



**Australian Government**

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# COMDISPLAN 2020

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT  
DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN

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## AUTHORITY

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The Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN) is the plan for the provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance to Australian states and territories in an emergency or disaster. The Minister responsible for emergency management must authorise approval for the provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance.

COMDISPLAN 2020 derives its authority from the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF). The AGCMF outlines the arrangements enabling the Australian Government's 'all hazards' crisis management approach. This approach is a continuum of: prevention; preparedness; response; and recovery. COMDISPLAN specifically addresses response.

Director General  
Emergency Management Australia

## AMENDMENTS

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Recommendations for amendments or suggestions for improvement may be forwarded to:

Director General  
Emergency Management Australia  
Department of Home Affairs  
PO Box 25  
Belconnen ACT 2616

## VERSION DETAIL

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In December 2020 COMDISPLAN underwent an administrative review to incorporate the recommendations from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. COMDISPLAN 2020 supersedes all previous versions and was endorsed by DGEMA on 16 December 2020.

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### 1.1. AIM

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- 1.1.1. COMDISPLAN outlines the coordination arrangements for the provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance in the event of a disaster or emergency within Australia or its offshore territories.

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### 1.2. SCOPE

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- 1.2.1. The term 'non-financial assistance' refers, but is not limited to: planning expertise, provision of mapping services, counselling, advice, management of external resources and physical assistance. Annex A provides an overview of capabilities that Australian Government agencies can typically provide.
- 1.2.2. Under COMDISPLAN an affected jurisdiction encompasses mainland Australian states and territories and the offshore territories of: Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Australian Antarctic Territory, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Coral Sea Islands, Heard and McDonald Islands and Norfolk Island.

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### 1.3. BACKGROUND

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- 1.3.1. Australian state and territory governments have responsibility for coordinating and planning for the response to and recovery from a disaster within their borders. When the total resources (government, community and commercial) of an affected jurisdiction cannot reasonably cope with the needs of the situation, the nominated official can seek non-financial assistance from the Australian Government under COMDISPLAN. The Australian Government accepts responsibility and prepares plans for providing Australian Government non-financial assistance in response to such requests.
- 1.3.2. Emergency Management Australia (EMA), through the Australian Government Crisis Coordination Centre (CCC), continuously monitors and informs stakeholders on situations that may affect Australian jurisdictions.
- 1.3.3. In line with standing plans and arrangements the CCC develops whole of Australian Government response options for disasters or emergencies within Australian jurisdictions.

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## 1.4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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- 1.4.1. COMDISPLAN may be used for the provision of approved Australian Government non-financial assistance.
- 1.4.2. COMDISPLAN can be activated for any disaster or emergency regardless of the cause.
- 1.4.3. COMDISPLAN acknowledges and complements existing agreements (such as bilateral arrangements) between jurisdictions, and in some instances international agencies.
- 1.4.4. In some circumstances, locally based Australian Government resources may be deployed in support of local authorities for limited periods without the need to activate COMDISPLAN. This may include the provision of Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) category one, which is activated for a set period of time under local arrangements.
- 1.4.5. Contingency planning prior to a formal request for Australian Government non-financial assistance is undertaken in the 'STANDBY' phase of COMDISPLAN.
- 1.4.6. For a jurisdiction to make a request under COMDISPLAN, one of the following criteria must be met:
  - All government, community and commercial resources are exhausted or are likely to be exhausted
  - The jurisdiction is unable to mobilise its own resources (or community and commercial resources) in time
  - The Australian Government has a capability that the state or territory does not have.
- 1.4.7. The Australian Government will assess all requests for assistance and where approved will provide non-financial assistance.

