



20 September 2023

Senator the Hon. Murray Watt
Minister for Emergency Management
Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Watt,

Re: Discussion Paper – August 2023

Public Safety Training and Response Group welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Department of Home Affairs and National Emergency Management Agency.

Our Company was created with the goal of developing better public safety practices for civilians, business, government agencies and the Australian Defence Force. We have the latest technology and equipment to tackle emergency response and intelligence gathering and the Company is also a registered training organisation.

In Australia, our emergency response resources are stretched too thin, including the heavy reliance on Australian Defence Force personnel and assets.

Public Safety Training and Response Group is an independent, veteran-owned, Australian sovereign company, which has a charter to empower and equip organisations and people with the tools to stay safe during a crisis.

The Company provides relevant training, products and applications that are simple to use when under pressure, yet advanced enough to be trusted during the toughest disasters. We are also a proud employer of veterans, providing career pathways and training following their vital service to our country.

We would welcome the opportunity to appear at any public hearings in the future.

Yours Sincerely,

Edward Andrews
Managing Director



Public Safety Training and Response Group Submission: Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper

Executive Summary

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide a considered response to the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper. The Public Safety Training and Response Group Pty Ltd (the Company) places a particular focus on a new model for government to address crisis response considering the current “unsustainable” model that relies almost exclusively on the ADF for assets and response.

Vision: A public-private, cross jurisdictional, interoperable asset capability, servicing defence, foreign affairs, emergency services and civilian requirements (a Public Private Partnership [PPP]).

Objective: To deploy assets via a Prioritised Asset Deployment Plan (PADP) to:

- Provide cost effective on-demand asset availability
- Reduce the pressure of disaster response obligations on Australian Defence Force (ADF) assets and personnel
- Improve and augment existing emergency hazard and natural disaster response with a scalable capability.

Delivered with a financial model that both reduces budgetary strain on the Australian Government and provides a realistic long-term transition pathway to provide better emergency response capabilities, while reducing reliance on the ADF and simultaneously enabling Defence to focus on its core mission.

The new proposal as discussed provides a bridge that maintains response primacy for local, state and territory governments and presents an opportunity to lower costs associated with the provision of specialist and surge capabilities.

Background

Public Safety Training and Response Group is a veteran focused, preeminent provider of training and response for all aspects of public safety. A key area of focus for the Company is the transition to civilian employment for the veteran community. The Company works closely with government agencies, Vet Path, veteran groups, and other charities to retain and enhance the skill set of personnel leaving the ADF.

The Company has a team of well qualified, highly experienced professionals with a diverse background from multiple disciplines (military, emergency services (EMO) and industry backgrounds with extensive formal and industry specific qualifications), situating itself to further expand its emergency response capabilities.

The Company operates in the commercial emergency response and training spheres and is uniquely positioned to provide a holistic view of the major issues in play across the EMO landscape and several unique concepts for developing alternative capability and response models.



1. What longer-term capacities and capabilities does the Commonwealth need to develop to meet the challenges of the evolving strategic environment?

The Australian Government has taken positive steps towards addressing the more immediate disaster needs, such as the National Emergency Stockpile, through the establishment of NEMA.

1.1 A cross jurisdictional, interoperable response capability

The findings of the numerous inquiries held into disaster response and recovery activity indicate the provision of a cross jurisdictional, interoperable, force multiplier would provide a long-term joint capability able to meet the challenging strategic environment.

This force multiplier must be interoperable with all local, state and territory emergency service groups (paid & volunteer) and the government (Defence, DFAT, Home Affairs, AFP, Border Force & AMSA). To achieve interoperability the proposed group would require:

- Standardised equipment and assets
- Nationally accredited common training protocols of a complementary standard with the ADF & EMO community

The provision would enable:

- A viable pathway for reduction of dependence on the ADF
- A capability to support defence in non-combat roles such as transport, logistics and SAR during non-peak emergency seasons (providing a viable force multiplier)
- In the case of a shared asset plan, a financially viable model able to self-generate income via multiple users (state/territory, Commonwealth & commercial engagements).

1.2 Surge capacity during peak season demands

Emergency services having the capacity to engage in multiple deployments for simultaneous disasters across Australia

The capability would allow the effective triage of assets and personnel using high-data input-modelling software that assists in the pre-positioning of resources prior to disaster occurrence—managing the evolving strategic environment with an offensive rather than defensive posture.

1.3 Large asset capability and workforce response

As the ADF reduces its disaster response frequency, the government will be required to ensure the large asset capability of Defence is replaced. To minimise effect of this loss on existing state and territory resources, a replacement capability could be developed and maintained by another provider to ensure adequate disaster support is ongoing.

In addition, the deployable nature of ADF personnel to disaster sites will have to be redeveloped as a non-military capability—whether that be via volunteers or private enterprise or a combination of both.



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

2.1 Over reliance on the ADF as a disaster response provider (personnel and assets)

There is an acknowledged over reliance on the ADF to provide both personnel and assets, in particular aviation assets (medium and heavy lift transport aircraft and helicopters). The ADF has acknowledged the increased workforce pressure on its resources and the impact on maintaining personnel numbers and force capability.

