

28 September 2023



To: Department of Home Affairs
National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)

By email: NationalResilience.Consultation@homeaffairs.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response – DISCUSSION PAPER

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comment on the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response and the focus on support for additional State and Territory led crisis response and recovery efforts.

Communications Alliance would like to recognise and acknowledge the work and support which is currently provided by the various Commonwealth, State and Territory support agencies leading up to, during and recovering from natural disasters. These are the times when it is important for collaboration and assistance from all jurisdictions when quick and agile engagement is required.

The telecommunications sector notes that from a jurisdictional perspective, State and Territory governments lead the planning, response, and recovery phases as a result of natural disasters, underpinned by emergency management plans. In terms of the role in which the Commonwealth plays, in the event a natural disaster event in size and severity may overwhelm a States or Territory's capability and capacity to respond, the Commonwealth plays a critical supporting role. It is in this vein the telecommunications sector acknowledges the efforts provided by the Australian Defence Force (ADF), of which the sector has benefited from, and the ADF are to be commended, especially as noted within the paper, that it is not their primary role.

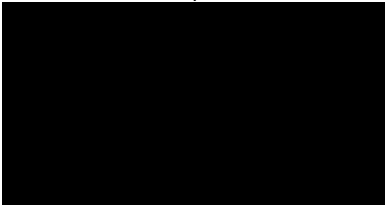
From a telecommunications sector perspective, the experience during a disaster, where assistance in the protection and remediation of telecommunications infrastructure is co-ordinated through State and Territory control centres. This arrangement is well placed to ensure the right people are collaborating to address the impacts, assess the risks/ priorities and to determine the targeted use of government support agencies. It is through this medium that additional support provided by the Commonwealth government is made available.

This co-ordinated / collaborative framework helps to ensure there is a collective and consolidated response to allow support agencies to be used optimally and they are not faced with unclear / competing or counter intuitive requests. During and post-disaster, government support agencies can be of great assistance to the telecommunications sector to help manage road/site/river access challenges, the transport of fuel and generators (road and aerial) as well as with the refuelling of generators over the longer term in remote areas.

We acknowledge that disasters do not hold themselves to State and Territory borders, nor do they just affect a single sector within Australia. Our members are constantly reviewing, refining and deploying measures to ensure network resilience so that during times of disaster, the critical nature of communications is upheld to assist in the protection of lives in the areas it is needed most. Communications Alliance therefore welcomes the opportunity to continue to be engaged, along with our members on the topic of disaster / crises response and overall resilience measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to further discussions on these matters.

Yours sincerely,



John Stanton
Chief Executive Officer

CC: [Redacted]
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