## SECTION 2 - RESPONSE

### 2.1. AUTHORITY TO REQUEST

- 2.1.1. The authority to request Australian Government non-financial assistance under COMDISPLAN is vested in one nominated official in each jurisdiction. In their absence, the officer performing their role holds this delegation.
- 2.1.2. The nominated jurisdiction official/s pass requests for Australian Government non-financial assistance to EMA for consideration by DGEMA. Following receipt of Ministerial approval for the provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance for a particular disaster, DGEMA is authorised to request any appropriate agency to undertake the task. These nominated officials are:

<b>JURISDICTION</b>	<b>NOMINATED OFFICIAL</b>
New South Wales	State Emergency Operations Controller
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emergency Management Commissioner - Victoria and</li><li>• Chief Commissioner of Police</li></ul>
Queensland	Executive Officer Queensland Disaster Management Committee
South Australia	State Coordinator
Western Australia	Chair of the State Emergency Coordination Group
Tasmania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Executive Officer, State Emergency Management Committee and</li><li>• State Controller</li></ul>
Northern Territory	Executive Officer, Northern Territory Emergency Management Council
Australian Capital Territory	Chair of the Security and Emergency Management Senior Officials Group
Norfolk Island	Chair of the Norfolk Island Emergency Management Committee
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	The Territory Controller, Cocos (Keeling) Islands
Christmas Island	The Territory Controller, Christmas Island
Jervis Bay	The Territory Controller, Jervis Bay

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## 2.2. RESPONSE PHASES AND ACTIVITIES

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2.2.1 COMDISPLAN consists of three phases:

- STANDBY
- ACTIVATED
- DEACTIVATED.

**COMDISPLAN is maintained in the STANDBY phase as the default status.**

### 2.2.2 **STANDBY**

Under STANDBY the following activities are undertaken:

- Monitoring of potential situations
- Planning for potential response
- Training and exercising.

### 2.2.3 **ACTIVATED**

Where an event/disaster is imminent, or has occurred, DGEMA activates COMDISPLAN in line with Section 2.3.

Under ACTIVATED the following activities are undertaken:

- The CCC advises appropriate stakeholders via email that COMDISPLAN has been ACTIVATED
- A CCC Crisis Coordination Team may be stood up
- Request/s for assistance received by the Australian Government are approved by the Minister responsible for emergency management
- The CCC provides task requests to the Australian Government agency providing the assistance
- Jurisdictions/agencies in conjunction with the CCC will cooperatively undertake approved tasks
- Jurisdiction/agency situation updates are provided to the CCC on an agreed basis
- The CCC provides stakeholders with regular situational awareness.

### 2.2.4 **DEACTIVATED**

Once an event has concluded, DGEMA deactivates COMDISPLAN.

Under DEACTIVATED the following activities are undertaken:

- No further requests for Australian Government non-financial assistance are expected
- Resources are returned to the parent agent
- No further actions are expected
- CCC advises stakeholders via email of COMDISPLAN DEACTIVATION.

**COMDISPLAN reverts to STANDBY phase as the default condition upon completion of DEACTIVATION phase.**

## 2.3. FLOW OF EVENTS - REQUEST FOR NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The following points show a typical activation of COMDISPLAN:

1. An event/disaster occurs, or is imminent.
2. Due to the nature, magnitude or duration of the event
  - all government, community and commercial resources are exhausted or are likely to be exhausted; or
  - the jurisdiction is unable to mobilise its own resources (or community and commercial resources) in time; or
  - the Australian Government has a capability that the state or territory does not have.
3. The nominated official advises the CCC of the intention to request Australian Government non-financial assistance under COMDISPLAN.
4. The DGEMA activates COMDISPLAN.
5. The jurisdiction forwards a signed request for Australian Government non-financial assistance to the CCC.
6. The CCC engages with appropriate agencies that can action the task request.
7. The DGEMA seeks approval of the task request from the Minister responsible for emergency management.
8. Once Ministerial approval is gained, the CCC advises the jurisdiction that the task request has been approved.
9. The CCC forwards the task request to appropriate agency for action.
10. The tasked agency advises the CCC of acceptance of the task request and advises actions and timeline.
11. The CCC advises the jurisdiction of tasked agency acceptance of the task request and advises actions and timeline.
12. The tasked agency provides regular updates to the CCC and relevant jurisdictions on the status of the task request.
13. The CCC regularly briefs Australian Government agencies and involved jurisdiction(s) on the status of task request.
14. The tasked agency briefs the CCC on the completion of task request.
15. The CCC advises jurisdictions and Australian Government stakeholders on completion of the task request.
16. The CCC advises the DGEMA of completion of all task requests and advises DGEMA to deactivate COMDISPLAN.
17. The DGEMA approves the deactivation of COMDISPLAN.