As stated in the most recent Defence Strategic Review (2023): *“Defence is not structured or appropriately equipped to act as a domestic disaster recovery agency concurrently with its core function, in any sustainable way.”*

2.2 The segmented nature of disaster response across Australia

Multi-jurisdictional disaster response in Australia is often difficult with cooperation between states and territories fractured due to factors such as incompatible equipment, different training standards and communication channels and differing cross-jurisdictional policy. This results in difficulty working together and presents a challenging environment for the delivery of emergency response.

Common findings from 18 of the major disaster inquiries over a 61-year period from 1939 to 2020 include:

- The need for adequate resources
- The lack of common communications infrastructure
- Inadequate hazard reduction
- Issues regarding local knowledge being ignored by bureaucracy

2.3 An over reliance on volunteer personnel availability and capability

The high reliance on volunteers to meet personnel requirements is seen as a developing pressure point due to the changing population demographic and the indications of reducing volunteer numbers. The demographic change is also driving a change in the type of volunteerism being embraced.

This new format of volunteerism finds that volunteers are often spontaneous, short term and untrained (at least from agency perspectives). This form of volunteerism often leads to the provision of valuable manpower that lacks coordination, support, equipment, and the specialist skills to operate EMO equipment.

Organisations are working to bridge the gap in this area to provide the missing elements, however, a viable solution is needed to address the dedicated support of large assets that require trained professional crew.

2.4 Regional instability

Regional instability offers many challenges but also provides opportunities for Australian Government engagement. The preeminent challenge presented revolves around supply chain instability.

The opportunities though, are many, such as: encouraging domestic manufacturing, heavy maintenance and the provision of regional services. The government has a major role in supporting this activity both directly, through contract arrangements, sales, or transfers of assets to the Sovereign Resource Pool and indirectly, by providing a regulatory environment that promotes the activities that respond to the needs.

2.5 The heavy financial burden of adequate disaster response preparation

The cost of meeting the multifaceted disaster response and recovery equation is high and rising. These costs revolve around not just inflation outstripping revenue but also community expectations and the strategic requirement to deepen regional engagement.

Some of the costs can be recovered if a new model allowing the release of assets, from local standby, to be deployed on a commercial basis during Australia's emergency response low season was embraced. International based asset may not be guaranteed for our peak seasons.

Refer to Appendix 1 to see a scenario of how issues 2.1, 2.2 & 2.4 could impact Australia in event of a large-scale domestic disaster.

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

The establishment of NEMA, the National Emergency Stockpile and the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (with its register of firefighting aircraft) and other similar projects are key elements of building community resilience and capability. However, much more could be done in this space with the inclusion of commercial emergency response providers such as the Public Safety Training & Response Group delivering surge capabilities domestically and fulfilling Australia's regional engagement requirements.

Large scale disaster mitigation infrastructure projects such as Northern Rivers Reconstruction are preventative activities that are greatly assisted by (may only be possible with) government funding and support.

3.1 Building community level resilience and capability programs for education and awareness

A certain amount of disaster readiness involves educational awareness programs. Providing funding and resources to enable the delivery and ongoing provision of information assists community preparedness for disaster events. While some programs currently exist, additional programs and further training for facilitators could improve course offerings, broaden appeal, and increase uptake. On this topic the Public Safety Training & Response Group as a provider of high quality nationally recognised courses is of the opinion that regional communities would benefit from training in the following subjects;

- Emergency Operations Management/Coordination
- Emergency Risk Management
- Evacuation Management
- Psychological First Aid



- Air Crew Officer Certifications
- Rescue Crew Officer Certification
- General and specialised CASA accredited UAV training courses covering drones with varying payload capacities
- Winch operation
- Para Rescue Services
- CPR / First aid
- Advanced First Aid
- Rescue and First Responder

Additional training courses specifically tailored for communities in flood prone regions are available

Public Safety Training & Response Group is licenced by Rescue 3 International to deliver internationally recognised courses and as such is fully aware of the benefit and value these courses would bring to communities where inundation is an issue.

Growing populations in disaster prone areas, such as coastal communities, also mean the currency and sharing of information is important.

3.2 Supporting the wider availability of large assets

Although there has been significant investment from the Disaster Ready Fund into infrastructure programs, little has been allocated for the provision of large assets—essential components of disaster response and recovery.

Many communities are hindered financially in terms of asset ownership but would benefit significantly from having access to larger assets. Several examples are listed below:

Preparing for Disasters: Access to large earthmoving equipment to create fire breaks or secure waterways (this could be via commonwealth owned/rented plant that can be transported where needed).

Disaster Response: Aviation assets that can be used for supply drops in remote areas of Australia (such as northern & central Australia—currently defence assets provide aerial support), aerial support for bushfire response.

Recovery: Earth moving plant and offroad vehicles to enable rapid access to disaster affected sites; aviation assets to assess disaster damage and provide logistics support.

3.3 Enabling communities to have greater access to disaster response technology

Technology can be used to assist communities and organisations that do not have the personnel support necessary to undertake traditional disaster preparedness and response. Drones, field sensors and mapping tools work as force multipliers to assist in informing communities about local climate conditions, necessary preventative measures and the nature of disaster progression.

This technology is especially useful in rural and remote communities.

