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An individual submission, not being made on behalf of an organisation.

Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper – August 2023

This response specifically addresses the following questions from the Discussion Paper:

- **Question:** How could the Commonwealth build community resilience and capability so they are better able to respond to and recover from national-level crises?
  Response: Explore and build **community-led** prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and resilience.

- **Question:** What changes in the current system are necessary to help Australia have the right capabilities and capacity to handle concurrent crises?
  – What gaps currently exist in state and territory emergency management capability?

  Response: Fund a separate stream of independent, **community-led** agencies, operating separately but in partnership with the traditional agencies. The current gap in the system is a complete lack of funding for community-led activities.

- **Question:** What models could the Commonwealth explore to replace or supplement support currently provided by the ADF during domestic crisis?
  – 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 and territory and local level?

  Response: Explore adapting the Land care model to the community-led disaster resilience setting.

Commentary:

Our time constraints preclude a full analysis of **Landcare** and its potential application as a model for disaster crisis response arrangements. The best we can offer at this stage is to suggest that NEMA examines the Landcare model and the National Landcare Program for elements that may be applicable to NEMA and disaster crises arrangements.

An overview of Landcare is available at https://landcareaustralia.org.au/

To which we need to add the National Landcare Program available at https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/land/landcare

Why our interest in the Landcare model?

Currently there is a direct lineage from the Federal government department to state/territory departments and then on to state based agencies which is structured with legislation/regulation, funding for operations, and performance measured against agreed KPIs. At a state level this covers agencies such as the CFA and SES.

However, there is no similar chain for independent, community-led agencies, eg Neighbourhood / Community Houses most of which provide great community support before, during and after major events.

The Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (ANHCA) is the national peak body for Neighbourhood Houses and Centres in Australia. https://www.anhca.org/

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria is the peak body for the Neighbourhood House sector. https://www.nhvic.org.au/

The emerging Disaster Relief Australia https://disasterreliefaus.org/ could also be built into this model.

We assert that there is an emerging national trend in the evolution of independent, community-led agencies, structured outside the traditional system, but working in parallel with the system.

With the Landcare model:

- The federal government funds a central secretariat which is representative of the community Landcare units and sets national policy and guidelines;
- There are state/Territory coordination hubs, also funded;
- Landcare includes funded regional landcare officers;
- There are a large number of community-based Landcare units located across the country;
- There are a huge number of Landcare volunteers contributing to the Landcare program;
- Landcare attracts and delivers both government and external grant funding on a wide range of land care projects.

NEMA actually currently includes some of these elements, but does not have the same level of community involvement nor community feedback at the national level as does Landcare.

We assert that the elements of this Landcare model could be adapted to a DisasterCare / ResilienceCare / Centres of Resilience model, reflecting the objectives of NEMA, whilst including community-led approaches in the disaster setting.

Action:

As a starting point, maybe NEMA could sponsor a 'think tank' of Landcare and DisasterCare representatives to explore the applicability of the Landcare model in community-led DisasterCare?

We'd be pleased to respond to any requests for further information.

Frank Archer and Caroline Spencer