



Strategic Directions

# Achievement Report

2024

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*Cover images, left to right from top left:*

*NSW EPA, EMV,*

*SACFS, FRV, NSW EPA,*

*ACT ESA, Richard J Ho, FRNSW*



AFAC acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Custodians of Australia and Māori, as the Tangata Whenua and Treaty of Waitangi partners in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

We recognise their unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and their rich contribution to society.

We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future.

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# From the CEO

It is my pleasure to provide the *AFAC Strategic Directions Achievement Report* for 2024, the third report under *Strategic Directions for fire and emergency services in Australia and New Zealand 2022-26*.

The Directions provide the fire and emergency service sector with a collective vision and a joint commitment to enhance community safety by informing, clarifying intent, and identifying actions required across the AFAC membership.

This report maintains the same format as previous years. It showcases the progress achieved over the past 12 months by all jurisdictions in collaboration with AFAC Members and partner agencies through case studies.

These case studies represent a selection of initiatives rather than an exhaustive list relating to the Strategic Directions. They demonstrate a national capability embedded in community engagement, operational readiness, the latest qualifications and standards, effective lessons management, research utilisation, and vital contributions to disaster recovery.

There are a range of initiatives from local to global and before, during, and after disaster events. From initiatives that change the way we work with each other, to those that encompass our communities and other partners.

AFAC's suite of doctrine is one of AFAC's most integral intellectual property assets and spans all the six Strategic Directions. The doctrine covers the national principles of primacy of life, trust and confidence, interoperability through partnerships, and accountability. Comprising over 120+ evidence-based publications, the collection

provides guidance for the consistent utilisation and implementation of practice, training, and research.

AFAC is privileged to work alongside our members in their important work, and proud to contribute directly to some of the initiatives in this report.

This publication is a collection of highlights, that barely scrapes the surface of what is achieved across a sector dedicated to community safety. I extend my thanks and gratitude to all AFAC members, other emergency management agencies and industry for their commitment and collective achievements during the year.



**Rob Webb**

Chief Executive Officer

AFAC

# Acknowledgements

AFAC, the Australian and New Zealand National Council for fire and emergency services, expresses gratitude to all members and affiliate members for their commitment to delivering on the *Strategic Directions Achievement Report 2024*.

AFAC acknowledges the staff within agencies who shared their own case studies. The eighth report includes examples from the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, Country Fire Authority Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, Fire and Emergency New Zealand,

Fire and Rescue NSW, Fire Rescue Victoria, Department of Fire and Emergency Services WA, National Aerial Firefighting Centre, NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, and SA Country Fire Service.

These contributions have ensured the final result is wide-ranging and reflective of the work undertaken by the fire and emergency services sector collectively.

# Background

*Strategic Directions for Fire and Emergency Services 2022-2026* is the third edition developed by AFAC. AFAC is proud to work with its member and affiliate member agencies to present the *Strategic Directions Achievement Report* for 2024, showcasing the industry and jurisdictional activities in support of the sector's Strategic Directions.

This report consists of six priority areas that reflect a shared vision and joint commitment to safe and secure communities in Australia and New Zealand. In late 2023, AFAC's National Council endorsed the additional principle 'Climate informed disaster resilience' to highlight the need for the emergency management sector to address the impacts of climate change. The new principle demonstrates AFAC members' joint commitment to

addressing the immediate challenges and long-term impacts of emerging climate and disaster risks.

The expectation within the AFAC National Council is that the Strategic Directions will be considered in the development of each agency's strategic plan. Together with states and territories, and the Australian and New Zealand Governments, the priorities are shaping the future of emergency management. 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.

The six Strategic Directions for 2022-2026 are:

 <b>DIRECTION 1</b> Supporting resilient communities through risk reduction	 <b>DIRECTION 2</b> Providing a trusted response	 <b>DIRECTION 3</b> Using credible and timely information and data	 <b>DIRECTION 4</b> Safe, capable and diverse workforce	 <b>DIRECTION 5</b> Informed by knowledge, innovation and research	 <b>DIRECTION 6</b> Effective and transparent governance
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Image: EMV

## DIRECTION ONE

# Supporting resilient communities through risk reduction

- > NSW EPA – Guung Butherun (water stories) project: a NSW EPA Flood Recovery Program for water quality monitoring
- > FRNSW – Fireproofing at-risk communities: A DRRF-funded initiative by AFDO in partnership with FRNSW
- > DFES – Building Back Better after floods in the Fitzroy Valley, Western Australia
- > AIDR and ABC – Helping Hands: Disaster Resilience Tool Kit
- > EMV – Victorian Australian Warning System community education program

## Overview

Fire and emergency services agencies are operating in an increasingly complex environment with demographic changes, technological transitions, heightened geopolitical risk, and climate change testing and stretching the sector’s capacities and capabilities. Climate change is particularly influencing the frequency, scale and intensity of natural hazards, and driving the creation of new risks that compromise the stability of natural, built, social, cultural and economic environments.