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## 2.4. MANAGEMENT OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

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- 2.4.1. The deployed Australian Government resources remain the responsibility of the parent agency. The CCC will facilitate liaison and working arrangements with the requesting jurisdiction.
- 2.4.2. In certain circumstances, under the direction of the DGEMA, the CCC may request the pre-positioning of Australian Government resources in advance of a disaster impact or a formal request for assistance to reduce response time.

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## 2.5. LIAISON OFFICERS

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- 2.5.1. Prior to or during an event the jurisdiction may request, or the CCC may offer, to deploy an EMA Liaison Officers (EMALOs) to the jurisdiction to assist in the coordination of Australian Government non-financial assistance.
- 2.5.2. Prior to or during an event the CCC may request liaison officers from Australian Government agencies and/or jurisdictions to be deployed to the CCC to assist in the coordination of Australian Government non-financial assistance.

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## 2.6. COMMUNICATIONS

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- 2.6.1. While initial contact and liaison on matters relating to COMDISPLAN may be made by telephone, the primary means of communication between the CCC and stakeholders will be by email. Alternative communication arrangements will be coordinated by the CCC as the situation demands. All telephone requests are to be confirmed by email as soon as possible.
- 2.6.2. Ongoing communications between the CCC and relevant agencies should be supported by the provision of regular situation reports.
- 2.6.3. It is the responsibility of agencies to provide the CCC with appropriate contact details and to arrange internal distribution messages. All correspondence related to requests for non-financial assistance is documented by the CCC.

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## 2.7. AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT MEDIA AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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- 2.7.1. Australian Government media releases, or interaction with media, about the activation status of COMDISPLAN, and the provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance, will be made by the Minister responsible for emergency management, their delegate or DGEMA. Australian Government agencies drafting media releases relating to assistance provided in response to a COMDISPLAN task must copy the release to Department of Home Affairs Media and the CCC.

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## SECTION 3 - OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE

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### 3.1. DOMESTIC

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- 3.1.1. If the CCC receives offers of domestic assistance the CCC will record relevant information and forward these offers to the appropriate jurisdiction or agency for consideration.

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### 3.2. INTERNATIONAL

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- 3.2.1. During an event where international non-financial assistance is provided the CCC will adhere to the Arrangements for International Reception.

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### 3.3. REQUESTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

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- 3.3.1. Where resources to meet a particular need are not available in Australia, the CCC in consultation with the affected jurisdiction, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) will seek international assistance as necessary through the appropriate channels.
- 3.3.2. The CCC will coordinate the movement of non-financial assistance to the affected jurisdiction in line with the Arrangements for International Reception.

### 4.1. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

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- 4.1.1. The Australian Government does not normally seek financial reimbursement from jurisdictions for assistance provided under COMDISPLAN. However, when Australian Government assistance is provided for tasks not directly related to the safety of life and property, or that could be handled by jurisdictional resources (e.g. clean-up teams), the Australian Government may seek reimbursement from the affected jurisdiction.
- 4.1.2. Unless the Task Request to the agency clearly states that costs are recoverable, costs incurred to fulfil the request will be absorbed by that agency. Where Australian Government agency resources are inadequate, because of insufficient funds or lack of a suitable appropriation item on which to call, no financial commitments can be entered into or expenditure incurred unless authorised by PM&C, in accordance with the current version of the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF).
- 4.1.3. Where an agency is tasked to provide a response capability, the criteria for cost recovery will be clearly defined within the formal Task Request. Any ambiguity relating to reimbursement should be clarified prior to the acceptance of the tasking.

