2023–24

Higher Risk Weather Season National Preparedness Summit Report

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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation NEMA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and the community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Foreword

Australia's landscape is changing at a pace and scale that is testing and stretching planning, resources and partnerships. Since 2019, there have been more than 200 disaster events, with 1,684 disaster declarations across 434 Local Government Areas (LGAs). In 2022, 70% of Australians lived in a LGA that was subject to a disaster activation.

Australia's higher risk weather season (HRWS) traditionally runs between October and April, when bushfires, heatwaves, flooding and tropical cyclones are more likely. Emergency services and communities are increasingly responding to disasters that stretch beyond the 'traditional' period of the HRWS, and well into winter and autumn.

Preparedness for Australia's HRWS is not just the responsibility of individual states, territories, organisations, agencies or governments. There needs to be a whole-of-society approach, especially as disasters do not adhere to borders, or avoid communities that are still recovering from previous events.

The National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA) primary purpose is to enable more secure, stronger and resilient communities in preparation for, response to and recovery from disasters. Under Australian arrangements, states and territories have primary responsibility to respond to and recover from disasters, but these arrangements are underpinned by collaboration and partnerships with industry, not-for-profit organisations, communities, emergency services, and all levels of government.

Through the 2023–24 HRWS National Preparedness Summit (the Summit), NEMA brought together senior leaders from a range of sectors to explore how we prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, and to collectively ensure Australia is prepared for the 2023–24 HRWS.

The Summit was held over two days. Senior leaders discussed best practice approaches, explored priorities and emerging emergency management themes, and exercised how states and territories and the Australian Government would respond to concurrent, cascading and compounding HRWS disasters with current capabilities and capacity.

I thank each and every one of the 155 organisations and 296 individuals that participated in this nationally significant event. Your attendance and participation in the Summit reinforced connections across all sectors that may be called upon to enhance the support we can provide to our communities when they need it most this HRWS.

Brendan Moon

National Emergency Management Agency **OFFICIAL**
2023–24 Higher Risk Weather Season National Preparedness Summit Report

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Executive summary

As part of broader preparedness ahead of the HRWS, NEMA held the inaugural HRWS National Preparedness Summit (the Summit) on 25-26 September 2023 at Australian Parliament House. The Summit was attended by delegates from all levels of government, key industry sectors, and not-for-profit (NFP) organisations. The Summit included a day of war gaming a scenario that was informed by the seasonal climate outlook, and stress tested the emergency management systems nationally.

This report summarises the themes discussed and findings from the Summit, and presents the overarching themes, insights and considerations, informed by Summit delegates, on preparedness, response and early recovery for this year's, and future years', HRWS.

The key outcomes identified through the Summit include the:

- importance of coordination, collaboration and consequence management between all levels of government, across response and recovery agencies, and industry and NFPs
- importance of continuity of government services to the community during and following disasters
- need for a human-centric approach to disaster management.

In addition, there were six overarching themes identified for consideration by the Australian Government, states and territories, industry and NFPs:

- Collaboration and partnerships
- National coordination
- Capability development
- Capacity building
- Community engagement and support
- Communication.

This report will provide a foundation for the Australian Government's ongoing HRWS preparedness, and continuous improvement for the Government and future Summits.

A snapshot of Summit insights

Summit delegates participated in briefings, panel discussions, and a National Preparedness Exercise to discuss best-practice approaches, and identify gaps and emerging issues, challenges, and key lines of effort for Australia's preparedness for the 2023–24 HRWS.

Over the two days of the Summit, delegate observations were collected and developed into six overarching themes, with high-level priority areas, and Australian Government and state and territory considerations, for the 2023–24 HRWS, as well as potential longer-term preparedness strategies and approaches.

Collaboration and partnerships

Communication

2023–24 HRWS National Preparedness Summit key themes

National coordination

Capability development

Community engagement and support

Capacity building

1. Collaboration and partnerships

- **National resource sharing processes** should be expanded and adapted to match increasing need due to more frequent disasters during the HRWS.
- **Coordination should be further integrated** across all levels of government, and across all sectors.
- **Ongoing engagement with industry and private sectors** should be incorporated during national discussions to help potentially enhance resource-sharing and problem solving.
- **Strengthen national consequence management** by further developing national emergency management tools.

Considerations

- Enhanced integration of the National Resource Sharing Centre (NRSC) into the National Situation Room (NSR).
- Broader roll out of Effective Consequence Management training.
- Explore existing resource sharing processes between local governments, and consider opportunities to feed into national and jurisdictional arrangements.

2. National coordination

- **Increased application of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM)**, linking to other sectors and capabilities.
- **Provision of continuous government services** as a priority during and after disasters.
- **A stronger national approach to coordinating recovery**, and commencing recovery activities as quickly as possible.

Considerations

- Use of the NCM to proactively provide situational awareness so all impacts are considered, and equities taken into account when decisions are made.

3. Capability building

- **Further integration of local government** in national emergency coordination, and support for capability uplift.
- **Creation of a national disaster management training approach** to help with response and recovery, and assist with workforce fatigue and surge capacities.
- **Improved awareness of current Australian Government plans and arrangements** in jurisdictions, industry, and NFP sector.

Considerations

- The Australian Government Protocol for National Coordination of NFPs could include a capability register.
- Continuation of the Charitable NFPs and Philanthropic Roundtable and Strategic Group.
- Facilitation of increased collaboration between Australian Government and local government by jurisdictions in preparedness for, response to and recovery from disasters.

4. Capacity development

- **Ongoing need for emergency and temporary housing.**
- **Increased mental health support** for at-risk communities and emergency services.
- **Improved surge capacity** and workplace management to combat staff and volunteer fatigue.
- **Improved capacity of health systems** to respond to major and concurrent events.

Considerations

- Establishment of the National Emergency Management Stockpile (NEMS).
- Development of a register of available deployable temporary housing.
- Increasing Australian Government and jurisdictional surge capacity.
- Better utilisation of primary health networks.
- Operationalise the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework.