Australia’s *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* (endorsed by COAG in 2020) recognises that reducing disaster risk is critical to supporting communities and economies to be resilient. It builds on the significant progress made across all sectors in Australia since the release of the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* in 2011, which highlighted the need for a shared sense of

responsibility to improve disaster resilience. The Second *National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction* (NEMA 2023) signals continued commitment to reduce systemic disaster risk in order to create stronger, more secure, and more resilient communities before, during, and after disasters.

AFAC members are playing an important role in providing leadership and collaborating with governments, businesses, communities, educational institutions, and individuals, to develop strategies and actions to reduce disaster risk and support resilient communities.

AFAC members are taking action to enhance preparedness and reduce disaster risk through influencing policy and regulatory change, education and engagement, and partnerships and collaboration.

Fire and emergency services support resilient communities through:

## NSW EPA – Guung Butherun (water stories) project: a NSW EPA Flood Recovery Program for water quality monitoring

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Following the submission '*Buuban Butherun (Flood Stories)*' by Oliver Costello (a Bundjalung man from Northern NSW), commissioned by the NSW Flood Inquiry in 2022, the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements funded the Guung Butherun (water stories) project, which was delivered by Jagun Alliance Aboriginal Corporation, and supported by NSW EPA.

### — AIM

To provide a cultural assessment of flood recovery in the Richmond River catchment on Bundjalung Jagun (Country), recognising that water quality monitoring can be better understood through cultural indicators of river health, Country knowledge practices and place-based experiences, while encouraging knowledge sharing.

### — FEATURES

The project created opportunities for connection, bringing knowledge holders together to provide a deeper understanding of flood impacts through workshops and on-river visits, discussing issues affecting community and Country, and holistically weaving Aboriginal knowledge and western science. This enhanced the cultural authority of Elders and engaged community.

### — OUTCOMES

In their final report, Jagun Alliance identified the Richmond River as being 'sick' based on water quality results and an Indigenous cultural perspective, stating 'the health of the Richmond River and the health of the Bundjalung community are intricately connected'.

The project provided a safe space to discuss historical and relevant issues that are of community concern. This project contributes to the development of a positive, ongoing partnership with Traditional Owners, community, NSW EPA and NSW Government emergency services.



## FRNSW – Fireproofing at-risk communities: A DRRF-funded initiative by AFDO in partnership with FRNSW

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

People with disabilities (PwDs) face increased risks during fires and other emergencies. Without proper knowledge of fire safety and prevention, their ability to plan or react is compromised. Leveraging the lived experiences of PwDs can significantly improve how emergency service organisations prepare and respond.

### — AIM

To educate and train firefighters and at-risk PwDs to reduce fire injuries and fatalities.

### — FEATURES

The project co-developed training and resources with PwDs. Focus groups were conducted across NSW by local disability organisations and FRNSW staff, involving nearly 100 participants. Feedback on the accessibility, understandability, and actionability of the fire safety messages and resources was collected and used for tailoring materials that heighten PwDs' preparedness and educating firefighters.

### — OUTCOMES

Key Deliverables:

- > **Distribute accessible fire safety resources:** seven factsheets and key messages are being translated into Easy Read formats and Auslan videos.
- > **Develop training videos:** FRNSW will collaborate with disability organisations, NDIS service providers, and PwDs to create training videos that increase community engagement between firefighters and PwDs.
- Integrate lessons into operations: FRNSW is committed to incorporating the lessons and recommendations learnt from this project into all prevention and preparation activities, including its Disability Inclusion Action Plans, and will share these learnings with other disability organisations and emergency services.



## DFES – Building Back Better after floods in the Fitzroy Valley, Western Australia

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (State Recovery) efforts following widespread flooding in the Fitzroy Valley.

### — AIM

To ensure communities in the Fitzroy Valley are more resilient to future flooding events by reconstructing public assets and infrastructure to a higher standard, and future-proofing residential properties.

### — FEATURES

The Fitzroy River Bridge was destroyed during the Kimberley floods in January 2023, isolating East Kimberley from the rest of the State. The rebuild of the Fitzroy River Bridge was completed six months ahead of schedule and designed and rebuilt six times stronger than the previous structure, ensuring it would withstand future floods.