3.4 Remote and regional access to assets and personnel

Identify opportunities to build regional engagement and use these opportunities to spread the sovereign asset cost burden amongst all stakeholders and commercial enterprise.

3.5 Improving domestic security

It is obvious that there are both domestic and international risks to security with the relevant causes in both classes having been dealt with extensively in this and other submissions. However, we see the following additional issues need to be addressed: increasing population density, a drier environment, insufficient fuel reduction, increased power line density, wind and solar farms, poor regional infrastructure, reduction in manpower, supply chain issues and lack of fuel reserves. Other less obvious security issues revolve around risks caused by service denial, arson and other nefarious acts by either state, non-state, or individual actors.

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

4.1 Increased availability of large assets

Aviation: There are several changes necessary to enable capability in the large asset class to be acquired and operated by a non-military operator, especially in the large aircraft field. The Australian Government must allow aircraft such as the C130J/LM100J to be registered, maintained, and operated in Australia in the normal aircraft category. Without this approval, charter passenger operations are not possible, meaning that the aircraft could not be utilised to full effect.

It seems likely that the RAAF will shortly be disposing of some of the current C130J fleet. A mechanism to allow purchase of these assets by a domestic company is a first step in developing this capability and so enable a progressive reduction in reliance on ADF assets. Perhaps these made available in the short term as a stopgap to new equipment being manufactured.

Land: Heavy machinery to enable communities to create disaster mitigating barriers and infrastructure, such as excavators and trucks. Container transport systems that can integrate handling and transport of emergency ready facilities such as flat pack temporary housing and other items as part of an overall logistics support plan.

Water: Provision of access to watercraft for flood prone and coastal communities to enable better and faster disaster and emergency response. Communities will have better outcomes through asset ownership, immediate response and deployment underpinned by local knowledge.

4.2 Emergency services that have cross jurisdictional capability

At present trans-border (e.g., Vic/NSW Murray River flooding) emergency response is problematic. Issues relate to:

- Communication
- Equipment incompatibility
- Command and control.

A multi-jurisdictional surge force with a predetermined deployment priority process could be utilised to augment the services of both jurisdictions (e.g., Vic & NSW) without diminishing incident control of either group.

The multi-jurisdictional surge force would also provide flexibility—being able to increase or decrease support as dictated by circumstance under the command of the relevant incident controllers, without the need for the complex multilayered approval process currently required.

4.3 Surge capacity in peak seasons or during simultaneous disasters

Australia needs a service that provides surge capability as has already been highlighted. This service needs to be provided while meeting the following competing requirements:

- Support of a capability that enables the reduction of ADF involvement
- It is expensive for the government to create an additional response capability
- The capability must be available when needed and capable of regional deployment
- The capability must be self-reliant in the field
- The capability must augment other services without diminishing existing command and control structures.

To deliver this combination of services, a new more responsive model of disaster response is recommended to:

- Reduce reliance on the ADF; medium and large assets must be obtained and operated by the new provider
- Reduce the cost to the government; the costs must be spread over multiple users including commercial contract work during Australia's low season
- Be available when needed; a pre-determined priority and deployment plan needs to be negotiated and approved by all stakeholders
- Deploy regionally; the service must have the required equipment and be given the mandate to do so
- Be self-reliant; in the field the service must have the resources and personnel to meet the requirement without drawing on local resources
- Augment other services without diminishing existing structures; implies a commercial pay for effect arrangement where deployment is made under predetermined processes and clear protocols are established and maintained. Liaison Officers will be needed to ensure seamless integration of strike teams.

4.4 Increased availability of trained personnel

Changes in work practices and population demographics have affected the level of community volunteerism. This indicates that the traditional emergency response model where volunteers crew emergency service assets and act as first responders may need revising. Traditional organisations (e.g., CFA, SES) should continue to be the primary first-responders with incident control protocols remaining as they are.

However, surge capacity should be provided by a professional national strike capability consisting of a sovereign resource pool and accompanying crews. Other unskilled manpower could then be provided by organisations catering to short-term volunteers. The proposed new model consisting of three components; existing ESO groups, sovereign resource pool with crews, and short-term volunteer groups, could address the following issues:

- Ensure primacy of existing local, state and territory incident management
- Retain existing community ESO engagement and service involvement



- Address the requirement for a reduction in ADF commitment
- Provide a staffing & asset solution for surge capacity—triaged in alignment with Prioritised Asset Deployment Plan
- Meet challenges presented by demographic change and the attendant change in volunteers
- Serve the veteran community and deliver value for the government by retaining veteran skill sets, providing meaningful engagement and underpin programs associated with veteran pathways and similar veterans' assistance projects

5. What models could the Commonwealth explore to replace or supplement support currently provided by the ADF during domestic crisis & are there sectors that could replicate the capabilities provided by the ADF?

The ADF is often called upon to provide capabilities such as: planning support, logistics, communication, transport, helicopter SAR, aerial drop support, engineering support and personnel.

Many of these activities rely on large assets and specialist operators. Other areas are labour intensive but rely on small numbers of specialists to manage activities.

Whilst no single organisation will be able to replicate the capabilities provided by the ADF, a strategic joint collaborative model involving existing suppliers in conjunction with private enterprise could provide a realistic path forward for delivering necessary domestic crisis response.

