

Submission to:
Department of Home Affairs
National Resilience Consultation

Alternate Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response



Without training, they lacked knowledge.
Without knowledge, they lacked confidence.
Without confidence, they lacked victory.

Gaius Julius Caesar

Christopher J Ainsworth
MBA CEM Fulbright Alumnus
Ver 1.0 20 September 2023

The Senate
Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Subject: Alternate Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response

I welcome the opportunity to submit a response to the Department of Home Affairs and NEMA.


I am a passionate emergency management practitioner who has been involved in Public Safety education across vocational and higher education, industry engagement for more than two decades. Drawing from the experiences as a 2001 Flexible Learning Leader, 2008 Fulbright Scholar, first responder volunteer, educator and practitioner, the focus has been on the development of "the next generation of emergency managers".

I am the writer and sole developer, consulting with a wide range of experienced and professional operatives who have contributed to a range of Public Safety Emergency Management and Community Safety qualifications for Swinburne University (2005), Australian College of Community Safety (2009) and Central Queensland University (2017) including facilitation of these programs within each institution.

Contributions to the sector include extensive involvement in reviewing and updating several Public Safety Emergency Management qualifications including international research and benchmarking of vocational Emergency Management and Recovery Management qualifications.

I have continued to work in the sector with a focus on "the next generation of emergency managers" as these emerging practitioners provided with sound professional development opportunities will ensure the safety of our community for the decades to come.

Sincerely,



Christopher J Ainsworth MBA CEM Fulbright Alumnus



20 September 2023

Executive Summary

Confusion: Definition¹

1. Uncertainty about what is happening, intended or required
2. The state of being bewildered or unclear in one's mind about something
3. A disorderly jumble

It seems that the definitions of Emergency Management, Disaster Management, Emergency Management Continuum, Disaster Management Continuum, the 4 phases of Prevention, Preparation, Response, Recovery and the seven stages of Response, Relief, Recovery, Reconstruction, Risk Reduction, Prevention and Preparedness are not standardized across different Departments, Agencies or organizations. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Australian Government Crisis Management Framework 2022², the National Emergency Management Agency: Statement of Strategic Intent 2023³, and Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience: Australian Emergency Management Arrangements 2023⁴ all have different interpretations of these terms.

Leaders may indeed interpret and articulate these terms in a way that will return the highest financial gain for their jurisdiction. However, it is important to note that these terms are used to describe critical processes for managing emergencies and disasters. They must be used consistently and accurately to ensure effective communication and coordination between different organizations. This is because the lack of standardization in the interpretation of these terms can lead to confusion, miscommunication, and ultimately, ineffective crisis, emergency and disaster management.

2023 Crisis Manager: A person who proactively identifies possible threats, develops overarching crisis management plans and ensures that the crisis management runs smoothly. A crisis manager is involved at every stage – before, during and after⁵.

2023 Emergency Manager⁶: A person who solves problems you can't, who undertakes precision guesswork based on unreliable data provided by those of questionable knowledge⁷.

2023 Disaster Manager: A person who is responsible for planning and preparing communities for disasters and emergencies⁸.

The ultimate goal of Crisis, Emergency and Disaster Management should be centred around

¹ <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>

² <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/australian-government-crisis-management-framework.pdf>

³ <https://nema.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/NEMA%20Statement%20of%20Strategic%20Intent%202023.pdf>

⁴ https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/10162/handbook_aema_web_2023.pdf

⁵ <https://studyonline.port.ac.uk/blog/what-does-a-crisis-manager-do>

⁶ **Note:** a search of dictionaries, global Emergency Management Associations, FEMA, Google Scholar, AIDR Glossary with no document or information providing a definition for an Emergent Manager.

⁷ <https://www.redbubble.com>

⁸ <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-community-recovery/>

providing quality decision-making based on sound intelligence within a timeline through pre-arranged communication mediums which allow communities to make clear and timely decisions about their safety during events of unprecedented turmoil and confusion.

Practitioners operating throughout the entire Emergency / Disaster Management continuum within current environments can only achieve quality outcomes through well-designed, integrated, widely disseminated and centrally assessed professional development programs. The 2020 Bushfires Royal Commission recommendation identified training as a concern which led to new and improved Public Safety qualifications being introduced into the sector.

This submission's central focus is on professional development and training within the sector and the demise of quality professional development programs within a Disaster Management Continuum – Time-Based context. (Figure 2 p. 11)

This submission addresses the following through the lens of: Insights, Observations and Opportunities.