Flood damaged houses in flood-prone communities were raised to one metre above the one in 100-year flood level increasing their resilience to future flooding events.

New river gauges were installed to provide the community with accurate and timely information on river water levels

Funding was also provided to design and incorporate resilience standards into the reconstruction of damaged and destroyed essential public assets and infrastructure.

### — OUTCOMES

Collectively, these initiatives will reduce the flood risk and increase the flood resilience of communities in the Fitzroy Valley.

Newly built and refurbished homes will be less susceptible to extreme flooding and therefore much safer for residents. Public assets and infrastructure will be less likely to suffer damage, reducing the impact to critical services which typically occurs after major disasters.

The recovery effort led by DFES has ensured future generations in these remote communities will have a greater level of protection from future flood events.



## AIDR and ABC – Helping Hands: Disaster Resilience Tool Kit

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience and ABC Kids Early Education.

### — AIM

To develop a disaster resilience curriculum planning tool kit<sup>1</sup> for early childhood educators to help young children and their families prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

The tool kit works toward achieving National Action One in NEMA's *The Second National Action Plan*: 'Create consistent, accessible information tools, guidance and programs to help everyone better understand their disaster risk and responsibilities, prepare risk mitigation plans and take appropriate action to manage their risks.'

### — FEATURES

The online toolkit catering to wellbeing and early learning needs of children under eight years of age and those who care for them includes:

- Links to trusted resources, ABC Kids<sup>2</sup> video and audio programs.
- Play-based planning ideas and sector stories.

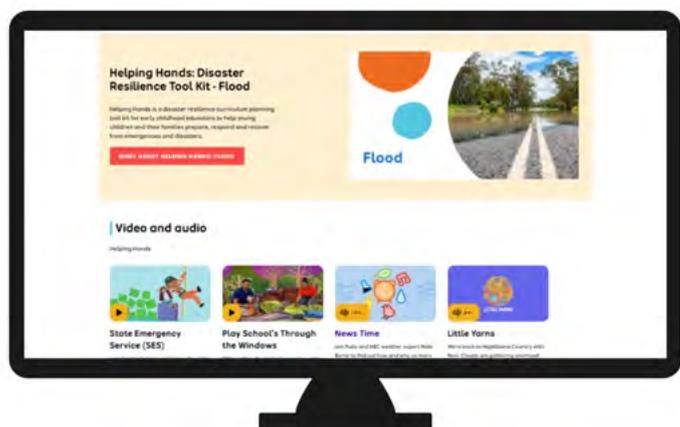
### — OUTCOMES

Teachers and educators in early learning and school settings can use the Helping Hands Tool Kit to plan for and create age-appropriate, responsive disaster resilience education programs that:

- Reflect the local context including hazard impacts on surrounding natural environments, disaster risk, and the lived experience of children and families.
- Help children prepare for a disaster or emergency event by building their knowledge and confidence to manage strong feelings and take safe actions, maintaining a sense of agency even during challenging times.
- Create community partnerships by connecting schools and early learning settings with relevant emergency agencies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional land custodians and local councils.
- Are accessible and inclusive for all young learners with a range of developmental abilities.
- Help children understand the link between climate change and weather-related disaster risk, developing their ecological identity.

1. <https://www.abc.net.au/abckids/early-education/helping-hands-disaster-resilience-tool-kit/planning-for-disaster-resilience-education/103187840>

2. <https://www.abc.net.au/abckids>



## EMV – Victorian Australian Warning System community education program

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

AFAC, the Australian and New Zealand National Council for fire and emergency services coordinated the national implementation of the new Australian Warning System (AWS) on behalf of the states and territories.

EMV was allocated federal funding to lead a tailored community education program across Victoria about the Australian Warning System. The program launched in December 2023 and will run for two years.

### — AIM

To educate the Victorian community about the AWS to better prepare them to respond to emergencies, and to protect them and their families when it matters most. This includes increasing their understanding of the warning levels, action statements, and reinforcing connection to the VicEmergency channels where they can access this critical information (VicEmergency website, app and hotline).

### — FEATURES

EMV took a creative approach to educate the community about the AWS by harnessing the power of storytelling. A series of stories have been created that focus on different emergencies and warning scenarios, with all storylines depicting individuals doing the right thing and following the instructions of the loveable warnings

characters. A range of materials have been developed including hard copy books, audiobooks, videos, worksheets for kids, posters, social media assets, radio ads, banners, stickers, postcards and more.

