

Emergency Management Victoria

Emergency Management Commissioner

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National Resilience Taskforce,

Alternate Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response - National Resilience Taskforce

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the *Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response* discussion paper. Recent emergency events have demonstrated that natural hazards leading to disasters will continue to increase in intensity, severity and complexity across the nation. Therefore, Victoria welcomes the opportunity to clarify the capability and capacity the Commonwealth Government can provide to support states and territories in emergency events.

Victoria works under an “*all communities, all emergencies*” emergency management framework, where common arrangements are used to respond to all types of emergencies, with an overarching principle of shared responsibility. Victoria supports the Commonwealth Government’s promotion of collective whole-of-society action across preparedness, response and resilience. Noting that states and territories have primary responsibility for emergencies in their respective jurisdictions, Victoria is of the view that states and territories are well placed to advise on emergency management needs in their jurisdictions. This includes advising on the need for additional capability from the Commonwealth Government to support state and territory-led emergency response, relief and recovery efforts.

Following the 2019-20 bushfires, Victoria made detailed submissions to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (RCNDA). Progress on implementation of these recommendations is currently being tracked through a National Report on the implementation status overseen by Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management committee (ANZEMC). Several areas of interest highlighted in this discussion paper align with those matters addressed in the RCNDA submissions and could be revisited by the Commonwealth Government to inform the suite of options under development. These included responses on capability gaps, professionalism and diversity of workforces, interoperability between jurisdictions and agreed national standards, and the role of the Commonwealth in driving a strategic agenda and investing in nation-wide capability building. Additionally, Victoria has a [Victorian Preparedness Framework](#) that sets out 21 core capabilities as a foundation for how Victoria can mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies. This has been validated by sector agencies outlining a desired future state for the state’s emergency management capabilities.

Commonwealth Government resources, capabilities and expertise are critical to Victoria’s ability to respond effectively to large-scale natural disasters. Victoria is grateful for support from the Commonwealth Government aiding the Victorian community during recent emergencies, including the services provided by the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). I would like to acknowledge and thank the ADF for the critical role it undertook during the 2019-20 bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recent October 2022 floods. For example, in response to the 2019–20 bushfires, the largest evacuation of



communities in Victoria's history took place by sea from Mallacoota. There was also significant demand from impacted communities for the provision of immediate relief. The deployment of ADF resources and personnel provided essential support to these operations, and in providing humanitarian assistance.

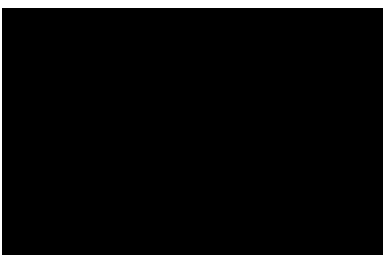
Victoria recognises the ADF's core function is the defence of Australia and its national interests, and its role in domestic crises as specified under existing arrangements, to be one of a *'force of last resort'* when state resources and capabilities are exhausted. Victoria understands that the ADF will continue to play a role in the Commonwealth Government's capability in times of extreme emergency, providing supporting resources for response, relief and recovery activities. As one of two nominated jurisdictional officials in Victoria with the authority to request Australian Government non-financial assistance, I seek assurance from Victorian emergency management agencies that requests for assistance are made only when Victorian capacity and capabilities have been fully committed and the required operational effect cannot be achieved with state resources.

In the face of a challenging future, Victoria encourages further exploration of options for how the Commonwealth can bolster its capabilities at scale as an alternative to, or to supplement, the ADF. Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), with responsibility for Victoria's emergency management system, is well placed to convene a meeting with relevant stakeholders from across Victoria to assist the Department of Home Affairs to consider long-term options to enhance Commonwealth capabilities while ensuring integration with Victorian emergency management arrangements.

EMV appreciates the opportunity to further collaborate at a roundtable meeting of key stakeholders and to provide preliminary considerations and proposals to ensure that Australia has the right capabilities and capacities to handle increasingly complex national crises.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this important work.

Yours sincerely



Rick Nugent APM
Emergency Management Commissioner

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