

My name is Simon Newstead. I'm a parent of a young kid, living in Melbourne and whose father served in Papua New Guinea and grandfather served in Gallipoli. My wife recently became a citizen of Australia. I feel a keen sense of love and appreciation for this great country and the peace and safety we have currently living here.

I want to express my gratitude for giving me the chance to speak up and share my thoughts on how the Commonwealth should handle crisis response and recovery capabilities, especially as a parent thinking about the next and future generations to come.

I've been thinking a lot about the recent shift in focus of the Australian Defence Force towards its primary mission. It's an opportunity for us as a nation to also take a step back and consider its primary mission - how we can best protect our people from the various dangers we face.

It's the government's responsibility, first and foremost, to **increase our actual, not only perceived safety.**

I believe that reevaluating how we perceive risks could lead to much better outcomes for our nation. To put it in simpler terms, I recall something Andrew Leigh wrote in his book, "What's the Worst That Could Happen," that really struck a chord with me:

"Existential risks aren't trivial. If there's a one in six chance that humanity could be wiped out in the coming century, that means that **the typical Australian is fifteen times more likely to die as a result of a species-ending catastrophe such as nuclear war than to be killed in a car crash.**"

It's clear to me that we need to pay more attention to experts and rely on solid information when making decisions about what risks to prioritize.

We can't afford to ignore the potential catastrophic and existential threats we face.

It's essential to engage with experts, make informed decisions, and consider the well-being of future generations.

I'm heartened to see the government taking a step back to reevaluate our emergency management strategies through the "Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response" discussion paper.

This is a positive move, and I would encourage the government to take an even broader perspective.

Let's start from scratch, looking at all potential hazards and how we can best protect Australians from them. By focusing on the expected harm these hazards can cause, we can identify interventions and better use of resources that will truly benefit our people.

In light of these considerations, I strongly believe that **Australia needs a National Risk Assessment** that takes into account all potential hazards.

The UK has recently completed its assessment, and many nations like ours have similar evaluations. It's crucial that our efforts to combat hazards align with the actual risk they pose. Currently, catastrophic hazards, despite their enormous potential consequences, are often overlooked. An all-encompassing risk assessment is essential for building the capabilities we

genuinely need.

I also see an opportunity for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to become a leader, not just within our government but globally, by taking catastrophic and existential risks seriously. These less likely but highly impactful risks are too often brushed aside.

If NEMA takes the initiative to explore how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from events like bio-terrorism or nuclear war, it can help convey the severity of these hazards to policymakers, regulators, and society at large. Instead of ignoring these risks, NEMA could help us all understand the challenges and emphasize just how crucial it is to prevent them from becoming a reality.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to share my perspective on the need to reform Commonwealth capabilities.

Our son Lincoln is 4 now, with a curiosity and love for the world, and I truly wish for him and his kids and beyond to live in a wonderful safe Australia, that we're so blessed to enjoy today. Given the high risks of serious catastrophes in coming decades, including man made, it's a topic that really hits home personally.

I may be just one voice, but I genuinely hope that our government takes the risks of catastrophic and existential hazards as seriously as they deserve.

The evidence is clear: these risks are significant, perhaps even more so than fires, floods, or storms. It's the responsibility of the Commonwealth to address these risks head-on and build the necessary capabilities to keep us safe, especially for the sake of our children's future.