The hero story ‘A camping trip takes a turn’ has proved particularly popular with children leading to additional materials being developed for use in schools, kindergartens and libraries. Tapping into younger generations has been enormously beneficial and shows the value in making sure we tailor emergency management information for all age groups.

### — OUTCOMES

The materials have been shared widely across the emergency management sector and local councils, receiving great feedback.

They are being used extensively for grassroots community engagement activities including at emergency management and local council expos and events, story time sessions with kids at schools and libraries, as well as being used for engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

This work has helped to increase community understanding about warnings, improving overall resilience to know what to do if an emergency occurs.



Images: EMV





Image: FRNSW

## DIRECTION TWO

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# Providing trusted response

- > CFA – Vols on Hols – Murrumbidgee Fire Brigade
- > FRV- Fire Ops 101
- > AFAC and Deakin University – Hydrogen Safety Awareness online training program (supported by face-to-face resources)
- > FRNSW – Multi-agency response to radiation incident - Arncliffe
- > QFD – United Nations International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Asia-Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise (APERE)

## Overview

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Fire and emergency services provide a trusted response by:

- > Providing effective, reliable operational response through evidence-based decision making, strategic planning and the ongoing incorporation of emerging technologies.
- > Embedding the concept of national capability to share and allocate ground and air resources based on risk, improving the timeliness and effectiveness of response and community outcomes.
- > Providing cohesive emergency management and operational support at a national, state, regional and incident level, enhancing national response and interoperability through a contemporary, and scalable Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System.

- > Supporting capability and leadership development through regular, comprehensive multi-agency emergency management exercises at a national, state, regional and local level.
- > Developing and maintaining relationships with key international emergency response partners and stakeholders to provide enhanced sector capability.

The AFAC National Resource Sharing Centre continues to facilitate a coordinated national approach to resource sharing to sustain emergency response efforts for multi-hazard situations locally and internationally.

There is a continued focus across all the Strategic Directions on incorporating knowledge and research into the practice of emergency management. It is important that such research is available and implemented so that practitioners and technical experts can keep pace with contemporary expectations and requirements.

Fire and emergency services provide a trusted response by:

## CFA – Vols on Hols – Mallacoota Fire Brigade

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

During summer, Victoria sees a significant influx of visitors, increasing the workload for local CFA brigades as they seek to protect life and property. The Vols on Hols pilot program launched in Mallacoota during the 2023-24 fire season, aiming to enhance emergency response through volunteer service portability.

Mallacoota was severely impacted during the 2019-20 bushfires and experiences a significant population increase during peak season, with up to 10,000 visitors.

### — AIM

To support Mallacoota Fire Brigade by harnessing the skills of visiting CFA members holidaying in the area.

By enabling visiting CFA volunteers to contribute their expertise, the program seeks to enhance emergency response capabilities of the brigade and improve community safety, particularly during the busy summer period.

### — FEATURES

Interested volunteers must first submit an Expression of Interest and undergo a credentials check.

Successful participants are welcomed by Mallacoota Captain Tracey Johnston and introduced to the brigade during a structured integration process; including meet and greet sessions, equipment inductions, and optional training exercises.

The program offers flexibility, allowing volunteers to respond to incidents based on their comfort level and availability.

### — OUTCOMES

The program was positively received by participants, and feedback from volunteers highlighted learning from different brigades and contributing in a meaningful way while on holiday.

The pilot initiative bolstered volunteer numbers during summer, strengthening Mallacoota's emergency response capabilities and community resilience.

The program's success demonstrates the potential benefits of volunteer service portability during peak periods and will inform CFA's current work to develop a contemporary volunteer membership model.

## FRV - Fire Ops 101

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

To enhance public understanding and appreciation of FRV's critical role in community safety.

### — AIM

To provide community leaders with an immersive experience of the challenges and complexities faced by firefighters, fostering a stronger connection between the community and FRV, and ultimately enhancing public trust in the organisation's ability to provide a reliable and effective response to emergencies. The Fire Ops 101 program has reached over 90 leaders from across a wide range of industries and sectors in Victoria.

### — FEATURES

- Immersive experience: participants engage in simulated firefighting scenarios to gain first-hand experience of the demands and risks associated with the job.
- Highlighting challenges: the program emphasises the importance of adequate resources, training, and support for firefighters to effectively deliver safe capabilities.

- Community engagement: by fostering a stronger connection between community leaders and FRV, the program helps to build public trust, confidence and support for the organisation.

