



**Australian Government – Department of Home Affairs & National Emergency Management Agency
Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response
Discussion Paper – August 2023**

Submission from the East Gippsland Community Foundation – September 2023

Questions:

- **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?**

Support for existing community foundations across Australia, particularly those that are likely to be impacted by natural disaster (fire, flood, storm events).

Example of East Gippsland Community Foundation evolving on the back of the Black Summer Fires 2019/2020. By the time the foundation was established the fires were 14 months past. Supporting community foundations to assist with community-led recovery activity is crucial. The involvement of Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) in East Gippsland did not have the right impact. A new agency evolved in a time when the community needed to lean on existing networks and connections. Three years post Black Summer Fires, BRV has come and gone.

East Gippsland Community Foundation and East Gippsland Shire Council are two of the few organisations remaining who are dealing with long term effect of the Black Summer Fires.

Preparedness funding should be made available to organisations who are there before, during and after emergency/disaster events.

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

Bodies on the ground at disaster locations, for example federal employees (and departments!) come and go, workforce is upscaled when crisis occur, downscaled when the need has passed. This makes for ad-hoc address to crisis, i.e. onboarding staff etc.

Solution – make funds available to LGA's and community foundations to assist with immediate relief rather than introduce new commonwealth departments and staffing. Note the role of Gippsland Emergency Relief in the Black Summer Fires.

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

Support LGA's and community foundations to lead preparedness and community led capacity building activity in the time when there is no disaster, so they are better prepared for impacts of the next event.

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

A robust framework for deployment of resources.

Supporting community foundations and local LGAs who already have local networks to work in this space. Note the role of Gippsland Emergency Relief at the time of crisis.

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

N/A

– **What does the right mix of Commonwealth capabilities look like?**

N/A

– **How could a Commonwealth workforce surge capacity be replicated in a scalable, efficient, and effective way?**

Utilise the services of local LGA's, community foundations and service organisations already in place in the geographic footprint impacted by disaster. Note the role of Gippsland Emergency Relief. Work with existing organisations in place.

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

Make funding available to local community groups to support government agencies – i.e. Apex, Rotary, Community Foundations.

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

N/A

– **What role could industry / the private sector play?**

N/A

How can the Government attract increased investment in emergency management from the private sector?

Private sector needs to make a profit to be involved unfortunately.

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

Lack of government agency staff in remote locations impacted by disaster events. Government staff are often scaled up during emergency response - this means new people, new learnings, lack of local knowledge, contacts and networks. When the crisis is over the staff are "let go" and the knowledge is lost. Hiring and firing staff is costly and does not assist local communities who have to deal with new people and agencies during a highly emotional and stressful time.

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

N/A

● **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?**

Supply of funds for resources to not only local government agencies but also community foundations who have existing knowledge of the geographic area including relationships and networks in the impacted areas.

● **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?**

Match dollar for dollar funds raised by local community groups during disaster events – i.e. community foundations, Bendigo Bank/Community Enterprise Foundation, etc.

East Gippsland Community Foundation

Contact: Michelle Dowsett, Executive Officer

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