- a) Acknowledging the primary role of states and territories in emergency response, what longer-term capacities and capabilities do the Commonwealth need to develop to meet the challenges of the evolving strategic environment?
- b) At a national level, what are likely to be the key pressure points or challenges for the Commonwealth responding to competing and concurrent crises?
- c) How could the Commonwealth build community resilience and capability so they are better able to respond to and recover from national-level crises?
- d) What changes in the current system are necessary to help Australia have the right capabilities and capacity to handle concurrent crises?
- e) What models could the Commonwealth explore to replace or supplement support currently provided by the ADF during a 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?
 - How could we harness the critical role of volunteers and civilian groups under this model?
 - How do these models supplement, but not replicate, existing models operating at a state, territory and local level?
 - What role could industry / the private sector play? How can the Government attract increased investment in emergency management from the private sector?
 - What gaps currently exist in state and territory emergency management capability?
- f) Are there sectors that could replicate the capabilities provided by the ADF?

Insights, Observations, Opportunities

- 1) NEMA coordinated Learning and Professional Development environment through the establishment of a virtual National Disaster Management College to coordinate the development of a National Disaster Management Curriculum to be made available to all Registered Training Organisations and Higher Education institutions that have Disaster and Emergency Management qualifications on their scope of delivery.
- 2) NEMA coordinated Learning and Professional Development environment through the establishment of a virtual National Disaster Management College with a team engaged to coordinate and work alongside AIDR in assisting in the standardisation of doctrine and language throughout the Emergency and Disaster Management sector.
- 3) NEMA coordinated Professional Development team to engage, register and coordinate with the State and Territories agencies and organisations to maintain a National Volunteer First Response Register. Register to prioritise the volunteers' first agency preference.
- 4) Fund a National volunteer organisation to establish and maintain processes and systems that can rapidly be deployed to manage spontaneous volunteers.
- 5) Existing training packages and professional development programs will need to include improved communication technologies which will require additional investment. Many institutions will be reluctant to invest in emergent technology without guaranteed student engagement. States, Territory and Agencies will be reluctant to invest whilst there are opportunities to seek additional commonwealth funding.
- 6) Community Action Teams (CAT) managed through the NSW SES is a low-impact strategic initiative that can be adopted into communities without pressuring stakeholders to longer-term commitments. The initiative should be reviewed and include expansion at a national level.
- 7) Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) are low-impact strategic initiatives that can be adopted into communities without pressuring stakeholders to longer-term commitments. NZ YSAR opens opportunities to engage youth within urban and rural environments, providing an added resource to volunteer Emergency Services and providing knowledge and skills that can lead to future employment. Both initiatives should be reviewed and expanded at a national level.
- 8) Prioritizing training and professional development, incident management teams and defence and civilian staff can enhance their capabilities, improve coordination efforts, and effectively respond to a wide range of incidents. This will ultimately contribute to more efficient and mutually understood resilient emergency response systems.
The establishment of a National Disaster Management College staffed by industry practitioners will lead to a greater understanding of the Disaster Management Continuum which encompasses Emergency Management application and practice.
- 9) Increased Defence Aid to the Civil Community awareness training in reducing the regular misunderstandings of Defence capabilities and roles during disaster events.
Should the establishment of a National Disaster Management College be forthcoming, then DACC training should be added as a mandatory course.

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Submission

Abbreviations

AAR	After Action Review
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AEMI	Australian Emergency Management Institute – Mt Macedon
AFAC	National Council for Fire and Emergency Services
CEM	iAEM Certified Emergency Manager
CERT	US Community Emergency Response Team
DACC	Defence Aid to the Civil Community
EM	Emergency Management
FEMA	US Federal Emergency Management Agency
HE	Higher Education
iAEM	International Association of Emergency Managers
NHRA	Natural Hazards Research Australia
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NRRA	National Resilience and Recovery Agency
P(M)PRR	Prevention/Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, Recovery
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
YSAR	NZ Youth Search and Rescue

The Author

The author of this submission has been involved in the Australian Quality Framework Public Safety Training Package education across vocational and higher education and industry for more than two decades. The submission is made in a personal capacity.