5.1 Examples of various model options

Broadly, the Australian Government could explore models such as:

- a dedicated Defence Disaster Response capability within Defence or a new department (National Guard/Coast Guard equivalent)
- a privately operated response capability
- a public-private joint operations model.

Given the geopolitical situation, the necessity for a rapidly deployable and scalable solution that can be delivered in a timely manner is critical.

5.2 Model Recommendation: A Public-Private Joint Operation Disaster Response Model

A public-private model that provides an all-agency, all-department, whole of government capability is a strategic path forward to ensure adequate disaster response whilst reducing ADF dependency. Public Safety Training & Response Group can assist by providing a capability to support multiple service providers while acting as a force multiplier by replacing the ADF in disaster response where appropriate and providing surge capability for some noncore ADF activities.

Vision: A public-private, cross jurisdictional, interoperable asset capability, servicing Defence, emergency services and civilian requirements (a Public Private Partnership [PPP]).

Objective: To deploy assets via a Prioritised Asset Deployment Plan (PADP) to:

- Provide cost effective on-demand asset availability
- Reduce the pressure of domestic obligations on ADF assets and personnel

- Improve and augment existing emergency hazard and natural disaster response with a scalable capability.

Delivered with a financial model that demonstrates a realistic long-term transition pathway to providing better emergency response capabilities, while enabling Defence to focus on its core mission.

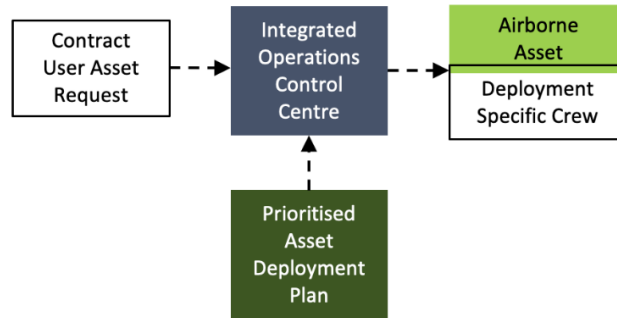


Figure 1: Prioritised Asset Deployment Summary

Service Delivery: the provision of interoperable assets that include, helicopters, transport category aircraft, all-terrain vehicles, multi-purpose maritime craft:

- A fleet of High-Capacity helicopters and crews, including redundancy and maintenance provisions
- A fleet of C130J/LM100J transport category aircraft and crews including redundancy and maintenance provisions
- Multiple all-terrain vehicle solutions with modularised capabilities and crews including redundancy and maintenance provisions
- Multiple swift-water and maritime craft with various capabilities and crews including redundancy and maintenance provisions.

Assets would be managed via a Prioritised Asset Deployment Plan through an Integrated Operations Control Centre (IOCC), to provide triaged service delivery and surge capacity in peak disaster times from strategic bases across Australia (positioned to also provide regional reach, including into the Indo-Pacific).

Financial Model: A public-private arrangement would ensure financial sustainability and a value for money outcomes-based model for government.

- Public component:
 - Government contracts with funding providing readiness (stand by charge) with additional charges for operational costs when assets are deployed.
 - Other aspects of the public component include a requirement for government support to enable operation and purchase of assets to meet the service requirements.
- Private component:
 - Readiness is always paramount, however, assets can be released and used to generate other income streams when not required (especially in the off season) to enable cost recovery—underpins a cost-efficient service delivery for government.

Outcomes: a transition pathway that builds:



- Rapid Australia-wide and regional response—a sustainable pathway forward, addressing the increasing frequency & impact of disasters
- Greater local emergency service access to assets especially large aviation assets
- Reduced pressure on Defence assets and personnel.

Refer to Appendix 2 for the specific capabilities the joint operation offers.

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

The government’s financial position enables it to be the provider of or sponsor of larger asset classes and their attendant crews that are cost prohibitive for local, state and territory agencies or indeed private companies, unless underpinned by an adequate income stream. Although all asset classes are needed, the most pressing class is the large aircraft category—both fixed wing and rotary wing (capability presently supplied by the ADF or foreign operators).

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

In the instance of a Public Private Partnership (PPP), the workforce remains engaged and trained by virtue of commercial engagements in the off-season and the overall general commercial nature of the operation. Veteran pathways, also provide a means by which workforce surge capacity can be scaled and maintained with qualified personnel.

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

The model is built around interoperability. While the PPP workforce provides trained crews for deployed assets, suitably trained volunteer groups would provide interchange crews when high tempo activities are under-way (e.g., fire services, DRA, SES, ADF). Groups providing unskilled volunteer personnel would supply labour for appropriate services (e.g., sandbagging, cleanup, loading, general duties).

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

The capability is intended to be deployed when called and to act as a force multiplier working under the direction of the incident controller providing requested capabilities and roles. The Sovereign Resource Pool is not intended to self-deploy; it would only deploy in response to requests made under a Prioritised Asset Deployment Plan (PADP) with cost recovery determined by the pay for effect process.

It is anticipated that requested capabilities would largely be those that are either not available to the requesting authority or be capabilities that need to scale up to meet an unusually severe occurrence. A similar role that is presently filled by the ADF but with the advantage of having a streamlined deployment process by virtue of the PADP.