5. Community engagement and support

- **Better recognition of existing community strengths and assets** to augment and inform emergency management.
- **The need for effective and ongoing engagement with First Nations communities**, especially before a disaster occurs.
- **Stronger integration and support for the NFP sector** in disaster management.

Considerations

- Implementing the Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction project.
- Continuation of the Charitable NFPs and Philanthropic Roundtable and Strategic Group.
- Strengthen financial counselling services and insurance education in communities.

6. Communication

- **The need to provide confidence to the public** that Australia has strong plans and arrangements, and is ready to face challenges today and into the future.
- **Coordinated and consistent nation-wide emergency communication**, which considers warning fatigue.
- **Improved data sharing and collection** to increase interoperability.

Considerations

- Implementation of the Second National Action Plan and National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework.
- Finalise the roll-out of the Australian Warning System.
- Increase awareness of the National Emergency Declaration (NED).
- Develop an inventory of data sharing issues between the state, territory and Australian Government levels to identify solutions.

Background

Since 2009, NEMA (formerly Emergency Management Australia) has delivered an annual HRWS Preparedness Program on behalf of the Australian Government. While NEMA leads the design and delivery of the preparedness program, it 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.

The HRWS Preparedness Program demonstrates NEMA's commitment to leadership and nationally coordinated effort across the emergency management continuum. NEMA supports Australia's national preparedness by engaging with key stakeholders and providing advice to states and territories on the seasonal climate outlook and national coordination arrangements.

As part of NEMA's commitment to continual improvement and expanding its support for HRWS preparedness, the program has evolved over time to incorporate state, territory and local governments, state and federal ministers, major industry sectors, media, and NFPs.

The establishment of NEMA in September 2022 provided an opportunity to review the program and ensure it was fit for purpose ahead of the 2023–24 HRWS. As a result of the review, NEMA developed and delivered the inaugural HRWS National Preparedness Summit, held on 25-26 September 2023 at Australian Parliament House.

Across the two days, 296 participants from 155 organisations (**See Appendix 1**) attended the Summit. This is the first time that key decision makers responsible for crisis response and recovery from all states and territories, all levels of governments, industry, and the NFP sector have been brought together in the same room in preparation for a HRWS.

Summit overview

The Summit was designed to provide delegates with an overview of the 2023–24 HRWS climate outlook. A series of briefings and panels provided delegates with information about trends and best practice relevant to the upcoming HRWS. Through the National Preparedness Exercise, participants explored key aspects of response and recovery activities, and examined national preparedness for the upcoming HRWS.

768 observations were collected throughout the two days, which have been used to identify the key themes in this report, and will inform the HRWS Preparedness Program and future Summits.

Aims

Summit aim
To provide a series of key briefings, present a seasonal climate outlook and deliver an exercise scenario that informs national preparedness and readiness.

Summit outcome
The Summit supported integrated HRWS preparedness across Australian Government, jurisdictions, industry, NFPs, and the whole emergency management continuum.

National Preparedness Exercise aim
To enhance national preparedness for consecutive, compounding and complex weather-based crises, in advance of the 2023–24 HRWS.

National Preparedness Exercise outcome
The exercise (war game) stress-tested existing emergency arrangements, covering multiple phases of the emergency management continuum, based on the 2023–24 HRWS climate outlook.

Objectives

Summit objectives

1. To re-launch the HRWS Preparedness Program in line with the establishment of NEMA.

   ✓*The HRWS Preparedness Program was re-launched through the delivery of the inaugural HRWS National Preparedness Summit.*

2. To provide an inclusive preparedness program that considered the entire emergency management continuum with consideration of a broad range of themes.

   ✓*The Summit incorporated multiple phases of the emergency management continuum (including preparedness, response and recovery), and explored 11 emergency management themes through breakout sessions.*

National Preparedness Exercise objectives

1. To identify gaps in capacity and/or capability to respond to and recover from significant weather-based disasters.

   ✓*Delegates considered capability and capacity gaps across response and recovery during each time-step of the discussion exercise.*

2. To explore Australian Government, state and territory, industry and non-government capabilities that can augment response and recovery activities.

   ✓*Government attendees connected with industry and NFP delegates to identify and explore how new and existing capabilities can support response and recovery.*

3. To examine the prioritisation and allocation of national resources during concurrent and consecutive weather events.

   ✓*Delegates discussed the challenges of equitably prioritising national resources during concurrent and consecutive crises, and sought to identify improvements that could be made.*

4. To explore the thresholds for a NED.

   ✓*Exercise participants were briefed on the thresholds of a NED, and considered its application and utility during each of the three time-steps of the discussion exercise.*

Structure of the Summit

Day 1 – Monday 25 September 2023

Day one of the Summit briefed delegates on the seasonal climate outlook for the 2023–24 HRWS, Australian Government capabilities, and national-level coordination arrangements. Following the briefings, delegates participated in one of the 11 breakout sessions to explore emerging issues in emergency management. Each panel reported back to the full group of delegates to share key observations and discussion points.

Breakout session	Facilitators
First Nations Communities	Bhiamie Williamson, Monash University Dr Emma McNicol, Monash University
Disability and Vulnerable Communities	Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve, Centre for Disability Research and Policy, The University of Sydney Pauline Cook, Monaro Family Support Service
Heatwave	Dr Georgia Behrens, Department of Health and Aged Care Professor Ollie Jay, Heat and Health Research Incubator, The University of Sydney
Aerial Firefighting	Commissioner Rob Rogers, NSW Rural Fire Service Josephine Stirling, National Aerial Firefighting Centre
Interoperability	Deputy Coordinator-General Joe Buffone, Emergency Management and Response, NEMA Rob Webb, National Council for Fire and Emergency Services
Insurance	Professor Paula Jarzabkowski, University of Queensland Liam Walter, Insurance Council of Australia
Supply Chain	Stephen McFallan, CSIRO Donna Looney, Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Pacific Preparedness	John Price, NEMA New Zealand Patrick Haines, Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance
Defence Capability	Air Vice Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC, CSC, OAM, Department of Defence Commodore Donald Dezentje AM, CSM, RAN, Department of Defence
Crisis Appreciation Strategic Planning	Jessica Cox, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet James Drummond, NEMA
Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements	Kieran Vassallo, NEMA Lorraine Trethewey, NEMA

Day 2 – Tuesday 26 September 2023

A National Preparedness Exercise was delivered on day two of the Summit to 'war game' and stress-test existing emergency plans. The exercise scenario, developed by NEMA in partnership with the Australian Climate Service (ACS), was based on the seasonal climate outlook. The scenario contained nationally significant events that led to complex, compounding and cascading crises, requiring collaborative decision-making at all levels.

