum, deconflicting and synchronising efforts.
- Supports the existing command and control structure.
- Entry point for support across the full range of capabilities across NEMA including the National Situation Room and the Crisis Coordination Team.

"In particular I appreciated the NCM's ability to rapidly cut through red tape across departments and jurisdictions in an action-oriented and solutions-focused way. There was genuine partnership and collaboration with corporate Australia to deliver the best outcomes for the community."

Adam Fitzgibbons, Head of Public Affairs for Coles

THE WAY AHEAD

In the Federal Budget 2023-24, the Australian Government reinforced its commitment to ensuring a cohesive approach to all hazard preparedness and emergency response and recovery. A range of key initiatives were announced as follows.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BUDGET 2023-24 INITIATIVES:

✓ **National Messaging System (NMS)**
This will improve how the Commonwealth delivers emergency messages, and how states and territories issue alerts and warnings in real time.

✓ **Public Safety Mobile Broadband**
This program will provide instant access to data, images and information in critical situations for first responders, and other emergency services personnel.

✓ **National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework**
The Australian Government is funding the National Emergency Management Agency to boost its mental health capability, which will allow it to implement the National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework.

✓ **National emergency management stockpile**
Funding has been allocated to generate a stockpile of lifesaving resources. This will provide state and territory governments with rapid access to critical disaster resources.

✓ **Non-Defence crisis recovery and response capacities**
NEMA will consolidate and enhance existing crisis management arrangements ahead of the 2023-24 high-risk weather season. These enhancements will ensure Australia has increased emergency management capacity for domestic crisis response activities.

DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE ROADMAP

We know from our stakeholder conversations that our success relies on several critical factors including:

- Citizen-centric emergency management services.
- Enhanced data and insights-driven decision making.
- Better investment in resilience and risk reduction.
- Clear perspective on 'all-hazards'.
- National coordination, sustainable partnerships.
- Smart governance across NEMA and the emergency management spectrum.
- A coherent suite of national capabilities.

We are developing a 5-year future roadmap that identifies our key priorities in relation to capabilities, programs and policy, partnerships, data and technology, people and culture and financial sustainability.

We look forward to continuing to engage our staff, stakeholders and the broader emergency management ecosystem in the development of this roadmap.