## SECTION 5 - ANNEXES

### 5.1. ANNEX A – CAPABILITIES OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Agency	Resource
<b>Airservices Australia</b>	Airservices provides Australian aviation traffic management including air traffic control and aeronautical information services. This includes aviation navigation and communication services and an extensive national footprint and communications network, including terrestrial resources and digital radio communications. Airservices also provides Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting services at major airports.
<b>Attorney-General's Department (AGD)</b>	AGD can provide interpretation of legal documentation and matters, and provide legal advice through the Office of Corporate Counsel, Office of International Law and the Australian Government Solicitor.
<b>Australian Border Force (ABF)</b>	ABF provides maritime and aviation search and surveillance support to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority as requested and within Maritime Border Command operational capabilities, and border facilitation of international assistance (resources and equipment). The 24/7 Australian Border Operations Centre in Canberra can expedite entry of overseas personnel and equipment, if required.
<b>Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)</b>	ABS provides population and other statistical and reference information.
<b>Australian Competition &amp; Consumer Commission (ACCC)</b>	ACCC provides a video conferencing network covering state capitals and Townsville and is the statutory authority responsible for ensuring compliance with the <i>Trade Practices Act</i> (1974).
<b>Australian Federal Police (AFP)</b>	AFP coordinates the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) capability as per the Australian DVI Activation and Response Plan. AFP also provides general and or specialist policing assistance as agreed through the memorandum of understanding that exists between the signatories of the Police Assistance in Neighbouring States/Territories in Australia.
<b>Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)</b>	AMSA maintains a 24/7 Rescue Coordination Centre with an aviation and maritime communication capability and picture for search and rescue planning and response. This includes air drop capability over land and sea and Distress Beacon locating over land, sea, ice and air. AMSA also provides marine pollution identification, monitoring and dispersal, maritime ship casualty response and emergency towage and the promulgation of Maritime Safety Information.
<b>Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)</b>	ARPANSA is postured 24/7 to provide specialist technical advice and operational field support if requested to assist during a nuclear or radiological incident. This includes operational planning support, deployment of technical assets and the provision of geospatial products across all elements of the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery phases of an event. ARPANSA is the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)-designated national authority for radiation emergencies both domestic and overseas.
<b>Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB)</b>	ATSB provides advice on transport safety matters including, but not limited to, occupational health and safety and site security aspects of transport accident sites.

<b>Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)</b>	CASA can provide advice on aviation safety regulatory matters, implement safety-related actions in accordance with CASA's functions (eg: establishing a temporary restricted area to limit/control aviation activity in the interests of public safety, as required), provide technical advice and support to other agencies (including on the safe transport and carriage of dangerous goods by air), grant permission for the air transport of dangerous goods not usually permitted for carriage by air, and approve the use of foreign registered aircraft in Australia.
<b>Department of Agriculture</b>	Agriculture provides advice and expertise on biosecurity, animal health and welfare, epidemiology, plant pests and diseases, introduced marine pests, food residues, pesticide use and response, native animal and pest animal issues. The Department can support linkages with state agricultural departments.
<b>Department of Defence</b>	Defence has a range of military capabilities that may be called upon to provide assistance to the civil community in emergency situations, as required and as appropriate. In seeking assistance from Defence, the most effective method is to define or outline the outcome or result required (the effect to be achieved) rather than seek assistance of a specific capability. By defining the desired outcome, Defence can consider a broader range of available capabilities and can assign the most suitable and available assets to achieve the required result. Capabilities may include: logistics support including airlift (fixed and rotary wing aircraft), sealift, land transport, engineering and medical support, temporary accommodation, imagery, and communications.
<b>Department of Finance</b>	Finance is responsible for Government financial accountability, governance and financial management frameworks, procurement policy, and fostering the efficient and effective use of information and communications technologies by the Australian Government.
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)</b>	DFAT coordinates international offers of assistance, including liaison with foreign governments. DFAT also provides reverse consular assistance to foreign missions whose nationals are affected and disseminates accurate and timely information to foreign governments about a crisis internationally, through Australian missions abroad.
<b>Department of Health</b>	<p>Health develops and maintains national health emergency plans, including environmental health, communicable disease, mass casualty and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear incident management.</p> <p>Health's tasks and capabilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring emerging communicable disease issues and outbreaks.</li> <li>• Providing specialist technical advice and expertise, such as epidemiological information, advice on infection control measures, provision of medical specialists through the AUSMAT system</li> <li>• Coordinating multi-jurisdictional public health response measures</li> <li>• Managing implementation of human biosecurity and border health measures</li> <li>• Supporting communication with health sector partners and stakeholders, including activation of the National Health Emergency Media Response Network</li> <li>• Collaborating with the Australian Medical Transport Coordination Group</li> <li>• Meeting international health reporting obligations, particularly the International Health Regulations</li> <li>• Managing the National Medical Stockpile and coordinating the deployment of items, and</li> <li>• Providing information of the location and number of care recipients in aged care facilities and likely vacancies in the event of an evacuation or relocation.</li> </ul>

