



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2022 – 2026



October 2021

AFAC Limited (ABN 52 060 049 327)

Level 1, 340 Albert Street, East Melbourne Victoria 3002

T: 03 9419 2388

F: 03 9419 2389

afac@afac.com.au

afac.com.au

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Strategic Directions 2022 – 2026

INTRODUCTION

The *Strategic Directions for Fire and Emergency Services in Australia and New Zealand 2022-2026* (referred as *Strategic Directions*) is the third edition developed by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), as the National Council of Fire and Emergency Services. These documents are endorsed by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) and the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM) and AFAC reports to these bodies annually on accomplishment.

The *Strategic Directions* provide the fire and emergency services sector with a shared vision and a joint commitment to enhanced community resilience. It informs, clarifies intent and identifies the actions required across AFAC agencies, engaging high-level officials and Government Ministers. The expectation within the AFAC National Council is that the *Strategic Directions* will be considered in the development of each agency's strategic plan and set the direction and priorities for AFAC collaboration at the national level.

This new edition provides the opportunity to address changing environmental factors and community and business settings, as we continue to transition from traditional fire and emergency service delivery to emergency management professionals integrated with, and working for, our communities.

INTEGRATION OF THE NEW DIRECTIONS

There are underlying themes that provide the foundation and linkage between each Strategic Direction. These underlying themes cross each of the Strategic Directions and help to provide achievement of the vision.

- Partnership and collaboration – creating new relationships, while utilising existing connections to better apply the collective distributed knowledge, capability and capacity.
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation – supporting communities and the sector to identify, understand, mitigate and adapt to changing climate risks.
- Intelligence based decision making – use of data and information, shared and applied in a consistent manner, to help deliver robust and timely intelligence across all hazards.
- Leadership and management – national and jurisdictional leaders commit to ensure unified outcomes are achieved by adopting a whole of community and whole of sector focus ensuring that the most vulnerable communities are supported.
- Traditional Owners and knowledge – ensuring First Nations knowledge, practices and culture is respected and used to inform collaborative and innovative partnerships that integrate cultural and land management outcomes, to strengthen local capacity and resilience.

RELATIONSHIP WITH NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

NEMMM consists of all Ministers responsible for Emergency Management from Federal, State and Territory Governments. AFAC reports to NEMMM through ANZEMC on achievements against the Strategic Directions annually.

The *Strategic Directions 2022-2026* support NEMMM in fulfilling its mandate in driving and coordinating recommendations of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

National principles

The following principles are fundamental to the work of Fire and Emergency Services. They enhance understanding and achievement across all agencies, contributing to safer and more resilient communities. They will be considered in the implementation of the Strategic Directions in policy and practice.

Primacy of Life - Primacy of life and the reduction of harm and suffering is the major motivation for fire and emergency services. Any loss of life from emergencies and disasters is deeply felt within the fire and emergency services community. Minimising loss is reliant on:

- working with communities to encourage shared responsibility and promote disaster resilience
- a highly skilled and proficient workforce with appropriate equipment and support
- planning and exercising to maintain the highest possible competencies
- effective incident management employing the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS).

Trust and confidence - Fire and emergency services depend on a high level of trust, not only within crews, teams, units and brigades, but also with key stakeholders such as other emergency services, local government and communities. Maintaining trust and confidence of those they serve is a key success measure for fire and emergency services. This trust and confidence requires:

- shared community information and a common operating picture before, during and after incidents
- individual and team behaviour of the highest standard
- common understanding and awareness of community risk and expectations
- reliable and professional advice and service delivery.

Interoperability through partnerships - Most emergency incidents generate a response from a variety of agencies. Interoperability is fundamental to emergency service delivery: all agencies, all hazards, all of the time. This requires open communication, sharing of information, approaches and philosophies, as well as interoperable equipment, procedures and a clear understanding of command and control. Interoperability through partnerships requires:

- commitment across government, industry and communities, planning for interagency response with a willingness to train and exercise together
- seamless operations and the application of AIIMS during incident management
- adopting common industry positions, standards and protocols
- sharing ideas, successes, lessons and resources.

Accountability - As publicly funded services, fire and emergency services must be accountable to communities, governments and their stakeholders. Accountability builds confidence and requires:

- responding to community concerns
- maximising efficiencies and cost reductions
- appropriate reporting and corporate governance
- minimising duplication across services.





Strategic Direction 1

Supporting resilient communities through risk reduction

Overview

Climate change is influencing the frequency, scale and intensity of natural hazards and driving the creation of new hazards and disaster risks that compromise the stability of natural, social, built and economic environments.

Australia has developed the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (NDRRF) and National Action Plan as its response to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, that Australia is a signatory to. The NDRRF recognises that reducing disaster risk is critical to supporting communities and economies to be resilient. This builds on the significant progress made across all sectors in Australia since the release of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience in 2011.