Public Safety research experiences include:

- 2001 Flexible Learning Leader - Introduction to Emergency Risk Management 'online' transition for the SA State Emergency Service for local government and community engagement,
- 2008 Fulbright Scholar researching 'access and equity for professionals and volunteers – the next generation of emergency managers,
- PUA50120 Diploma & PUA60120 Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management) qualification review and restructure undertaken by Australian Industry Standards, the custodian of the Public Safety Training Package.
- PUA50722 Diploma of Public Safety (Recovery Management) qualification development, including the international benchmarking across seven countries for Australian Industry Standards in 2021 for the National Recovery Skills project, was conducted on behalf of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment and the National Recovery and Resilience Agency (now incorporated into the National Emergency Management Agency). The latter included the development of the Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Recovery Management) qualification tranche, which has been deferred to a later date for validation and ratification.

The author has been a volunteer with the SA State Emergency Service for eighteen years including endorsement as a volunteer state trainer, and ten years with the SA Country Fire Service.

The author was the sole developer of a range of Public Safety Training Package Emergency Management and Community Safety qualification delivery programs at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels for;

- Swinburne University (2005 - 2008) – Advanced Diplomas of Public Safety - PUA60104 Emergency Management & PUA60704 Community Safety qualification programs,
- Australian College of Community Safety (2009 - 2015), -PUA60104 / PUA60112 Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management) & PUA60704 / PUA60712 Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Community Safety), PUA52312 Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management) qualification programs
- Central Queensland University (2017-2020), PUA52312 Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management and PUA60112 Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management) qualification programs,

engaged as the lead facilitation and assessor within each of these Registered Training Organisations.

Internationally, the author is an International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) credentialed Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) since 2010, currency to 2025 and the current global IAEM Certification Commissioner (2021 – 2023 & 2024 – 2026 elect) for the Oceania Council (Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands) region.

Operationally, the author has undertaken roles in the following;

- Manager – Emergency Management Training Unit – Northern Territory Emergency Service (2016)
- Regional Emergency Operations Centre Lead (CVOID-19) WA Country Health Service (2021)
- Director, Emergency Management, NT Health (2022)

Discussion

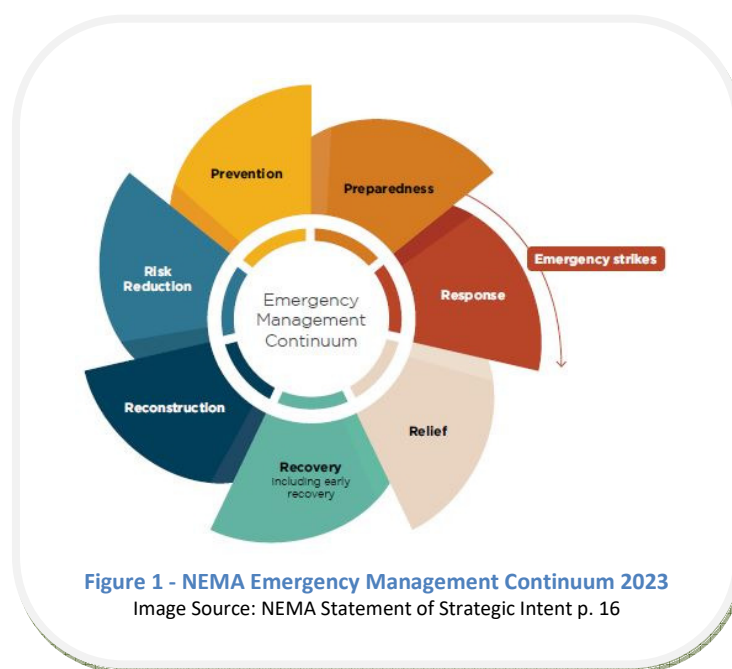
Over the past decade, every Australian State and Territory has been exposed to natural hazards which have resulted in catastrophic outcomes from significant events. Some of these events have resulted in Royal Commission recommendations for new approaches to enhancing a range of Prevention (Mitigation), Preparedness, Response and Recovery strategies to be explored and develop enhanced emergency management practice. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements⁹ (Royal Commission) highlighted the need for improved national emergency coordination including training/ professional development. The ADF has been called upon to respond to all disaster events since the 2019 – 2020 Bushfires.

The Australian Government Crisis Management Framework Ver 3.2 November 2022 (AGCMF):
outlines the Australian Government's approach to preparing for, responding to and recovering from crises.

September 1st, 2022, saw the establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), a joining together of Emergency Management Australia and the National Recovery and Resilience Agency.