Refer to Appendix 3 for further detail on the PADP.

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

Success in the private sector is directly dependent on profit; the sector brings with it a focus on cost effectiveness and efficient service delivery that is concerned with consumer satisfaction.

A clear government vision would enable the private sector to invest and deliver a service capability that meets the requirements in a cost-effective manner. To develop a clear vision a collaborative process will be required. The Public Safety Training & Response Group proposes the PPP model and would actively support the model and be a collaborative partner with government should such a model be pursued.

Other enablers to promote investment in the emergency response field could include:

- Tax concessions for large plant items (increased rates of depreciation, instant asset write off provisions or similar)
- Registration concessions
- Fuel rebates
- Standby contracts for multiple equipment classes based on the aerial firefighting contract model.

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

In terms of the emergency management command and control process the states and territories are well resourced but remain somewhat uncoordinated despite the AIIMS process underpinning management processes. The 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements noted that there are “clear benefits in nationally coordinated data and information, we also acknowledge that the best level for making decisions can be at a local level.”¹

This indicates that decision-making in Incident Control Centres displays a bias against using the local knowledge available from regional agencies, a situation unchanged since first being recorded in the findings of the Stretton 1939 Royal Commission which reported that state authorities overrode local authorities and ignored local knowledge. This situation could be remedied with federal oversight of data and tighter guidelines for Incident Control.

6. 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?

The Australian Government has a crucial role maintaining critical functions such as:

- Management and coordination (NEMA, NSR, NCM, AIDR, EMA, National Coordination Node)
- Consumables (NEMA & NEMS)
- ADF response in extreme emergency Defence Aid to Civil Community & High Availability Disaster Recovery (DACC & HA/DR)
- National equipment and personnel registers (in progress)
- Common training standards (theoretically achieved but in practice outcomes are variable largely due to differing equipment across the agencies)
- Maintain funding roles

¹ The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements 28 October 2020. 4.43



7. 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?

7.1 Streamlining public private and state and territory asset sharing arrangements

Enable private and state-based assets to be more freely shared between defence, emergency services and civilian operations. This would enable more private investment in the crisis response sector and expand the current base of Australian-owned assets and personnel.

In addition, arrangements surrounding the seasonal provision of assets requires more consultation to firm ongoing seasonal contracts—allowing the release and re-engagement of assets. This would assist in facilitating generation of income in the offseason, ensure recall of assets on short notice and ensure assets were available as needed during the emergency high season. This added certainty, makes investment in disaster response assets a more appealing option for the private sector.

Although the Australian Government at a federal level does not have the capacity to enact asset sharing agreements between states and territories, it could facilitate discussions, encourage, and support the model by having multiple commonwealth departments as contract users, especially as part of a regional engagement program.

7.2 Australian-made crisis response technology and materials

Multiple inquiries into bush fires and other disasters have highlighted the need for research, improved equipment, and commonality of equipment across multiple jurisdictions. Therefore, federally there is an opportunity to provide incentives for private enterprise to:

- Conduct research that informs materials and standards
- Provide research and development funding for equipment design
- Mandate standardised equipment designs across multiple jurisdictions and suppliers—simplifying manufacturing processes & improving interoperability.

7.3 Consideration of a tax offset model for additional private disaster assistance providers

The provision of tax offsets, instant asset write-offs, or increased depreciation rates could encourage the listing of, and additional acquisition of, commercial assets, such as earth moving equipment for the national equipment register. This would provide additional disaster support equipment and reduce reliance on ADF equipment for response and recovery support.

Approved asset owners would need to commit to participation in training exercises as part of this process and to be eligible for the tax credit.

This system could encourage sectors such as the construction and transport industry to become more involved in crisis response and reserve additional assets in their fleet to allow for this capability.

7.4 A greater focus on National standards in operations and training

Quality assurance and monitoring promotes accountability and consistency. Emergency services agencies are audited and benchmarked by a patchwork system including various federal, state, territory, and internal processes.

Centralising this process federally through ASQA (Australian Skills Quality Authority) (or equivalent) could enable the realisation of meeting best practice and continuous improvement targets. By mandating a national body external to states and territories conduct quality assurance auditing, confidence and consistency in all processes including training can be assured.

The stated benefits of independent audits are as follows:

- “providing greater confidence to government and the community in emergency management
- promoting a culture of continuous improvement within the sector, and encouraging all levels of the emergency management system to conduct their own self-assurance processes
- identifying benefits in consistency and collaboration
- strong engagement with stakeholders, community involvement and facilitation of better cooperative arrangements between agencies
- performing an accountability function through monitoring the implementation of previous review recommendations
- independent and accountable to Parliament, and
- building trust and relationships and taking a non-adversarial approach”²
- ensuring a verifiably consistent training content and standard is maintained nationally.

7.5 Policy surrounding the establishment of a Sovereign Resource Pool

A policy that works towards establishing a Public Private Partnership to develop a Sovereign Resource Pool (SRP) as part of national capability (that includes the National Emergency Management Stockpile) could be encouraged. The SRP would supply on-demand capability when requested. This service could be underpinned at a commonwealth level through initial financial support and then by ongoing contract engagement. Cost recovery mechanisms could include contract work domestically (State, Territory and Commonwealth Pool Members), third party contracts and government contracts internationally.