The exercise covered multiple phases of the emergency management continuum (predominately focused on preparedness, response and early recovery), and explored the impacts and secondary consequences of weather-based hazards with an all-sectors approach. The exercise facilitated discussions on how agencies and organisations can collectively support timely and effective response and recovery activities to reduce the impacts of extreme weather events on individuals and communities. It also explored the thresholds for a NED to educate participants on its thresholds and application.

The scenario had national impacts, which were broken down into jurisdictional-specific disasters, to allow for table participants to explore state arrangements and consider how their organisations would support response and early recovery with current capabilities and capacity. Industry and NFP representatives were placed on states and territory tables to prompt discussion. Australian Government tables focused on national coordination and arrangements. Throughout the exercise, delegates examined the impacts from a jurisdictional and national lens to prioritise capabilities.

Delegate feedback for future Summits

Delegates suggested that the followings topics could be considered at future HRWS National Preparedness Summits:

- Further education on national arrangements, such as the NED and the NCM

- Emergency and temporary housing

- Community preparedness plans and activities

- Implementing lessons management processes

- How to engage with industry and the NFP sector

Key Summit themes and insights

The six themes identified through the Summit were synthesised utilising the OILL methodology (Observations, Insights, Lessons Identified and Lessons Learned). Observations were collected during the breakout sessions, presentations, report backs, and the National Preparedness Exercise. A NCM was held following the Summit for Australian Government delegates to validate the identified themes and insights.

1. Collaboration and partnerships

National resource sharing

- The established processes for sharing resources between jurisdictions during emergencies – coordinated by the NRSC through the Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee (CCOSC) – works well and is a vital feature of Australia's emergency management approach. The coordination of recovery processes in Australia would benefit from a similar mechanism to support prioritisation and shared situational awareness.
- Due to the increased frequency and scale of disasters globally, there is a growing demand for resources across Australia and internationally. Australia's current resource sharing system works well, but it will need to adapt to these pressures. Future opportunities include building greater awareness and coordination of resource sharing outside of the NRSC process, primarily at the local and district levels, and in recovery.
- Sharing resources at the local and district levels are not coordinated by the Australian Government. There is an opportunity for the Australian Government to work with states and territories to re-engage with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) to explore how resource sharing arrangements could be established more broadly between local governments.

Coordination and partnerships across sectors

- The integration of state and national arrangements are well understood and practised. However, there are opportunities for increased inclusion of NFPs and industry to assist in problem-solving, and augmenting response and recovery activities, particularly around critical infrastructure and supply chain disruptions.
- Enhancing and fostering partnerships, and promoting information-sharing between Australia and other countries facing similar hazard risks, including non-traditional international partners, may aid Australia's response and preparedness activities, and potentially identify new capabilities.
- Industry capabilities could be integrated and formalised into national emergency management frameworks, maturing the existing system which currently relies on goodwill.

Effective consequence management

- Effective consequence management is an area that all levels of government and sectors need awareness and appreciation of. Ideally, there should be a greater focus on the first, second and third order consequences of a hazard to anticipate impacts, and plan for mitigation measures.
- National emergency management capabilities, including the NCM and the Crisis Appreciation Strategic Planning (CASP) methodology, could be used to gain situational awareness and inform decision making. Risk forecasting and strategic insight tools like the CASP enable a broader understanding of risk, in particular for complex or multi-sector emergencies.
- A nationally consistent approach to collecting impact data would assist effective consequence management.

2. National coordination

Increased applicability of the NCM

- The NCM is seen as a valuable tool by the emergency management sector in enhancing situational awareness, rapid problem definition, and defining lines of effort and ownership of solutions to stabilise issues of concern.
- As the NCM evolves, there are opportunities to expand the sectors that participate in the NCM to broaden shared situational awareness.
- It is important to provide information collected and decisions agreed on during NCMs to relevant non-Australian Government stakeholders, such as local government and industry.

Providing continuous government services

- The Australian Government's priority is ensuring the continuity of community services, especially for vulnerable cohorts, as soon as possible following a disaster.
- Beyond protection of life and restoration of critical infrastructure, the Australian Government will seek to ensure that its key services, supplies and financial support are promptly delivered to affected populations.
- Heatwaves in particular can place significant demand on the energy sector and greatly impact business continuity, with communities as well as frontline support workers needing to be supported.

A stronger national approach to coordinating recovery

- It is important that recovery planning commences at the same time that response occurs to anticipate community needs and required resources.
- A national approach to coordinating recovery, potentially supported by the NCM, would provide opportunities for collaboration and information sharing.

3. Capability building

Lifting local government capabilities

- Engagement with local governments supports a human-centric, place-based approach to emergency management as local governments directly work with impacted local communities.
- There is a need to explore how the Australian Government, working with states and territories, can supplement local government capacity in preparation for, response to, and recovery from disasters.
- Longer term strategies could include:
  - Exploring how local governments could be further integrated into national emergency coordination arrangements, including increased involvement in NCMs.
  - Partnering with local governments to assess and uplift capabilities in areas such as public messaging, resource coordination and information sharing.

Building a national training approach

- As a long-term strategy, a national disaster management training program would support response and recovery, and assist with workforce fatigue management and surge capacities.
- The regulatory environment for emergency response training can dissuade individuals from gaining the necessary training required to perform roles in the emergency services sector.
- There are opportunities for targeted vocational training in the sector to help uplift priority capabilities.