*NEMA was guided to establish a single end-to-end agency to improve response to emergencies, assist communities to recover from, ensuring Australia is better prepared for disasters.*¹⁰

The NEMA Statement of Strategic Intent (the Statement), introduces the Emergency Management Continuum (the Continuum) diagrammatically, adding three new stages, Relief, Reconstruction and Risk Reduction.



⁹ Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report, Commonwealth of Australia, 28 October 2020.
<https://bit.ly/3FgGCcJ> ISBN: 978-1-921091-46-9 (Online)

¹⁰ <https://nema.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/NEMA%20Statement%20of%20Strategic%20Intent%202023.pdf> p.16

To understand Emergency Management (EM) holistically, consideration needs to be given to understanding and appreciation of a contemporary Emergency Management Cycle¹¹ of P(M)PRR, Prevention / Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery phases. EM practice has traditionally reflected on the PPRR phases as being an equal representation of the EM cycle, 25% for each phase. In the Continuum, each phase displays an equal representation of ≈14% share within the Continuum cycle.

Emergency and Disaster Management Model – Time-Based

Emergency Management and Disaster Management are globally recognised yet separate areas of operational activities Figure 4^{12 13} framed around the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF)¹⁴ Disaster Management Continuum.



¹¹ <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/leading-resilience/emergency-management-prevention-preparedness-response-recovery>

¹² Ainsworth, C. (2018, 19 April). *Next generation of Emergency Managers: a 2020 vision - where have we progressed since 2012*. ANZDMC, Gold Coast, QLD.

¹³ Ainsworth, C. (2023, 12 July). *Next Generation of Emergency Managers: Part III - the incomplete jigsaw, how far have we progressed since 2012 and 2018 ANZDMC*, Gold Coast, QLD.

¹⁴ DPMC. (2022). *Australian Government Crisis Management Framework* (D. o. P. M. a. Cabinet, Ed. 3.2 ed.). <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/australian-government-crisis-management-framework.pdf>

The Disaster Management Continuum – Time–Based model (DCM-TB) illustrates the interconnectedness between the EM and DM domains. Both domains are often interchanged to suit a point of reference or view in describing actions or event activities. EM and DM are closely related to qualification structures utilising the same learning, applied within different and varying contexts. While NEMA uses the term Emergency Management Continuum the AGCMF refers to the same system as Disaster Management Continuum.

Emergency preparedness is more specifically related to the before, during, and immediately after the Response Phase of an event. On the other hand, disaster preparedness relates to all phases or stages of the continuum.

Emergency Management: is viewed as:

the core business of Emergency Services but every individual and/or organisation has a part to play¹⁵.

Emergency Management is about managing risks to communities and the environment.

Emergency Management is often used interchangeably with the term Disaster Management, particularly in the context of biological and technological hazards and health emergencies. While there is a large degree of overlap, an emergency can also relate to hazardous events that do not result in the serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society.¹⁶

Disaster Management: is

The organisation, planning and application of measures preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters.¹⁷

Disaster Management is how we deal with the human, material, economic or environmental impacts of said disaster, it is the process of how we:

prepare for, respond and recover from and learn from the effects of major failures.¹⁶

though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins.

The introduction of the NEMA's 2023 Emergency Management Continuum model removes any notion of Disaster Management (DM) practice, learning and professional development, everything is now grouped into Emergency Management (EM). There is a potential that practitioners will note the disconnect of understanding and relationships between EM and DM practices, roles, responsibilities, and personnel. The Continuum highlights that EM will be the dominant identifier of all activity aligned within the Continuum model.

¹⁵ <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/leading-resilience/emergency-management-prevention-preparedness-response-recovery>

¹⁶ Terminology - Disaster Management. United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction. Retrieved 20 August 2023 from <https://www.undrr.org/quick/11998>

¹⁷ <https://www.undrr.org/quick/11998>

Credible pathways where EM and DM can co-exist have been established. The challenge for the future is identifying strategies, learning and development and how these will be implemented to ensure the key outcomes endure. The challenge for the future is identifying strategies, learning and development. These strategies will need to be implemented to ensure the key outcomes endure. Non-emergency service operatives who work within the complex area of Recovery and Reconstruction may need to shift their mental focus to respond to events under the Emergency Services Command, Control, and Coordination when requested in the context of the Continuum Response and relief (Rr) stages. Should the EM focus be adopted throughout the Continuum model, then Disaster Management in the context as practitioners know and understand may cease to exist.