Local government followed by state and territory governments are responsible for disaster management in their own jurisdictions unless they request additional resources or declare a state of emergency enabling them to seek federal assistance, such as ADF support. An arrangement with a private entity with a commercially based deployment processes could provide a path for streamlining Australian Government disaster support.

The Sovereign Resource Pool (SRP) would contain assets available for use by all member groups as per an agreement. This is in effect a one stop shop for the expanded and streamlined offering of assets managed through the National Resource Sharing Center (NRSC) and the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC). The proposed assets would provide a national response capability as a force multiplier in any situation by being built around response capability. The attributes of response capability achieved through the SRP are:

1. Integration and interoperability
2. Scalability
3. Nationally accredited, audited, and complimentary competencies and standards for all personnel
4. Common asset types across all groups to allow seamless integration in all circumstances

² The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements 28 October 2020. 24.1



5. Having an agreed resource allocation priority plan in place to allow rapid response in all circumstances
6. Deployable without drawing on external resources in most situations
7. Self-sustaining when deployed so that regional resources are not impacted.

Appendix 1: Scenario

The ADF has responded to a regional conflict and is deployed in multiple locations across the Indo-Pacific. The ground forces are totally reliant on air support for resupply and the C17, C130 & C27J fleets are fully committed in this role. Similarly, the ADF's helicopter fleet is deployed or in heavy maintenance and they have no additional assets available.

Additionally, many ADF personnel are deployed in the field, on leave rotation or involved in support roles and cannot be released without impacting ongoing operations. In short, the government is not able to draw on ADF assets in the event there is a request for DACC tasking to assist in a disaster.

Australia faces one of its hottest summers on record, which has resulted in two major summer events. A large-scale bushfire affecting South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales and a cyclone that has affected the Northern Territory and the Kimberly. The effect of these natural disaster events has been for SA, Vic, NSW the NT, and WA to request Commonwealth-assistance from the Australian Government as all available state and territory assets and personnel have been deployed, as have available commercial assets.

At this point, the questions include:

- What additional assets can be called upon?
- What are the supply chain difficulties?
- What fuel supplies remain?
- What International resources would be available considering the military activity in the Indo-Pacific may be impacting air and sea access for civilian operations?

The questions above highlight some key pressure points especially asset deficiencies:

- Sovereign freight capability – a lack of Australian owned and registered air and maritime freight assets
- Lack of commercial out of gauge and specialist aerial assets
- Lack of medium and large commercial helicopter assets on the east coast
- Overly complicated process to allow cross jurisdictional cooperation
- Lack of interoperability for assets
- International assistance may not be available in a time of crisis

Questions the government of the day may need to respond to:

- Why is the Australian Government not providing adequate assistance?
- Why are the states & territories not cooperating, a common finding across 18 inquiries over the past 64 years?
- Where are the assets needed to respond?
- Why is there no common asset standard considering this has also been a common finding in those same inquiries over the past 64 years?

Additional areas of focus for the press:

- Loss of life and property
- Environmental fallout
- Economic loss
- Lack of resilience and forward planning

Appendix 2: Details of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Proposed Benefits

A PPP as envisaged would provide capabilities as follows:

For the ADF

- Rapid access/procurement to equipment, capability, and commercial-off-the-shelf options, especially where there is common equipment from commercial operators
- Integration with commercial operators (Force Multipliers)
- Integrated specialist third party operators with the ADF, e.g., as logistics providers
- Build shared public-private sovereign capability in maintenance where appropriate, especially in consort with a provider who also operates the same equipment
- Flexibility in availability of assets and personnel
- Optimise resources to enable assistance to Defence when tasked with DACC and HA/DR operations
- Personnel Transition Training pathways, resources, and providers
- Research opportunities, especially in small, targeted projects
- Personnel retention and post separation engagement through Ready Reserve/Flexible Working Arrangements
- Opportunities for collaboration and skill retention through Industry/ADF/EMS partnerships and multiple employer structures
- Pathways for skills, education & employment for
 - Serving personnel
 - Separating Personnel
 - Separated Personnel

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Border Force (BF), Australian Federal Police (AFP), Department of Home Affairs (DHA) & National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA):

- Visibility and engagement in the Indo-Pacific region · Opportunity to focus on its core responsibility rather than disaster relief
- A means of transporting personnel, equipment, and aid within the region
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) SAR and Oil Spill response
- Regional response capability
- Access to equipment
- Logistics support
- Training pathways
- Research Opportunities

State Emergency Services (SES), Police Forces (Pol. F), Ambulance Services (AS):

- Access to additional equipment
- Experienced and qualified personnel
- Operational Scope
- Logistics support

- Training Pathways
- Research Opportunities

The capability opportunities identify a financial burden that is prohibitive for individual agencies, especially due to the sporadic use of some resources and capabilities. Collectively, they reflect how agencies require access to the same capabilities but not necessarily at the same time. This allows a solution using a multi-access asset and capability program.

This concept is aligned to the findings of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements which states *“We have concluded that Australia needs a national approach to natural disasters. This does not mean that the Australian Government should ‘take over’ from state and territory governments. Rather, it means that we need ‘whole-of-nation,’ ‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-society’ cooperation and effort. More will be required of all. Neither individuals nor any one level of government will be able to cope alone.”*

The cost of these services is reduced by providing assets under commercial arrangements on the global market in the Australian low season.