Improved awareness of existing Australian Government plans and arrangements

- States and territories, industry and NFPs expressed interest in more education about Australian Government crisis arrangements, mechanisms and capabilities. NEMA is supporting greater awareness through an expanded National HRWS Preparedness Briefing Program for a range of priority sectors, including industry and NFPs.
- Of particular interest is information on the NED, and how the NCM, Requests for Assistance (RFA) and Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) work.

4. Capacity development

Ongoing need for emergency and temporary housing capacity

- Temporary and long-term emergency housing is an ongoing need and a priority in most states and territories, especially during large-scale or concurrent disasters. The current housing crisis has placed increased pressures on housing stocks.
- Temporary housing solutions need to be reconsidered, as in some cases people are staying in temporary housing for extended periods of time.
- NEMA is currently working towards providing temporary housing options through the NEMS.

Mental health support for at-risk communities and emergency services

- Increased mental health services targeting specific at-risk communities (i.e. young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds), and emergency services staff and volunteers, will support community resilience. This is particularly important in locations where disaster fatigue is present and/or communities are still recovering from previous disasters.
- Mental health should be prioritised during recovery – if funding is delayed it can hinder the provision of timely support.
- Greater national focus and communication regarding the impacts of heat on mental health is required, given the higher likelihood of heatwaves this season, and overall, in Australia.

Improved surge capacity

- There are frequent overlaps between paid emergency services staff and emergency or defence reserve volunteers, which can limit surge capacity for response and recovery.
- It is important to support agencies and organisations to have work health and safety (WHS) policies and systems in place that help combat staff and volunteer fatigue, especially with concurrent disasters occurring during the HRWS.

Capacity of health systems to respond to major and concurrent events

- Significant weather-based incidents could severely strain the capacity of hospitals, ambulance services, disaster victim identification capabilities, and mortuary services. This is especially the case during compounding and consecutive crises.

5. Community engagement and support

A human-centric and place-based approach to emergency management

- Recognising existing skills and capabilities within communities can reframe perceptions of vulnerability in emergency management. This approach supports greater recognition of individual strengths and assets, and can help enhance local emergency management response and early recovery.
- Proactive community engagement at the local level is vital for identifying communities with additional needs, including new and emerging communities (those that have recently arrived in Australia and are increasing in number), who may be at more risk to the impacts of hazards.

First Nations engagement

- Emergency services should ensure that they have ongoing and effective communication with First Nations communities and existing leadership arrangements, for response and recovery activities, and especially before a disaster occurs.
- Emergency management officials recognised that the 2023 Referendum, regardless of the outcome, may impact engagement with First Nations communities throughout the 2023–24 HRWS.

Stronger integration and support of the NFP sector in disaster management

- NFPs and community organisations are often involved at the frontline of preparedness, response and recovery activities, so are natural partners for government and emergency services, but are not always recognised as such.
- Additional disaster preparedness funding could be channelled to these organisations to support community level resourcing.
- There are opportunities for NFPs to be better integrated into local emergency management committees to support place-based planning, response and recovery processes and activities.

Financial and insurance education for the community

- Strengthening financial counselling services and insurance education in communities may assist in enhancing community preparedness and resilience, and lead to reduced recovery time after disasters.
- Increased education is required to help people better understand existing insurance products, how to put together a claim, and whether their insurance is appropriate.
- The stress of a disaster can compound existing financial stress. Identifying agencies and organisations that are currently providing financial counselling, and integrating them into the emergency management continuum, could support recovery for financially vulnerable people.

6. Communication

Building community confidence and reassurance

- Australia will be increasingly challenged by significant weather-related disasters and events, particularly during the HRWS. State and territory emergency management arrangements are tried and tested, but governments across all levels need to provide confidence to the community that there are plans in place, and that Australia is ready to face challenges today and into the future.
- By working together, the Australian Government and jurisdictions can provide consistent messaging to reassure the public about Australia's readiness for the HRWS to help alleviate anxiety.

Coordinated and inclusive emergency communication

- Emergency response and recovery communication needs to be coordinated and consistent nation-wide, and consider the potential impacts of warning fatigue on communities' response to warnings.
- Preparedness, response and recovery information needs to be accessible for people with lower literacy levels. It is also important to communicate to the public across multiple channels and formats, and to target messaging at the community level and to people with additional needs.

Improved data sharing and collection

- Consistent, quickly-accessible and validated data allows agencies to be on the same page, and increases interoperability. Data collection, accuracy, and accessibility could be improved by increased sharing of data between agencies, ensuring consistency of files, types, and sources, and addressing access restrictions (i.e. paywalls).

Insights and considerations across emerging emergency management issues

Summit delegates were invited to explore emerging issues and trends in emergency management through 11 concurrent breakout sessions, focussing on key issues and trends that will influence the delivery of effective crisis response and recovery activities, particularly in the context of the 2023–24 HRWS.

First Nations communities

Key takeaway: *Fostering a human-centric approach that recognises strengths, knowledge of Country, and the importance of cultural heritage will facilitate more meaningful conversations with First Nations communities. It is necessary to engage before a disaster occurs.*

Considerations:

- Full implementation of the Second National Action Plan and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework.
- Identification and engagement of First Nations communities in developments of CASP and other planning products.
- Continued engagement of First Nations communities to support protection of culturally significant sites during disasters.

Summit delegate insights:

- First Nations communities are often labelled as vulnerable, however there is a need to also recognise their strengths and resilience.
- It is important to engage with Traditional Owners and Elders through existing support programs as early as possible, ideally prior to a disaster occurring.
- Emergency management officials need to recognise that regardless of the outcome of the 2023 Referendum, there will be implications for First Nations communities.
- The inclusion of First Nations Liaison Officers within Incident Management Teams to advise on culturally significant sites would help protect these sites during and following disasters, and provide increased knowledge of local landscapes.