The delineation of Emergency Management and Disaster Management is important in providing the separation between the important emergency responses undertaken by the Emergency Services, Response and Relief and the post-emergency roles in Recovery and Reconstruction. Response and Recovery are generally managed by different agencies and different teams. Adopting a Disaster Management Continuum, Figure 2, provides a clear delineation between the Emergency Services core business roles of Response and relief (Rr) and the many different agencies that manage the Recovery and Reconstruction.

Practitioners who have sought formalisation of their previous knowledge, skill, competency and capability through accredited training and development, may have their qualification recognition challenged and accepted as a 'practitioner'. Future careers in the Disaster Management domain will become very limited if not extinct in Australia should the Continuum be adopted in full by all States and Territories. Ongoing research is needed to identify the changing landscape in which the Emergency Services, Emergency Management and Disaster Management sectors operate and function.

Over the past decade, local and state Emergency Management environments across the nation have experienced more frequent response and recovery efforts than in the decades prior. However, a high level of complacency has gradually crept into the Emergency Management sector. This trend commenced as early as 2005 when Emergency Management Australia indicated that EM professional development delivered by the Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI), a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), would transition the responsibility of training funding to the states over three years. In 2008, the states did not take responsibility, influenced by individual budget constraints. The influence brought was that the states had previously received funding for this area of professional development. Over time, the states and territories chose to ignore the issue of funding as the commonwealth to date had accepted this responsibility. Limited levels of funding continued up to 2015 when AEMI Mt Macedon ceased operations. This has resulted in a gradual decline of personnel undertaking facilitated EM professional development where the levels of knowledge, skill, competency, and capability are at their lowest level in over two decades. Competency and capability assessment has been replaced by the wide application of the 100%

Recognition of Prior Learning within excess of 90% of qualifications issued through this process¹⁸.

In the context of this submission, the utilisation of the Australian Defence Force (ADF): the alternative commonwealth capability, refers to approximately 10% of the Disaster Management Continuum in the areas of Relief and Recovery. The remaining 90% continues unresolved.

Responses to Questions:

Below are reflective comments on the questions posed in the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities Crisis Response discussion paper and alternatives to ADF support.

The responses are framed using the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (AIDR) Lessons Management Handbook.

- a. *Acknowledging the primary role of states 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?*

The Commonwealth's first step should be to clearly articulate whether the combined responses to natural or man-made events are a response to an emergency or a greater effort required to minimize the impacts of a disaster. The magnitude required for the Response, Relief, and transition to short-term Recovery is determined by effort timelines and resourcing, which reside within the Emergency Management domain (refer to Figure 2).

*The core business of Emergency Services but every individual and/or organisation has a part to play*¹⁹

The remaining stages of the NEMA Emergency Management Continuum, Figure 1, pose a challenge in terms of support. Recovery, Risk Reduction, Prevention (Mitigation), and Preparedness are not considered emergencies under the current definition.

Recovery, Risk Reduction Prevention (Mitigation), and Preparedness are multi-year cycles that do not fit within an Emergency Management cycle, which typically lasts minutes, hours, or days.

Emergency responses that extend past these timelines transition into Disaster Response, which includes the Emergency Services along with several additional agencies and organizations.

Campaign events like floods fall into this category, and in exceptional circumstances, fires like the 2019-2020 Bushfires.

A common understanding and use of integrated and interoperable management processes, systems, and networks can facilitate the natural progression of roles and responsibilities, including transitional phases, between Emergency Management and Disaster Management (refer Figure 2).

¹⁸ Osborne, K., & Serich, C. (2020). *Exploring the recognition of prior learning in Australian VET* NCVER. https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0040/9660766/Exploring_the_recognition_of_prior_learning_in_Australian_VET.pdf

¹⁹ <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/leading-resilience/emergency-management-prevention-preparedness-response-recovery>

To achieve desired outcomes, nationally positioned roles in the professional band should be supported by recognized, centrally coordinated training. This will underpin success across all participating agencies, organizations, and stakeholders.

In essence, Emergency Management (EM) and Disaster Management (DM) are only recognized as administrative-level positional responsibilities by Federal, State, and Local governments. This recognition ensures that personnel working in these respective roles are not required to have any recognized level of knowledge, skill, competency, capability or competency to undertake the administrative application of legislation in EM or DM, nationally or jurisdictionally.

