

COMMUNIQUÉ

National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting 9 December 2022

A meeting of the National Emergency Management Ministers was held virtually on 9 December 2022. Emergency Management Ministers and the Vice-President of the Australian Local Government Association attended and were supported by senior officials from Australian, state and territory and local governments.

The National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM) was chaired by Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Commonwealth Minister for Emergency Management.

The meeting focused on the ongoing progress towards implementing the *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements* (Royal Commission) Recommendations and governance, policy and program items for noting, agreeing and endorsing.

Outcomes

Updates from the Commonwealth

NEMMM members were provided with a verbal update on the Australian Government Ministerial Committee for Emergency Management inaugural meeting, the Second National Action Plan for the *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* and the *First National Mental Health Plan for Emergency Services Workers 2023-2026*.

Key updates on the High Risk Weather Season including current and recent jurisdictional events and state and territory preparedness arrangements

NEMMM members noted that states and territories have a range of preparedness arrangements in place for the High Risk Weather Season.

Outcomes of the First Secretaries Group's Review of the Ministerial Councils

Members noted the outcomes of the First Secretaries Group's Review of Ministerial Councils, including streamlined yearly reporting from the NEMMM to National Cabinet.

Members also agreed to retain NEMMM as the ministerial council name, in line with the outcomes of the Review.

Members noted the National Cabinet reporting process, Annual Report format and the new Terms of Reference requirements.

Terms of Reference for the national natural disaster governance arrangements review (Royal Commission Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2)

Members agreed the Terms of Reference for the review of national natural disaster governance arrangements as detailed in the Royal Commission Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2. The review will ensure that the national governance architecture is fit-for-purpose to achieve outcomes across the disaster management continuum and strengthen resilience to natural hazards.

Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) Review and broader disaster funding review

NEMMM endorsed an initial short-term work program for the next phase of the DRFA review aimed at enhancing awareness and national consistency, improving administration and simplifying access to DRFA assistance. All members noted an agreement to the expanded scope of the DRFA review. Key initiatives include developing national guidance on emergency and temporary accommodation, disaster clean-up, and restoration of public assets, and reviewing the definitions of primary producer and small business.

Update on the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) design process

Members noted the update on the DRF, and the commitment made as part of the 2022-23 Budget to provide up to \$1 billion over five years to reduce the impacts of disasters. This includes direct investment in infrastructure and systemic risk reduction activities. States and territories will be expected to provide a 50 per cent co-contribution towards the cost of proposals. Waivers or reductions may be considered only in exceptional circumstances. The NEMMM noted the *Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022* passed through Parliament on 23 November 2022. Members noted that consultations on the design of the DRF are underway, led by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Royal Commission Implementation of Priority Actions Summary Report

Members endorsed the Summary Report on the Implementation of the Royal Commission Priority Actions. Of the 11 Priority Actions (seven Tranche One and four Tier One, Tranche Two) that were tasked with being delivered by the beginning of the 2022-23 High Risk Weather Season, two Priority Actions have been completed, three are on track to be completed by the end of 2022, five are scheduled for delivery in 2023 and one in 2026. All three Tier Two, Tranche Two Priority Actions that were tasked to have commenced implementation by 1 October 2022 at the start of the High Risk Weather Season, have commenced.

Implementation of remaining Royal Commission Recommendations

Members reconfirmed their shared commitment to implementing the Royal Commission Recommendations, and endorsed arrangements for enhanced national coordination and oversight mechanisms to ensure the timely and coordinated implementation of remaining Recommendations.

Land-use planning (Royal Commission Recommendation 19.3)

Members noted a verbal update on the implementation of Royal Commission Recommendation 19.3. The NEMMM discussed the issue of land use planning and notes that the National Cabinet is considering this issue.

Funding to support local government

Members noted the progress towards Royal Commission Recommendations for local governments. Members also agreed in-principle that jurisdictions should work with their state and territory Local Government Associations on the implementation of Recommendations 11.1 and 11.2 of the Royal Commission, consistent with state and territory arrangements.

Members also agreed to support the Commonwealth Government's DRF, and recognised that the local government role is at the forefront of disaster recovery in preventing and protecting communities in the face of natural disasters

National resilience: Commonwealth approach and all hazards risk mitigation

The NEMMM noted the establishment of the National Resilience Taskforce within the Department of Home Affairs, which will work with NEMA, state and territory governments, communities, industry and academia to bolster Australia's national resilience.

The NEMMM also noted the forthcoming review of the *Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF)*.

Australian Defence Force Protocol

A national Protocol for requesting assistance from the Australian Defence Force has been developed by NEMA in collaboration with the Department of Defence. This Protocol provides guidance on the conditions by which the states and territories should request non-financial emergency support from Defence through NEMA during a domestic disaster response, and how NEMA broadly considers such requests.

National Coordination Mechanism (NCM): Facilitation and Coordination of assistance from Non-Government Organisations and Volunteer Organisations

The Australian Government through the NCM will develop in consultation with states and territories, a protocol to facilitate engagement between non-government organisations and volunteer organisations to provide support to state and territory governments in events of national significance (as referred to in the AGCMF).

Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB) Strategic Review

An independent PSMB Strategic Review (Review) was commissioned by the Australian Government in early 2022 to inform options on the most efficient and effective approach to implement national PSMB capability.

The Review involved extensive engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders including Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, public safety agencies, telecommunication providers, and equipment vendors and suppliers to understand the challenges and inform findings and recommendations.

The Review is now complete. The Australian Government is carefully considering the Review's recommendations, including next steps required to deliver PSMB capability.

National 'Tell Us Once' Program update

Members noted the update on the national 'Tell Us Once' Program (the Program) led by NEMA working closely with the co-lead, Services Australia. The Program's first phase was completed in July 2022 and included consultation with cross-jurisdictional and sector recovery partners to better understand the barriers to securely share sensitive information between individuals, organisations and Government on a national scale.

The next phase of the Program will commence in January 2023. This phase will pursue and finalise detailed scoping, analysis, design and costings across legislative, data sharing, platform management and governance streams of work.

Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) Ignition, Suppression and Impact (ISI) project funding and Cell Broadcast – National Messaging System (NMS)

The NEMMM members were provided with a verbal update on AFDRS ISI project funding. Members were advised that the AFDRS was implemented nationally on 1 September 2022. The Australian Government has committed \$2.3 million to further support national implementation in 2022-2023.

Members were advised that the NMS will allow the Australian Government to reliably deliver messages about national emergencies, to mobile phones in near real time.