



## Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response

Please find below submission from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) in response to the correspondence dated Thursday 10 August 2023 and the “*Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response*” discussion paper as provided.

It is well understood that, as climate change makes future crises increasingly complex, consecutive and cascading across a broad spectrum of hazards, a whole-of-society effort is required to build national capability and resilience, whilst enhancing the Commonwealth’s ability to support States and Territories as primary first responders.

In answer to the questions posed in the discussion paper:

### **Acknowledging the primary role of state and territories in emergency response, what longer-term capacities and capabilities does the Commonwealth need to develop to meet the challenges of the evolving strategic environment?**

Commonwealth arrangements through the Commonwealth Disaster Plan (COMDISPLAN) should be enhanced to provide an increased level of support to states and territories. Potentially including:

- Consistency in Incident Management capability (i.e., all hazard, all agency) to ensure ease of mobility in support of potentially larger and more protracted state responses.
- Identify other commonwealth agencies such as Australian Border Force, Biosecurity, Health, Transport to supplement capabilities previously provided by the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

### **At a national level, what are likely to be the key pressure points or challenges for the Commonwealth responding to competing and concurrent crises?**

The biggest pressure point of competing/concurrent crises is likely to be insufficient resources to mobilise in support of the response. Outside of the ADF other agencies are not resourced or equipped to support incident response to events of national significance.

### **How could the Commonwealth build community resilience and capability, so they are better able to respond to and recover from national-level crises?**

A greater focus on highly integrated (all hazard, all agency) community awareness programs across states and territories to ensure communities understand their role in Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PPRR) and a stronger push towards true resilience and less reliance upon agencies.

### **What changes in the current system are necessary to help Australia have the right capabilities and capacity to handle concurrent crises?**

Increased access to resources by increasing state agency budgets and volunteer base (which also increases community resilience). Increase attraction, engagement, and retention of volunteers through incentives such as meaningful tax concessions for individuals and businesses, increase volunteer leave from employers, increased funding for volunteer training and retention in combination with a decrease in Vocational Education and Training (VET) requirements.

**What models could the Commonwealth explore to replace or supplement support currently provided by the ADF during domestic crisis?**

- **What does the right mix of Commonwealth capabilities look like? – How could a Commonwealth workforce surge capacity be replicated in a scalable, efficient and effective way?**

Undertake large scale research and analysis of current capabilities versus future requirements to better inform agencies of what they will need to look like, budget for and build into the future.

Increase level of funding for state agencies to attract additional volunteer workforce, acquire equipment and build capability to replace that currently sought from ADF. Consistency of training and increased mobility of Commonwealth workforce to act as surge support in State led responses.

- **How could we harness the critical role of volunteers and civilian groups under this model?**

National volunteer legislation to support volunteer incentives including those listed above; tax concessions for individuals and businesses, increase volunteer leave from employers, increased funding for volunteer training and retention, decreased VET requirements.

- **How do these models supplement, but not replicate, existing models operating at a state and territory and local level?**

In order to support state/territory/local systems do not replicate capabilities but strengthen support to states to build their capacity and capability.

- **What role could industry / the private sector play? How can the Government attract increased investment in emergency management from the private sector?**

Tax incentives and providing access to training such as IMT for private sector/industry so that employees can be made transferable during a crisis.

- **What gaps currently exist in state and territory emergency management capability?**

Different state capabilities and systems and lack of big picture of the emergency management environment.

**Are there sectors that could replicate the capabilities provided by the ADF?**

Yes, however funding is required to engage the agencies/private/industry to fulfill these roles. Different states have different capabilities and standards which are not necessarily directly transferrable across borders.

**What are the critical functions the Commonwealth Government should continue to perform in disaster relief and recovery, in support of local, state and territory governments?**

Functions as per COMDISPLAN as this is currently effective.

**What legislative, regulatory or policy changes could be undertaken to make it financially viable for other sectors to contribute to a Commonwealth crisis response capability?**

Tax incentives, reduce VET requirements, increase volunteer leave from employers, consistency in legislation across states to increase modality/transferability.