

20 September 2023



bai communications

NationalResilience.Consultation@homeaffairs.gov.au

Dear Madam / Sir,

Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response

BAI Communications Australia (BAI) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper.

BAI owns and operates an extensive broadcast transmission network, delivering terrestrial television and radio (including ABC, SBS and SCA television and radio services) to approximately 99 per cent of the Australian population. BAI is therefore deeply experienced in providing highly reliable wireless services across Australia's vast geography to a dispersed population.

Within the Public Safety space, BAI has been the operations and maintenance provider for the NSW Telco Authority's Public Safety Network (PSN) since 2013.

BAI is a contributor to the Commonwealth's Trusted Information Sharing Network through representation on both the Communications and Space Sector Groups. As part of the recent updates to the Security of Critical Infrastructure legislation, BAI's broadcast network has been defined as Critical Infrastructure.

During the 2019/2020 bushfires, the impact on BAI infrastructure was small compared to other communications infrastructure providers. However, one site near Batemans Bay on the NSW South Coast (Mt Wandera) was significantly impacted. On this occasion, the ADF were brought in to assist the SES and RFS. The role of the ADF was to assist with clearing of trees from roads and fire impacted trees near the site which were at risk of falling and further damaging the infrastructure.

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In the Lismore floods of 2022, the BAI site at Mt Nardi, approximately 30 km north of Lismore, lost mains power and the road to site was blocked by multiple landslides. The on-site generator and fuel storage allowed the site to continue to provide telecommunications, PSN, television and radio services to the Lismore community although some non-essential services were reduced in power and switched off at night to reduce the fuel consumption and extend the site's autonomy. Requests were made for aerial support to provide additional fuel to the site, however, the ADF were not able to support this requirement. Once the road was partially cleared by the council, additional fuel was delivered to site by road to extend the site's autonomy prior to mains power being restored.

During these crises BAI did not, and does not foresee the need to, rely on ADF staff for specialist technical communications skills. BAI has been able to both rest teams prior to expected high risk disaster seasons and redeploy skilled staff from other locations across the country.

In summary, BAI sees the most important need for Federal support of the communications sector in times of emergency as providing secure road access to sites (clearing / remaking roads and providing escorts) and assisting with making the sites secure or mitigating any additional risks post incident through the removal of local hazards such as fire impacted trees.

Kind Regards,



Stephen Farrugia

CTO