Disability and vulnerable communities

Key takeaway: *A human-centric approach is required in recognition that personal agency is essential when supporting communities with additional needs to influence decision-making at all levels. Proactive community engagement is vital.*

Considerations:

- Implement the Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction project.
- Implement the Second National Action Plan and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework.
- Explore further integration of NFPs in local emergency management committees, where appropriate, to support place-based planning, response and recovery.

Summit delegate insights:

- Strong, collaborative partnerships between social service organisations and the emergency management sector, combat agencies, and local government are important for effective response and recovery.
- Reframing perceptions of vulnerability to also recognise people's strengths and assets will benefit emergency communication, response and early recovery.

- Preparedness, response and recovery information should be tailored for lower literacy levels, and communicated across multiple channels and formats, including at the community level.
- Proactive community engagement at the local level is vital for identifying communities with additional needs, including new and emerging communities (those that have recently arrived in Australia and are increasing in number), who may be at more risk to the impacts of hazards.
- NFPs and community organisations are often involved at the frontline of preparedness, response and recovery activities, so are natural partners for government and emergency services, but are not always recognised as such. Disaster preparedness funding could be embedded in funding structures for these organisations.
- The integration of NFPs in local emergency management committees would support enhanced place-based planning, response and recovery.

Heatwave

Key takeaway: *Heatwave is a complex hazard that impacts people in different ways due to factors such as age, socio-economic conditions, geography, and access to services. Ensuring consistent power service is vital to mitigate impacts, as well as targeted public messaging.*

Considerations:

- Implementation of the National Heatwave Framework.
- Finalise the roll out of the Australian Warning System.
- Explore how outdoor work in heatwaves can be completed safely by emergency service workers.

Summit delegate insights:

- Greater innovation in how outdoor work is conducted by emergency services workers in hot temperatures would benefit worker safety, including exploring emerging Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) technology options, and considering how operations are managed during heatwaves.
- Clear and consistent public messaging across agencies is important during heatwaves. It is vital that warnings, advice and educational materials are based on scientific evidence and are clearly communicated in targeted, accessible languages and formats, and encourage people to have a plan.
- Individual risk perception of heatwaves is often inaccurate. It is important to identify who is at higher risk to heatwaves at the local level, and provide proactive advice during the HRWS.
- As Australia's aged care system evolves, more elderly people will be living in their homes; this will create additional challenges in managing future heat stress mitigation.
- The impacts of heat on mental health, in addition to physical health, should be further communicated.
- Innovations in heatwave preparedness technology and apps should be explored, but need to be accessible to vulnerable individuals.

Australian Defence Force Capability

Key takeaway: *The Australian Government has a range of capabilities that can be drawn on or repurposed that are not always considered. The Defence Strategic Review has highlighted that greater awareness of, and upskilling in, the use of the Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) is required, with Joint Operations Support Staff (JOSS) currently embedded in each jurisdiction.*

Considerations:

- Implementation of the NEMS.
- Use of Disaster Relief Australia in response to and recovery from disasters.
- Identification of alternative capabilities that can augment response and recovery activities.

Summit delegate insights:

- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) must maintain national security requirements, and should be considered as a capability of last resort, once all jurisdictional and commercial capabilities have been exhausted.
- By working closely with JOSS liaison officers, jurisdictions can ensure that the correct information is fed into the RFA process to help the ADF decide which capability or asset is best suited to the desired effect.
- The overuse of the ADF has hindered reservist recruitment, creating a further resourcing capability gap within Defence.
- An assessment of jurisdictional capability gaps should be conducted, and alternate methods of assistance explored to reduce unnecessary expectations on the ADF during emergency response.
- Public messaging must clearly articulate the role of Defence in a crisis response.

Crisis Appreciation and Strategic Planning

Key takeaway: *Greater awareness of the CASP in jurisdictions, across industry and local government would supported an uplift in planning capability and support interoperability.*

Consideration: NEMA to consider broader roll out of CASP training.

Summit delegate insights:

- Providing training on the CASP methodology and processes for states, territories and industry may contribute to a national standard for planning.
- There are opportunities and benefits of using CASP for long-term recovery planning.
- There needs to be a better understanding across government of current crisis management methodologies and frameworks, including CASP.
- There is an opportunity to further integrate NFP and industry partners within national planning processes, and the NCM may be the mechanism to achieve this.
- Local government planning must be integrated into the jurisdictional and federal levels to ensure that all parties are receiving the same information and working towards the same goal.

Aerial Firefighting

Key takeaway: *The establishment of a permanent sovereign fleet with capability to cross-load and for use beyond aerial firefighting would augment Australia's existing capabilities. Multi-use aircraft would broaden the current fleet's capability and capacity. There are opportunities to explore the private sector as surge.*

Considerations:

- Continue working with the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) and CCOSC on future requirements, noting that the current fleet is fit-for-purpose for this HRWS.
- Continue exploration of drones during fires to augment response operations.

Summit delegate insights:

- The installation of remote water refill stations would lessen refill times and reduce the number of helicopters needed.
- Federal funding formerly accounted for around 50% of the cost of an aircraft. Market forces have increased aircraft procurement costs, meaning that this percentage is now significantly less.
- A national/sovereign fleet would require a governing body, including responsibility for maintenance.
- Procurement of multi-use aircraft (for use in firefighting, search and rescue, intelligence gathering etc.) would help bolster the current national aerial firefighting fleet.
- There is a need to reduce community expectations of aerial firefighting fleets given their frequent operational limitations and support role for ground firefighters.
- Drones are an emerging capability, and could be used for intelligence and firefighting.

- An Australian training facility and program would assist with standardising domestic capability.

Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

Key takeaway: *Access to recovery funding for individuals is critical, however when technology is affected as a result, challenges emerge. Sharing best practice and positive experiences in relation to DRFA is important.*

Consideration: Engage with local government through the DRFA Roadshow.