Currently, only Emergency Services agencies that are bound by Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBA) require their staff to have knowledge, skill, competency, and capability to undertake specialised roles. This requirement is limited to various Fire agencies in Australia where qualifications are linked to pay scales. In other EM or DM environments, there is no requirement for staff to have any level of training or professional development.

Without nationally recognized and centrally coordinated training and professional development, national capabilities cannot be enacted. The States and Territories will continue to operate as they have in the past.

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 1) NEMA coordinated Learning and Professional Development environment through the establishment of a virtual National Disaster Management College to coordinate the development of a National Disaster Management Curriculum to be made available to all Registered Training Organisations and Higher Education Institutions that have Disaster and Emergency Management qualification on their scope of delivery.

b) 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 **integration and interoperability of different processes, systems, and agency structures** pose challenges for any centrally coordinated relief and recovery from a disaster that impacts multiple jurisdictions. The choice of all governments to relegate emergency management and disaster management to administrative position levels, where appointments are not always based on verifiable knowledge, skill, competency, and capability.

A Nationally developed and coordinated professional program delivery will be essential if a capable workforce is to be deployed in any jurisdiction. This will only be achieved with nationally recognized and centrally coordinated training that aligns with agreed common jurisdictional

processes, systems, and standards. Currently, each state and territory implements different processes and systems in their state and territory responses.

Compounding the issues remains the confusion of the top tier Departments (DPC), Agencies (NEMA) and Organizations (AIDR) on their interpretation and understanding of the 'Continuum', Emergency and Disaster Management including the number of phases or stages applied. A top-level doctrine document must be established to which all flow-on documents must refer to ensure there is continuity of terminology and understanding. As change occurs, the core flow of reference documents must be updated and disseminated immediately through interim update flyers and documents updated within minimum and agreed timelines. An optimal timeline should be on the day of the update for flyers and three months from the date of amendment for any responsible department, agency and organisation.

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 2) NEMA coordinated Learning and Professional Development environment through the establishment of a virtual National Disaster Management College with a team engaged to coordinate and working alongside AIDR assisting in the standardisation of doctrine and language throughout the Emergency and Disaster Management sector.

Disaster Fatigue: Managing multiple crises over an extended period leads to fatigue, particularly among volunteer responders. Campaign events, the 2019-2020 Bushfires and 2020-2022 Flood events pose a greater impact on communities, particularly when events are back to back.

In rural areas, volunteer first response volunteers are more likely to be signed up to two or more agencies, skewing the number of available responders to any given incident or event. The multi-agency commitment places strain on the individual, the community as a whole and the effectiveness of responses, reducing the requirement for external support and additional resourcing.

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 3) NEMA coordinated Professional Development team to engage, register and coordinate with the State and Territories agencies and organisations to maintain a National Volunteer First Response Register. Register to prioritise the volunteers first agency preference.
- 4) Fund a National volunteer organisation to establish and maintain processes and systems which can rapidly be deployed to manage spontaneous volunteers.

Data and Information Management: There are extensive data sources that need to be combined, and codified before the collected information can be available for wide distribution. However, the primary issue with data collection is that much of the information quickly becomes white noise leading to information overload for Emergency and Disaster Managers. The effort and cost involved in collecting and sorting data into useful decision tools can rapidly become overwhelming even for the most experienced analyst. Artificial Intelligence (AI), implementation, adoption and adaption during events will play an important role within future coordination centre management.

During significant events, social media platforms such as Facebook and X (Twitter) can be a valuable source of real-time information. However, the rapid disappearance of posts on these platforms can place strain on responding agencies and create a disconnect with their communities. The presence of fake news, misinformation, and lack of information contributes to white noise.

To address these challenges, new professional development and training strategies need to be developed to improve information collection and analysis while reducing physical resourcing.

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 5) Existing training packages and professional development programs will need to include improved communication technologies which will require additional investment. Many institutions will be reluctant to invest into emergent technology without guaranteed student engagement. States, Territory and Agencies will be reluctant to invest whilst there are opportunities to seek additional commonwealth funding.

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

Capacity Building and Training:

Within any given community, many would like to, or feel obliged to volunteer, yet for several different factors either do not have the time to or have competing priorities that prevent their participation within state-based Emergency Service agencies. (Fire, SES, Ambulance).

Consideration needs to be given that not every town or community can support multiple agencies combined with the economics, agencies often are unable to fund the high cost of providing services within a given community. NSW SES Community Action Team (CAT) structure is one area of enhanced community involvement undertaken within a semi-formalized structure.