Fire and emergency services agencies are well placed to provide leadership and to collaborate with governments, business, communities, educational institutions, and individuals to develop strategies and take action to reduce disaster risk and support resilient communities, through mitigation, influencing policy and regulatory change, and education and engagement.

Fire and emergency services will enhance resilient communities by:

1. **Supporting exposed and vulnerable communities** to prepare and adapt to the increased frequency and severity of natural hazards due to climate change.
2. **Integrating a systemic approach to climate and disaster risk** to address the escalating impacts of climate change on exposed and vulnerable communities and the environment.
3. **Partnering and collaborating across sectors** to share, use and promote community level knowledge and skills, build understanding, and strengthen collective impact for risk reduction and resilience.
4. **Enhancing the effectiveness of community education and engagement programs** through collaboration and evidence-based practice, with a focus on inclusion and participation.
5. **Supporting disaster resilience education and collaborative approaches** to engagement with children and young people in schools and other settings, with a focus on place-based learning, student agency and local action.
6. **Advocating for and promoting effective risk mitigation measures** in the built environment through strengthening regulations, policies and Standards.
7. **Influencing effective land use planning decisions** that mitigate disaster risk and loss.
8. **Supporting community-centred recovery** as an opportunity to enhance resilience across the social, built, natural and economic environments.
9. **Improving the resilience of Australia and New Zealand's landscapes** through an understanding of the role of fire in the landscape and implementing sustainable fire and land management practices.



Strategic Direction 2

Providing a trusted response

Overview

Rapid-onset, large-scale incidents can have life-altering consequences for those impacted, causing a potentially high number of fatalities and widespread destruction. Catastrophic disasters disrupt lives and impact our communities economically and socially. Readiness is critical for the industry to ensure that the response and recovery missions are appropriately executed and successful. The fire and emergency services sector are committed to providing management and specialist training, leading the country's risk reduction efforts, and providing research and data collection and analysis. The sector provides current, relevant and robust training, education and educational materials to prepare and strengthen the nation's fire and emergency services to prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond and recover from all hazards.

Fire and emergency services will provide a trusted response by:

1. **Providing effective, reliable operational response** through data-based decision making, strategic planning and use of appropriate and available technologies.
2. **Embedding the integration of recovery activities** and centering on the reduction of community impacts at all phases of the emergency management process.
3. **Allocating ground and air resources based on risk** to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of response and improve community outcomes.
4. **Adopting an evidence-based approach** to consider future capacity and capability requirements.
5. **Embedding the concept of national capability** to share resources and provide integrated emergency response operations across jurisdictional borders.
6. **Providing cohesive emergency management and operational support** at a national, state, regional and incident level.
7. **Enhancing national response and interoperability** through a contemporary, and scalable Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System.
8. **Supporting capability and leadership development** through regular, comprehensive multi- agency emergency management exercises at a national, state, regional and local level.
9. **Cultivating and enhancing relationships** with key international emergency response partners and stakeholders to provide greater surge capacity for extreme events.



Strategic Direction 3

Using credible and timely information and data

Overview

Accurate, reliable and timely information is critical to effective decision-making and modern systems rely on the rapid transfer of information to deliver impact and value.

By utilising current and emerging technologies across a wide range of systems, sources and capabilities, fire and emergency services can enhance community advice and understanding before, during and after emergency events.

At local, state and national levels, data will be at the heart of our decisions. By implementing consistent data and information systems, standards and protocols, fire and emergency services will streamline the collation of information and make it easier to combine diverse data streams to improve risk and impact assessments, strategic planning and decision making. This in turn supports individuals and communities to make appropriate, informed and timely decisions.

Fire and emergency services will use and communicate credible and timely data and information by:

1. **Implementing and applying the Australian Fire Danger Rating System** nationally.
2. **Implementing the Australian Warning System** for multi-hazards to provide consistency in warnings for individuals and communities across jurisdictions and hazard types.
3. **Transitioning bushfire simulators from the various existing techniques to Spark Operational** as the national bushfire simulator.
4. **Establishing national standards and protocols for data collection** and sharing to support national initiatives that enable collaboration to reduce risk.
5. **Working collaboratively with other organisations and sectors** to build data and information capability.
6. **Generating intelligence from data and information** from a wide range of sources including ground, aerial, remote sensing, media, social media and all other available sources.
7. **Enhancing and building greater predictive services capability** to improve risk assessment, strategic planning and operational and tactical decision making.
8. **Actively sharing data and information within and between agencies and other stakeholders** creating Decision Support Systems to use at incident, regional, state and national level.
9. **Enhancing community understanding of risk and mitigation approaches** by information exchange with communities through available and emerging technologies.



Strategic Direction 4

Safe, capable and diverse workforce

Overview

Fire and emergency services have an Australasian workforce of 288,000. It consists of 254,000 registered volunteers, 34,000 paid staff in career roles across fire services and parks and land management agencies and 6,000 retained or part time staff. Across the broader emergency management sector, the number exceeds 500,000. This is a significant workforce capability, that is organised, trained and ultimately provides the nation with a substantial surge capacity in challenging times. This national capability is achieved through substantial volunteer contributions.