Summit delegate insights:

- The DRFA Roadshow is an important initiative to provide additional support and upskill local governments.
- There are opportunities to improve reporting, monitoring and evaluation of DRFA programs. This will assist with sharing good practice, and evaluating how money is being spent. Improved assessments of DRFA programs will ensure programs meet recovery needs, are effective, and will help determine if they can be replicated in other jurisdictions.
- Technology companies could provide global information on assets (roads and bridges etc.).
- There are opportunities to increase awareness that funding is available through the DRFA for environmental purposes.
- Local governments can struggle to acquire specialists required for DRFA works, such as engineers and project managers. A state/national surge capability could be developed to help with this.

Supply Chains

Key takeaway: *Bringing industry and major supply chain networks together is vital to understanding problems, exploring solutions, and identifying rapid decisions to support response, relief and recovery operations.*

Consideration: Continued use of the NCM for proactive situational awareness to ensure that all impacts are being considered, and the equities of different portfolios are taken into account when decisions are being made.

Summit delegate insights:

- There are opportunities to incorporate more data and improve accuracy in modelling to better provide information to decision-makers on impacts and consequences of supply chain disruptions.
- When trying to plan crisis responses, resolve supply chain issues, and find solutions, it is vital to have the right people in the room, including representatives from all modes of freight.
- It is important to engage smaller and community-level supply chain stakeholders as they can play a large role in disaster response. In smaller places, the smaller players can have the largest impacts.
- Strong communication is vital when responding to supply issues within a community. At all levels, clear messaging around which supplies are needed, and where they need to go, is required.

Insurance

Key takeaway: *It is important to help communities better comprehend hazards and collectively assess their risk, draw data into the system, and support insurance processes to move quickly to get people back into homes.*

Consideration: Work with states and territories to facilitate access for insurance assessors as soon as practicable post disaster.

Summit delegate insights:

- Learning about insurance systems could be integrated into school curricula to help educate people from a younger age and grow community resilience.

- Educating people to better understand hazard risk and insurance will help people prepare for the HRWS, including supporting people to understand what insurance product they need, how to prepare a claim, and how to get an appropriate level of insurance.
- Reducing legacy risk is key in the insurance space. In the long-term, this could include managed relocation of communities, buybacks and retrofitting, and different reforms that prevent future risk.
- Proactive messaging is vital to inform potential homebuyers of the consequences of building or buying houses in at-risk areas, and the insurance implications that are associated with this.
- Some Australians are unable to get insurance. There would be benefit in exploring alternatives to the current insurance system for these people.

Pacific preparedness

Key takeaway: *Building capability and capacity of our Pacific partners is key. Investment in local development and incorporating local knowledge will improve resilience before, during and following crises. Domestic capability preparedness should be designed with the ability to extend support into the Pacific.*

Consideration: Australian Government and jurisdictional collaboration (noting that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is the lead Commonwealth agency) when engaging with Pacific partners.

Summit delegate insights:
- Australia's relationship with the Pacific should be viewed as a partnership that can provide mutual assistance.
- Investment in response and recovery capability development and education of Pacific partners, including through a train-the-trainer function, should be prioritised and will be critical in aiding resilience and preparedness across the region.
- Pacific preparedness should be locally led, with careful consideration of maintaining existing local resilience. International assistance in times of crisis can have an adverse impact, and risks creating dependency.
- Warning systems and infrastructure have been previously installed in Pacific countries, but not maintained, and in some cases are no longer operable. Building local capability is as important as providing infrastructure to ensure longevity of systems and preparedness and response mechanisms.

Interoperability

Key takeaway: *Coordination of national collaboration and resource sharing through the NRSC, CCOSC, and the NCM is vital. There are opportunities to apply these mechanisms, particularly the NCM, to recovery. A national training program with minimum standards could help create consistency across all levels of government, and assist with surge capacities and fatigue management.*

Considerations:

- Further integration of the NRSC into the Australian Government NSR.
- Use of the NCM to coordinate government decision-making for recovery in collaboration with jurisdictions.

Summit delegate insights:
- There is a need for coordination, collaboration and information-sharing across all levels of government to ensure the interoperability of crisis response across all sectors. The NCM could be leveraged to map and understand existing capabilities and gaps.
- There is an identified need to develop and establish a national recovery and community assistance capability that can be deployed to affected areas following a disaster.
- Non-traditional international partners should be engaged to develop Australia's practices.
- The NRSC is a useful current capability, but should be adapted to include relief and recovery.
- National foundational training systems, programs and frameworks should be developed to create consistency across all levels of government and improve speed to deployment.

National Preparedness Exercise key insights

The National Preparedness Exercise, held during the Summit, provided opportunities for delegates to focus on response and recovery issues related to their own jurisdiction. Below is a summary of the key insights from jurisdictions in response to the scenario. These have been incorporated into the overall Summit themes.

Coordination and collaboration

States and territories recognised and emphasised the importance of collaboration and coordination. Delegates considered it critical to engage with industry, including to maintain power and for supply chains. There was an identified need to enhance cross-border operations and interagency communication when managing resources.

Rapid targeted investment

States and territories identified the need to expedite recovery program funding; a solution may be a national presence in disaster zones and further collaboration with NFPs, local government, and the insurance industry.

Human-centric approach

Implementing a community-led, human-centric approach to emergency management, data collection and extensive engagement at the local level is required to better understand needs. Concerns included aged care, communities with additional needs, mental health, and the insurance and compensation sphere of recovery.

National coordination

States and territories were concerned with ensuring that national resources, such as medical supplies and fuel commodities, are distributed equitably and according to need in times of crisis. National coordination arrangements such as the NCM are considered useful, and delegates expressed interest in further education in these. States and territories recognised that the Australian Government plays an important role in information-sharing and in liaising with industry.

Health and emergency services challenges

All states and territories noted several capacity gaps in the health and emergency services sectors, with shortages in healthcare supplies, personal protective equipment, hospital space, and availability of essential supplies singled out. Delegates also expressed concern about the mental health of exposed communities and the welfare of frontline staff involved in response to and recovery from compounding disasters.