From our research the Public Safety Training & Response Group has identified that the most cost-effective model for the provision of a capability as discussed is through a Public Private Partnership (PPP). A PPP brings synergies in that government pays for effect based on contracted services spread across multiple provisions to multiple agencies and departments.

Governments at all levels and private enterprise must come together in an open, collaborative college to develop the operating framework. Regulations and policy must support various elements of proposal (transfer and purchase of equipment especially considering commonality with ADF equipment, licencing, other approvals, training facility & course development, joint exercise development & access to government facilities when required).

Delivering the Shared Public Private Partnership

The Public Safety Training & Response Group propose to mitigate tension between service delivery, control of response, asset retention, cost, and responsibility by bringing together common areas of interest, activities, and capabilities in disaster arrangements. This proposal is a plan to enhance community-based disaster arrangements and provide cost savings without impacting the autonomy and independence of participating departments and agencies.

At the core of the proposal is the establishment of a Sovereign Resource Pool (SRP) to provide capability and resources for a wide variety of disaster response activities in support of participating agencies and departments at all levels of government. This proposal aligns with findings of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

The report states *“Efforts to make Australia more resilient to natural disasters are likely to become increasingly costly, and therefore will call for more resources and a more effective and efficient use of resources. The Australian Government can find nationwide efficiencies and economies of scale through, for example, facilitating greater cooperation and the sharing of resources within and between states and territories. Each state and territory could, in theory, try to be self-sufficient, and resource their fire and emergency service agencies to meet peak demand in the worst disaster seasons. But a national approach to disaster management would use national emergency resources more effectively and efficiently across the nation.”*

Differences across jurisdictions in equipment, technology, training, processes, and protocols all make it more difficult for people to help with and respond to disasters outside their home state. During the 2019-2020 bushfires, some fire and emergency responders working interstate struggled to communicate with other responders. Some even faced these difficulties when working within their own state or territory.

Fire and emergency services have for some time worked to make systems more interoperable, but challenges remain.”

A PPP asset program is the best solution as a way forward. The proposal is based on the need for a Nationally Agreed Prioritised Asset Deployment Plan (a development of the Resource Prioritisation Guidance Plan) that divides resources into three classes to be made available as needed:

Dedicated Resources

A resource provided under specific contract terms for a sole user e.g., SAR helicopters contracted to the ADF available on a 24/7/365 basis.

Pooled Resources

Resources available to multiple users on a similar basis to accessing a fractional corporate jet program where members have access to aircraft when needed on the understanding that not all members will need to use the same asset at the same time. Capability can be maintained while costs are shared, reducing the individual burden.

Unallocated Resources

Unallocated resources are additional resources in the system intended to cover planned activity (such as scheduled maintenance cycles) and unplanned activity (unscheduled maintenance or unexpected tasking, etc). The added benefit is that these assets are available to provide a surge capability during periods of heightened activity.

This also recognises that it is not possible to cater for every contingency, hence there is a requirement for a resource allocation plan for exceptional circumstances.

Cost benefits are delivered due to the pooling of resources and the commonality of assets allowing participants to have a ‘pay for effect’ model rather than paying for dedicated equipment, personnel, training, and excess capacity to cover non-productive cycles such as leave and maintenance.

THE SOVEREIGN RESOURCE POOL

The SRP will deliver the following resources:

1. Personnel: The SRP will provide a trained pool of personnel able to deploy to support all types of response. Following an in-depth evaluation of stakeholder needs, the SRP will propose a personnel pool that can fill positions in deployable operational response teams (planning, command / control, operations) and in generic workforce positions (debris clearing). A workforce model will be developed that incorporates civilians, veterans, and ADF personnel to provide a critical mix of backgrounds to ensure a resilient, flexible, and adaptable workforce.

More specifically, by example Public Safety Training & Response Group aircrew will be a mix of full-time company crew (ex-ADF & civilian), full-time ex-ADF aircrew who are also SERCAT 3/5 Reservists (20-100 days per year depending on position & type), and part-time company aircrew who are



SERCAT 7 (full-time on an FWA) / SERCAT 6 (part-time) ADF members, granted time off from the ADF to fly for the Company.

2. Veterans and Family Employment Pathway: The workforce model proposed for the SRP will focus on providing an employment pathway for veterans and their families based on the premise of ongoing employment and transfer of disaster arrangement skills, experience, and knowledge between military and civilian roles. The model will cross-reference skills gained from defence service to identify and recognise prior learning and experience.

3. 'Ex Service ASSIST': Using a model based on harnessing Ex Service personnel and locations, the Public Safety Training & Response Group will examine the feasibility of a localised workforce response model centred on RSLs. Provisionally titled 'RSL ASSIST' this program is in the early developmental stages and requires stakeholder engagement.