Fire and emergency services are working to build an inclusive culture, by embracing the value of bringing people from different backgrounds and different points of view to work together, to cultivate a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community.

Governance and resource management of this significant resource needs to be contemporary, adaptable and accountable.

Fire and emergency services will foster a safe, capable and diverse workforce by:

1. **Cultivating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community we serve** and instilling a culture of access and inclusion where everyone is responsible for their part in respecting and valuing the different backgrounds, skills and experiences of individuals.
2. **Ensuring physically and psychologically safe workplaces** where mental health services are accessible and prioritised.
3. **Engaging in workforce planning to build capacity and capability for current and future needs** through recruitment, selection and retention practices that ensure a skilled and sustainable workforce available to deliver positive community outcomes.
4. **Creating a safe and healthy workplace for all** by providing a supportive and inclusive work environment and fulfillment of workplace and workforce requirements.
5. **Cultivating adaptable, dynamic leadership** to enable the workforce to manage change in the operating environment.
6. **Professionalising our workforce** through the Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme, vocational education training, and research utilisation to build capability and support a learning culture.
7. **Maintaining a competent, organised, equipped, ready and sustainable workforce**, skilled and able to lead in routine, challenging and dynamic environments.
8. **Participating in professional development events** designed to increase knowledge and understanding to build development and capability of the workforce.
9. **Remaining engaged in national initiatives such as Champions of Change Coalition** to drive gender equity.



Strategic Direction 5

Informed by knowledge, innovation and research

Overview

Emergency Management operates in a dynamic environment with major shifts in technology, demography, and community expectations. An ongoing concern for AFAC and its members is the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Particularly heatwaves, storms, floods and extreme bushfire conditions. The fire and emergency services will anticipate and respond to these challenges, underpinned by robust knowledge, informed by post event analysis, research and innovation.

Partnerships will be established and maintained to deliver pure and applied research and importantly look beyond the sector to understand how to achieve the path to our goals. By scanning the environment and collaborating across Australia and internationally, opportunities can be identified and utilised.

Our research focus will be driven by community safety outcomes and we'll confidently refocus our efforts to maximise value.

Fire and emergency services will be informed by knowledge, innovation and research by:

1. **Maintaining a visible link between our research and community benefits** through an ongoing commitment to being engaged in the research, informed of research outcomes and adopting improved practices.
2. **Ensuring knowledge and information** is collected, stored and made accessible across the sector.
3. **Enhancing evidence-based decision-making** by establishing and maintaining robust lessons management processes and using available data, information and research to improve outcomes.
4. **Actively engaging with Traditional Owners** to allow where appropriate, knowledge and practice to be shared, acknowledged and respected for continual learning and adaptive management.
5. **Driving innovation to enable sector advancement** whereby intellectual expertise is valued and there is a desire to identify, nurture and champion evolving opportunities and potential.
6. **Considering how the sector adapts to future scenarios**, including demographics, climate change and emerging technologies.
7. **Strengthening our national and international partnerships** to accelerate our learning, promote creative thinking and enhance value for all.
8. **Anticipating and responding to emerging community, industry and government needs** through deep engagement and understanding of the changing environment.



Strategic Direction 6

Effective and transparent governance

Overview

The fire and emergency services sector operates within established governance frameworks, by which our members are directed, controlled and held to account. Modelling good governance and seeking to build on best practice will foster an environment that results in greater collaboration while delivering value through strategic and transparent business and procurement practices.

Governance, in this context, refers to the set of control measures and processes that include appropriate legislation and risk management systems by which emergency services derive their powers and are held to account for their decision-making.

Accountability is a core component of effective governance, made up of four key elements – transparency, responsibility, enforcement and responsiveness. Our sector is accountable for its emergency management responsibilities to governments and the communities they serve. This requires clarity in the delineation of responsibilities for decision-making authority, functions, advice and information sharing.

Fire and emergency services will ensure effective and transparent governance by:

1. **Influencing and contributing to legislation and policy** at all levels of government and industry standards that impact all levels of service delivery.
2. **Compliance with agreed best practice** including International and Australian Standards relating to equipment, appliances, and personal protective equipment that are fit for purpose and are benchmarked.
3. **Delivering value** by reviewing practices and services and promoting business acumen in our leaders and managers to ensure that the highest standards of governance practice is embedded within the workforce.
4. **Pursuing opportunities and information sharing** that lead to collaboration on strategic and transparent procurement practices; to maximise efficiencies, identify cost benefits, and aim toward standardised outcomes.
5. **Focusing on appropriate risk management practices** and ensuring effective hazard mitigation strategies apply to resource management (including assets and maintenance), training and development, health and safety through an awareness and understanding of risk exposures and how these can impact on sector objectives.
6. **Designing and implementing rigorous tools and reporting systems** to support operational and strategic decision making to achieve sector objectives.
7. **Improving outcomes by monitoring and evaluating performance** to meet government and community expectations.