Impact assessments and data

A key concern for states and territories was the accessibility and sharing of early, reliable and accurate data during disasters. Improved data sharing, and more consistent use of systems and tools, would be beneficial for disaster management. In the recovery sphere, delegates agreed that a lack of access to insurance assessors in impacted areas is a major concern.

Communications and connectivity

States and territories recognised that disaster communication needs to be targeted, tailored, and based on the needs of individual communities. To reduce the likelihood of warning fatigue, and manage expectations, communications should be coordinated, consistent and distributed from a single source of truth.

Supply chains

In the event of a single or multiple catastrophic events during the 2023–24 HRWS, supply chains are expected to be put under strain. Particular areas of concern would be the transport of essential supplies, fuel, building supplies and food, with remote and isolated communities under the most strain. States and territories suggested that further coordination with industry partners and their commercial capabilities would ease pressure on supply chains.

Resource management and gaps

Jurisdictions identified several capability and capacity gaps during consecutive and compounding weather-based disasters. These include shortages in mortuary and healthcare services (including staffing), temporary accommodation, electricity services and aviation support; mental health was also seen as a key challenge to be considered. Delegates suggested that increased engagement with the NFP and private sectors may alleviate some of these stresses.

Learning from previous HRWS

NEMA's HRWS Preparedness Program allows NEMA to gather insights that assist in guiding its strategic objectives and programs.

NEMA is currently working on a range of key national initiatives, in partnership with states, territories, local governments and industry, which have been developed in part through insights from previous HRWSs. Below are a list of 2023–24 NEMA initiatives.

Implementing the National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework

A how to guide for governments and recovery partners to consistently support Australians' mental health and wellbeing before, during and after disasters.

Administering the Disaster Ready Fund

An enduring fund to provide all levels of government and affected stakeholders the certainty they need to plan for robust investments in resilience projects to reduce the impacts of disasters.

Preparing Australian Communities Program – Local Stream

Provides support to locally identified and led projects that improve the resilience of Australian communities against natural hazards.

Hazards Insurance Partnership

Brings together representatives of the Australian Government and insurance sector to address issues at the intersection of hazard risk and insurance. The program informs effective and evidence-based activity and investment, with a view to influencing insurance availability, coverage and affordability.

Embedding NEMA across the emergency management continuum

A single, enduring, end-to-end agency to better respond to emergencies, help communities recover, and prepare Australia for future disasters.

Commissioning a DRFA independent review

An independent review into the DRFA to understand how all levels of government can streamline efforts to provide timely financial support to Australian communities during and following disasters.

Launching the inaugural HRWS National Preparedness Summit

Brings key emergency management stakeholders together to understand short, medium and long-term risks, current and future policies, capabilities and programs as well as national preparedness for the 2023–24 HRWS.

Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) & Australian Warning System (AWS) – National Messaging System and Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB)

Enables governments to deliver more targeted and rapid emergency warnings. Provide an Inter-Governmental Agreement and planning for a National PSMB entity.

Understanding national non-Defence surge response capacity

Optimises our national capabilities within the Australian Government, states, territories, private sector and NFPs.

Improving national coordination

Improve national coordination through capabilities such as the NSR, National Joint Common Operating Picture, and NCM.

National Emergency Management Stockpile (NEMS)

NEMS enables the Australian Government to provide disaster response and relief resources for rapid deployment across Australia, augmenting state and territory capabilities, when their capabilities have been fully committed in response to severe and catastrophic disasters.

Existing Government capabilities

"'Whole-of-nation' effort and cooperation is necessary to make Australia more resilient to natural disasters. This calls for action, not only by governments and individuals, but also by industry, businesses, charities, volunteers, the media, community groups and others."

– Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements 2020

NEMA leads the Australian Government policy approach to disaster response and recovery. In alignment with these policies, NEMA delivers a range of national initiatives and capabilities, which have been identified and developed through avenues such as the Summit, and in collaboration with state and territory governments, industry and other NFPs.

Many of NEMA's programs and initiatives closely align with priorities and recommendations identified by the *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*.

National Coordination Mechanism
Royal Commission Chapter 3: National coordination arrangements
Royal Commission Chapter 4: Supporting better decisions
Royal Commission Chapter 6: National emergency response capability

The NCM is at the centre of the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework as a whole-of-government all-hazards capability.

The NCM facilitates shared situational awareness and rapid problem definition, while defining lines of effort and establishing ownership of solutions to stabilise issues of concern.

The NCM is available to all states and territories, as well as industry and NFP stakeholders and has effectively supported consequence management at all stages of the disaster management continuum, including preparedness, response and recovery.

National Situation Room and NJCOP
Royal Commission Chapter 6: National emergency response capability

The NSR provides 24/7 crisis management information and whole-of-government coordination capabilities and supports NEMA in leading coordination efforts across states and territories, private sector and industry.

The National Disaster Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework
Royal Commission Chapter 15: Health

A how-to guide for governments and recovery partners to consistently support Australians' mental health and wellbeing before, during and after disasters.

Non-Defence Capabilities
Royal Commission Chapter 6: National emergency response capability
Royal Commission Chapter 7: Role of the Australian Defence Force
Royal Commission Chapter 8: National aerial firefighting capabilities and arrangements

The **NEMS** will include:

- Emergency shelters
- High-output power generators
- Water purification / desalination units

The **National Aerial Firefighting Fleet** contracts approximately 150 aircraft on behalf of state and territory governments, with a mix of Australian and foreign-owned aircraft.

Disaster Relief Australia strengthens the capacity and capability of the nation's volunteer base.

National Emergency Declaration (NED) Act 2020
Royal Commission Chapter 5: Declaration of National Emergency

The NED enables the Australian Government to use a number of emergency powers to respond quickly and efficiently to an emergency.

The NED has the power to remove procedural 'red tape' requirements (for example, requirement for individuals to provide ID and/or sign a document to access Australian Government support) where it would be of benefit to the public to support response and recovery from the emergency.

The NED also signals the severity of a disaster to the community, and acts as a marshalling call for the facilitation of coordination between the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

Requesting Australian Government Assistance
Royal Commission Chapter 3: National coordination arrangements

The Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN) authorises the provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance to requesting Australian states and territories in an emergency or disaster.