The CAT system whilst still in its infancy faces challenges where located in that the initiative competes with existing volunteer agencies and organizations.

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 6) Community Action Teams (CAT) managed through the NSW SES is a low impact strategic initiative which can be adopted into communities without pressuring stakeholders to longer-term commitments. The initiative should be reviewed and include expansion at a national level.

Community engagement:

Expanding on the Community Action Team concept as an option for communities is the adaptation of the US Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) with a focus on a Prepared Community as part of the FEMA Ready.gov program. The CERT program is mature with more than 600,000 members across 50 states of the United States engaged in 2,700 active programs.

The program offers several entry points starting with the TeenCERT program which is introduced in the high school system. This is an opportunity to encourage youth to live a lifelong understanding of disaster resilience. CERT-trained students are invaluable during disruptive events in that they can rapidly establish a Command and Control environment working alongside and assisting non-teaching staff to provide effective responses to incidents whilst relieving teaching staff to maintain control and coordination of remaining students.

College and Higher Education CERT program replicates the TeenCERT program within these institutions.

Community is the backbone of CERT. Community-led first response to incidents and disruptive events within a community. Community members will often be first on the scene and generally before the arrival of Emergency Services first responders. Often within the US, the CERT Team Leader can complete a situational awareness and local knowledge handover, reducing the timeframe for first responders to commence operations.

The program has a foundation of a two-day introduction course which is supported by a wide range of resources that can be readily adapted to the Australian environment. Like in the US, an Australinised CERT program could be managed at the National Level within a Disaster Management umbrella, supporting but not competing with State-based agencies in gaining deeper community connection and improved resilience. The major concern is this is another group that would be bidding for access to limited funding.

The CERT program could be readily introduced into sporting and service clubs with minimal requirements for ongoing intensive training. The program could be managed within local government without any significant impact on resources.

Whilst aimed at the youth environment, the NZ Youth Search and Rescue (YSAR) Trust (Auckland NZ) is another program that has benefits during events. The use of “cadet” type environments, which prepares college-age students for the national community volunteer sector aligned to Search and Rescue (SAR) and Civil Defence Emergency Management. The program includes a marine and rural fire component, including the Coastguard Boating Education Day Skippers qualification. To date, there have been 250 students have participated in the training program:

- 1) Developing and implementing ArcGIS including live tracking, search and rescue, emergency management preplanning, Integration Safety Management Systems, field data collection and Geographic Information Systems training.
- 2) Diversity and Inclusion integration – engagement design and organisational change management with emphasis on Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- 3) Cultivating and fostering national strategic partnerships and community engagement.
- 4) Developing field intelligence systems for SAR and emergency response.
- 5) Leading the Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) pathways for the development of youth.
- 6) Implementing IT solutions including Microsoft 365, SharePoint, FOCUS Command and Control, and Drone (UAV) for SAR and SAR Pre-Plans.

In a review of the military “cadet” system alongside the emergency services, utilising an integrated program similar to the NZ YSAR and CERT, provides a longer-term sustainable response force that is untapped and provides ongoing pathways for youth into a chosen defence or emergency service career opportunity with long term transferability of knowledge, skill and competency. The result delivers higher levels of capacity within the community which can be effectively managed at the local government level. It is recognised that those entering these career options through a cadet system lead to higher personnel retention rates and lower overall training investment resulting in higher capability levels within deployments. There is an increased potential that defence force members exiting the service may seek to return to their pre-service volunteering.

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 7) Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) are low impact strategic initiative which can be adopted into communities without pressuring stakeholders to longer-term commitments.

NZ YSAR opens opportunities to engage youth within urban and rural environments, providing an added resource to volunteer Emergency Services and provide knowledge and skills which can lead to future employment.

Both initiatives should be reviewed and include expansion at a national level.

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

The increasing frequency of disasters places greater demand on all agencies and non-profit organizations. Each group is vying for operational response expenditure reimbursement and funding opportunities. Without operational funding, many non-agency groups and organisations cannot survive. Some non-profit organizations are leveraging the less-than-optimal response and recovery efforts to gain recognition as service providers.

Disaster impact responses affect local communities, yet in many states, the response is controlled at the State and Territory levels. Local governments are generally left out of the process and, in many cases, moved to the back of the room during response. Once in the relief and recovery phase, long-term recovery is shifted to the local government, yet remains inadequately funded.