4. Management: The SRP will be managed by the Public Safety Training & Response Group, which ensures a single partner administers it, this streamlines the SRP and ensures all participating stakeholders including the NRSC and NAFC have a single point of contact with real time asset monitoring during responses. The Public Safety Training & Response Group has established an Integrated Operations Control Centre (IOCC) to manage responses and operational response teams. The intent is to connect the IOCC with state and federal emergency and incident control centres to support the use of AIIMS procedures and protocols. Integrated control centres will achieve information flow, a common operating picture, and shared logistics support. Any SRP resources will be under the operational command of the incident controllers responsible for various activities. The Public Safety Training & Response Group will ensure that there is a Liaison Officer attached to operational response teams to ensure cooperation and compliance expectations are met.

5. Training: Following cross-referencing and determining training and education requirements (initial & recurrent) for the disaster response and recovery workforce, personnel will be trained by the Public Safety Training & Response Group's in-house RTO (Registered Training Organisation). This RTO will provide specialist and general training for emergency, crisis, and natural hazard response missions.

The Public Safety Training & Response Group has commenced providing specialist training in the aviation area, underpinned by Air Operators Certificates that provide for drone training, helicopter training, and fixed wing aircrew and flight crew training. Additional courses and facilities are being added as the Group becomes aware of stakeholder needs with the goal to become the exemplar for emergency response in the region.

Courses provided by the Public Safety Training & Response Group will be available for all personnel from member organisations. This furthers the concept of shared resources and allows for more training opportunities, greater standardisation, collaboration, and lower costs. This model for training delivery is compatible with the findings of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements which states;

"A level of national consistency in training and competency standards also aids resource sharing, enabling someone trained in one state or territory to work effectively in another. There has been substantial progress towards this end, but there is further work to be done.

There should be a national register of personnel and equipment, which could be supported by a personnel accreditation scheme. These initiatives will enable available resources to be easily identified and deployed.

National-level exercises for natural disasters, including disasters that cross state borders, are also critical.”

6. Research, Evaluation and Learning: The Public Safety Training & Response Group recognises the need and has the capability to conduct and support agency and cross-agency research, evaluation, and learning, including joining existing Communities of Practice. Research is considered a critical and concurrent aspect of disaster arrangements and delivery of the SRP program. Ongoing research, knowledge generation, and continuous improvement will enable the PPP to make evidence-based decisions, identify and respond to issues, trends, and other factors that emerge during operations and training. Due to the dynamic nature of emergency operations, Public Safety Training & Response Group perceives that many small low-cost research projects and studies are likely to deliver valuable data giving a high return for minimal investment. This is also the view of the group’s potential research partners.

Within the training environment there are two areas requiring immediate research and action:

1) For the SRP program to meet its full potential, the Public Safety Training & Response Group will participate in the development of a common competency-based system that meets civilian AOC (Aircraft Operating Certificate) and licence requirements (CASA (Civil Aviation Safety Authority)), while aligning to ADF regulatory requirements (such as the DASR (Defence Aviation Safety Regulations)).

2) The Public Safety Training & Response Group will progress specialist training from a skills-based structure to demonstrated competency and proficiency model. A common competency-based training system is necessary to meet the needs of all SRP personnel. This requirement, however, will be especially important for the aircrew cohort.

7. Logistics: The SRP will be self-sustaining in the field and in-house logistics support has been built into the model. The Public Safety Training & Response Group will manage SRP logistics, warehousing and maintenance of agreed stores and equipment at suitable locations. As part of their operations, the Public Safety Training & Response Group intends to operate a fleet of fixed and rotary wing aircraft, and a mix of land transport vehicles. These assets will primarily be used to facilitate the transport of personnel, stores, and equipment to be self-sustaining. It is anticipated that all SRP capability will be able to augment and integrate with in-service air, maritime, and land capabilities, such as the ADV Reliant. When not required for regional, national, or state emergencies, SRP assets will be used for training and commercial operations, where practical, thus reducing the government’s financial burden.



APPENDIX 3

PROPOSED PRIORITISED ASSET DEPLOYMENT PLAN

Sovereign Resource Pool User Classes

Contract Users

An SRP user who has assets assigned under a longterm contract and pays for assets and crews to always be available as per the contract terms. (e.g., ADF) Assets would only be released in response to extreme emergency. (As per the PADP, ADF assets would be redeployed under similar circumstances to the existing DACC Protocol)

Special Ad hoc Users

Special ad hoc users are commercial customers (e.g., BHP) who would have access to Standby Assets when available. The income derived from this commercial activity would help defray the unit cost associated with the overall operation.

Winter 3rd Party Users

Winter 3rd party users are commercial customers who have access to assets on a cyclical basis (e.g., Australian Winter). Cyclical contracts generally run for 4 to 6 months (e.g., US Dept of Forestry contract firefighting).

Asset Pool Members

Members who contribute to the cost of the assets on a longterm commitment (e.g., State/Local Governments, CFA, Police SAR). These users have access to capability but do not pay for a specific asset. Assets are available for use on call as per the PADP.



Asset Classes

- **Dedicated Assets**

Assets dedicated to support the requirements of a contract.



- **Standby Assets**

Assets used for multiple roles.

- Replace assets in maintenance or undergoing upgrade
- Available for Special Ad hoc Users
- Available for surge capacity



- **Dedicated Pool Asset**

Asset dedicated to provide capability to Asset Pool Members.
Some of these assets may be released in the Australian off season to provide assets to support cyclical contract work with Winter 3rd Party Users.