Coordination and Planning Officers
Royal Commission Chapter 6: National emergency response capability

Coordination and Planning Officers (CPOs) work in partnership with states and territories to support disaster-affected communities to collectively build resilience, reduce risk and harm, and effectively respond to and recover from disasters. They are also an important liaison between state and territory agencies and Australian Government departments.

Post-Summit HRWS preparedness activities

The HRWS National Preparedness Summit is the flagship event of NEMA's 2023–24 HRWS Preparedness Program. However, there are also a range of other NEMA initiatives that support and inform HRWS preparedness across Australia.

- **National HRWS Preparedness Program**

The HRWS National Preparedness Summit was a launch pad for the National HRWS Preparedness Program. After the Summit, NEMA held key leadership briefings with state and territories, and sector specific briefings with Australian Government agencies, key industry and NFPs, via the NCM. Briefings provided an overview of the seasonal outlook, and how the Australian Government is positioning to support state and territory emergency services, and communities during the HRWS.

- **Post-Summit NCM**

A post-Summit NCM was convened by NEMA to bring together Australian Government agencies that attended the Summit. The purpose of the NCM was to review the themes identified at the Summit, and ensure action ahead of the onset of the HRWS. NEMA aims to maintain the momentum attained at the Summit, and address any insights that have emerged.

- **HRWS National Preparedness Summit Report and Dashboards**

This report, and the Summit dashboards, are key tools designed to improve Australia's response and recovery efforts during the HRWS. The insights obtained from the Summit and reported here will inform NEMA's efforts over the upcoming HRWS and will guide future iterations of the Summit.

- **Crisis Coordination Team Lessons function**

NEMA is already looking ahead to next year's Summit. During operational responses, NEMA will embed a Lessons function within the Crisis Coordination Teams (CCTs) established this season. The Lessons team will collect observations on the functioning of the CCT from its members to understand how NEMA's operations can improve when responding to crises. Lessons identified will inform the development and key themes of the 2024–25 HRWS National Preparedness Program.

- **DRFA Roadshow**

To improve awareness and evaluation of DRFA programs, NEMA has embarked on a DRFA Roadshow. This will help to enhance local governments' understanding of DRFA – the primary national funding arrangement supporting recovery efforts following a disaster – and to confirm that payment programs are targeted to community requirements. Additionally, the Roadshow will provide local governments with information on funding they can access to ensure that communities are supported as best as possible.

Appendix One –
List of delegate organisations

ACT Ambulance Service
ACT Emergency Services Agency
ACT Fire & Rescue
ACT Policing
ACT Rural Fire Service
ACT State Emergency Service
AGL Energy
Aldi
Amazon Web Services
Ambulance Victoria
Anglicare
Australasian Fire and Emergency Services
Authorities Council
Australasian Railway Association
Australian Banking Association
Australian Beverages Council
Australian Border Force
Australian Building Codes Board
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Australian Business Volunteers
Australian Civil Military Centre
Australian Energy Market Operator
Australian Food & Grocery Council
Australian Local Government Association
Australian Logistics Council
Australian Maritime Safety Authority
Australian Mobile Telecommunications
Association
Australian Red Cross
Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation
Australian Taxation Office
Bureau of Meteorology
Bush Heritage Australia
Bushfires NT
Business Council of Australia
Centre for Disability Research & Policy
Coles Group
Commonwealth Bank
Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research
Organisation
Country Fire Authority Victoria
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the
Environment and Water
Department of Defence
Department of Education
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate
Action - Vic
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing -
Vic
Department of Finance
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Department of Health - Vic
Department of Health and Aged Care
Department of Home Affairs
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
Development, Communications and the Arts
Department of Social Services
Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet - NT
Department of the Premier and Cabinet - NSW
Department of the Premier and Cabinet - Qld
Department of the Premier and Cabinet - SA
Department of the Premier and Cabinet -
Tasmania
Department of the Premier and Cabinet - WA
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Department of the Treasury
Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts -
Qld
Disaster Relief Australia
DP World Australia
Emergency Management Victoria
Emergency Recovery Victoria
Energy Networks Australia
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of
Australia
Fire and Rescue NSW
Fire Rescue Victoria
Foodbank
Forestry Australia
Geoscience Australia
GIVIT
IAG
Icon Water

Insurance Council of Australia
Justice & Community Safety Directorate - ACT
K&S Group
Lifeline
Linfox
Local Government Association - NSW
Local Government Association - NT
Local Government Association - Qld
Local Government Association - Vic
Local Government Association - WA
Luscombe Solutions
Minderoo
Monash University
Municipal Associations of Victoria
National Disability Insurance Agency
National Emergency Management Agency - AUS
National Emergency Management Agency - NZ
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
National Indigenous Australians Agency
Natural Hazards Research Australia
NBNCO
NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
NEXTDC
NSW Ambulance Service
NSW Police Service
NSW Reconstruction Authority
NSW Rural Fire Service
NSW State Emergency Services
NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services
Office of Senator Tony Sheldon
Office of the Cross-Border Commissioner
Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management - Qld
OneFortyOne
Optus
Origin Energy
Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance, the Pacific Community
People with Disability Australia

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Queensland Police
Queensland Reconstruction Authority
Queensland Water
RACQ
Rural Aid
SA Ambulance Service
SA Country Fire Service
SA Fire and Emergency Services Commission
SA Health
SA Metropolitan Fire Service
SA Police
SA State Emergency Service
Salvation Army
SEQ Water
Services Australia
St John Ambulance
St Vincent de Paul Society
Sunshine Coast Council
SunWater
Sydney Water
Tasmania Ambulance Service
Tasmania Fire Service
Tasmania State Emergency Service
Team Global Express
Telstra
The University of Sydney
Toll Group
TPG Telecom
University of Queensland
Urban Utilities
Victoria Police
Victoria State Emergency Service
Volunteering Australia
WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services
WA Health
WA Police
Waveconn
Westpac