The specialized response is within the domain of state governments with State Emergency Services and Rural/Country Fire Services. Even with a national representative body like the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC), the operational models and standards of each state member-based organization differ. Training is one aspect where there are consistent qualifications through the Public Safety Training Package. However, state-based variances lead to differences in knowledge, skill, competency, and qualifications that are not transferable across jurisdictions. This has resulted in inconsistencies in accredited training that are often not recognized in another jurisdiction.

Existing recognized emergency service and not-for-profit organizations are having difficulty attracting volunteers due to dysfunction within organizations, an aging demographic, and some individuals feeling burned out or unrecognized for their efforts. Some non-agency groups are finding their way into the disaster response, relief, and recovery area, with members becoming disenfranchised with traditional volunteer organizations. Some non-agency organisations are seeking government-funded programs to remain viable.

Such funding comes at the expense of the more traditional volunteer organizations, where training quality has been slowly falling due to the increasing demands placed on volunteer trainers to maintain skills and upgrade qualification requirements. The high of training is leading organisations to reconsider using accredited Public Safety Training or transition to an agency-based curriculum which significantly reduces training demand and cost.

Standardization of training curriculum and delivery will deliver higher levels of competency and capability, inclusive of transferability across jurisdictions. There are significant gains to be achieved by aligning training programs and ensuring consistency in curriculum and delivery methods.

By establishing a standardized approach to training, organizations can enhance the quality and effectiveness of their programs, ensuring that volunteers receive consistent and comprehensive training regardless of their location. This will contribute to improved emergency management capabilities and facilitate greater collaboration between organizations during response and recovery efforts.

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

No Local or State Government or organisation has deployable heavy lift or specialised capabilities that the ADF has which can be readily deployed. This has been demonstrated across multiple states of Australia in nationwide 2020 – 2022 flooding events and the bushfires of 2019-2020.

Request elements and criteria are not fully understood within many leadership groups, and they lack knowledge and understanding of the timelines for a Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) request, including the type of resources that may be deployed by the Australian Defence Force (ADF). There is a recurring anticipation that Defence will provide a particular type of asset, which agency planning has generally predetermined as necessary for a successful outcome. There is an assumption that the request will be provided with the resource requested. A greater understanding is needed that Defence will decide on the most appropriate and available asset to be deployed based on Defence priorities and asset availability for any given DACC task request.²⁰

With the growing number of requests and responses, there may be a need for an enhanced level of training and professional development between incident management team leaders and defence staff. This is particularly important due to the turnover of staff in both areas.

To address this challenge, it is crucial to bolster comprehensive training programs that focus on building the necessary skills and knowledge required for effective incident management. These programs should emphasize the importance of collaboration, communication, and leadership in managing complex incidents²¹. By investing in ongoing training and professional development, organizations can ensure that their staff are well-prepared to handle the demands of their roles and adapt to changing circumstances.

Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing can help mitigate the impact of staff turnover¹. This can be achieved through mentorship programs, knowledge repositories, and regular debriefing sessions to capture lessons learned from previous incidents²².

²⁰ [Support to the Australian Community | Sectors | Defence](#)

²¹ [Learning from Experience: Incident Management Team Leader Training | Kristina Lauche - Academia.edu](#)

²² [Evidence for incident management team capability | AJEM Research \(aidr.org.au\)](#)

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

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 8) Prioritizing training and professional development, incident management teams and defence and civilian staff can enhance their capabilities, improve coordination efforts, and effectively respond to a wide range of incidents. This will ultimately contribute to more efficient and mutually understood resilient emergency response systems.

Establishment of a National Disaster Management College staffed by industry practitioners will lead to a greater understanding of Disaster Management Continuum which encompasses Emergency Management application and practice.

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

The ADF has unique capabilities that are not readily replicated by other sectors, such as **security, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, logistics, engineering, aviation, health care, and cyber**. These capabilities are essential for the ADF to perform its core functions of defending Australia and its national interests and contributing to regional and global security.

In the context of Disaster Management, without a specialised agency, it would be challenging for any organization to replicate the ADF capabilities.

Insights, Observations, Opportunities:

- 9) Increased Defence Aid to the Civil Community awareness training in reducing the regular misunderstandings of Defence capabilities and roles during disaster events.

Should the establishment of a National Disaster Management College be forthcoming, then DACC training should be added as a mandatory course.

g. 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?

Not addressed

h. 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?

Not addressed