<b>Department of Home Affairs</b>	<p>Emergency Management Australia (EMA) is a division within Home Affairs which coordinates the provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance to Australian jurisdictions under COMDISPLAN. EMA maintains 24/7 all-hazards situational awareness and monitoring through the Australian Government Crisis Coordination Centre (CCC). Home Affairs is also responsible for maintaining the nation's security and has capabilities that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing advice on transport security matters, assessing airport curfew dispensation requests, processing aviation cabotage requests and assisting in facilitating additional commercial airline resources or access to airports</li> <li>• Sourcing of translation and interpretation services</li> <li>• Providing liaison and advice relating to ethnic communities and the replacement of immigration documentation to clients.</li> </ul>
<b>Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</b>	<p>The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications is responsible for policy advice and regulatory frameworks relating to the telecommunications, broadcasting and postal sectors; including spectrum allocation and the National Triple Zero Emergency Call Service. The national broadcasters (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and SBS) provide emergency broadcasts.</p>
<b>Department of Social Services (DSS)</b>	<p>DSS can provide advice on available programs to support adversely affected people, families or communities, and works closely with Services Australia on the delivery of payments. Some of the DSS programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Relief Services - provides support to address the immediate needs in a time of crisis e.g food vouchers and parcels, clothing, transport</li> <li>• Family Support Program - provides funding to non-government organisations to support families, particularly those who are vulnerable or living in disadvantaged communities, and</li> <li>• Humanitarian Settlement Services - provides accommodation and case management services to newly arrived refugees and migrants.</li> </ul>
<b>Geoscience Australia</b>	<p>Geoscience Australia can coordinate access to various satellite imagery, including detailed high-resolution imagery of impacted areas through the International Charter for Space and Major Disasters. This includes access to fundamental national mapping capabilities and historical datasets as well as detailed demographic reports (including structural, social and economic characteristics) to support recovery efforts and provide contextual information to jurisdictions regarding an impacted area.</p>
<b>Services Australia</b>	<p>Services Australia coordinates the provision of the National Emergency Call Centre Surge Capability (NECCSC) to assist states and territories and other Government agencies as agreed through NECCSC agreements. Services Australia provides surge assistance in the form of service officers; social workers and other health and allied health professionals; mobile IT capability and support; mobile service centres; and live and interactive webcasting capability. (Note that arrangements involving the agency are subject to the Secretary, or a delegated officer, authorising staff and/or resources to be in the field for a particular event).</p>

5.2. ANNEX B – REQUEST FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Requests for Australian Government non-financial assistance may be phoned to EMA in the first instance, but must be confirmed by email from the nominated official. The format for requests is as follows:

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Event and nature of request being made.
<b>DATE:</b>	This must include the date and local time of the request.
<b>REQUEST ID:</b>	This should be a jurisdiction number that can be used for reference (EMA will allocate separate sequential numbers to each incoming request).
<b>SITUATION:</b>	A brief summary of the reason for the request.
<b>OWN RESOURCES:</b>	An explanation as to why the requirement cannot be met from within the jurisdiction's existing resources (local, government, commercial or other).
<b>PRIORITY:</b>	Start date and duration of request.
<b>DELIVERY LOCATION:</b>	Details of where the assistance is required.
<b>TASK DESCRIPTION:</b>	A brief description of the need and effect required.  Requesting authorities should NOT specify the means for meeting the effect but should identify constraints that may influence EMA's decision (e.g. landing area unsuitable for all but rotary wing aircraft).
<b>CONTACT NAME &amp; DETAILS:</b>	Full details of delivery point contact officer/s including name, location and telephone number as appropriate.
<b>APPROVED BY JURISDICTIONAL NOMINATED OFFICIAL:</b>	Name, title, contact details and signature.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>	Any general comments that may contribute to providing the fastest and most effective response to the request.

**REQUEST FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT  
NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**SUBJECT:**

**DATE:**

**REQUEST ID:**

**SITUATION:**

**OWN RESOURCES:**

**PRIORITY:**

**DELIVERY LOCATION:**

**TASK DESCRIPTION:**

**CONTACT NAME & DETAILS:**

**APPROVED BY NOMINATED JURISDICTIONAL OFFICIAL:**

**COMMENTS:**