### — OUTCOMES

- Increased public understanding of the challenges faced by firefighters.
- Awareness of FRV and fostering an understanding of the existence and function of the newly formed agency.
- Strengthened relationships between FRV and advocates across community, sporting, political and industry leaders.
- Enhanced public trust and confidence in FRV's ability to provide a reliable and effective response to emergencies.
- Increased awareness of the importance of supporting FRV through funding, training, and community involvement.



## AFAC and Deakin University – Hydrogen Safety Awareness online training program (supported by face-to-face resources)

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The Council of Australian Governments released Australia's National Hydrogen Strategy in 2019, aiming to establish a clean, innovative, safe, and competitive hydrogen industry that benefits all Australians.

As part of these efforts, training Australian emergency first responders for hydrogen-related incidents was identified as a key element.

The project included the analysis of commercially available hydrogen training modules and the formation of diverse working groups to critically evaluate the options and to provide subject matter expertise.

As a result, AFAC through the fire and emergency services, in collaboration with Deakin University, has developed the first ever National Hydrogen Awareness Package in Australia for the emergency services.

### — AIM

To develop and implement a national Hydrogen Safety Awareness Training Program for emergency first responders.

### — FEATURES

An online course, including supporting resources, was developed that is:

- > Fit-for-purpose and innovative.
- > Incorporates the unique requirements of the Australian context, including specific regulations, geographical considerations, local case studies and industry practices.
- > Relevant and effective for Australian emergency first responders, regardless of their jurisdiction within the emergency response community.

The course is hosted on the AFAC website and published scorm files have been made available to AFAC member agencies.

### — OUTCOMES

The online program has been publicly released which provides emergency responders with hydrogen awareness when responding to hydrogen related incidents.

## FRNSW – Multi-agency response to radiation incident - Arncliffe

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

On a typical morning in Arncliffe, Sydney, FRNSW was called to assist the Australian Border Force (ABF) during an operation that uncovered low-level radioactive isotopes in an apartment. The discovery required immediate and expert management to ensure the safety of the residents and the environment. The incident demonstrated FRNSW's capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to hazardous materials situations, while collaborating seamlessly with other agencies to mitigate any potential risks.

### — AIM

To safely manage and neutralise the discovered low-level radioactive materials, protect public health, and secure the environment through effective response measures and inter-agency collaboration.

### — FEATURES

- Incident identification and containment: establishment of a 10-metre exclusion zone and implementation of the Three Zone System to manage the incident effectively.
- Medical and environmental assessments: evacuation and precautionary medical evaluation of affected individuals, with comprehensive radiation testing

confirming no exposure.

- Inter-agency collaboration: coordinated efforts between FRNSW, ABF, EPA, and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, including the establishment of an incident command system and conducting dynamic risk assessments.
- Scene security and handover: properly securing the site and formalising the handover to relevant authorities once the situation was under control.

### — OUTCOMES

- Successful containment: no radiation release or exposure, ensuring the safety of residents and responders.
- Thorough assessments: environmental and medical checks validated the effectiveness of the containment and neutralisation efforts.
- Community reassurance: effective communication and prompt actions reassured the local community and ensured their safety.
- Strengthened inter-agency collaboration: the incident reinforced the importance of seamless cooperation among multiple agencies during hazardous material incidents.



## QFD – United Nations International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Asia-Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise (APERE)

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The exercise was part of Australia’s INSARAG commitment and NEMA’s National Crisis Exercise Program.

An APERE is held annually and Brisbane, Australia was the location for 2023.

### — AIM

To strengthen the preparedness and response to a catastrophic earthquake, including concurrent and compounding events, in accordance with local, state and national plans, through an immersive, face-to-face simulation.

The exercise focussed on the management and decision-making of state and national bodies, and the coordination of international assistance in response to a catastrophic national disaster.

### — FEATURES

QFD partnered with NEMA, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and FRNSW to host the exercise.

Over 250 participants attended including international teams from Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United States of America.

### — OUTCOMES

The insights gained formed a body of knowledge and experience across domestic and international borders that will contribute to future activities to strengthen Australia’s preparedness and response capacity to catastrophic earthquakes.

Overall, APERE 2023 was a great success from a learning, development and engagement perspective.





Image: SACFS

## DIRECTION THREE

# The source of credible and timely information and data

- > SACFS – Emergency Management (EM) Merge Project
- > EMV – VicEmergency Plus – A pilot to improve language and accessibility of the VicEmergency app for diverse communities
- > FRV – Developing and embedding our Values, Together
- > NSW SES – Ensuring Rapid and Effective Emergency Response: the role of the myAvailability app
- > NSW EPA – Eyes in the Sky: drone surveillance of Hawkesbury River post-flooding April 2024

## Overview

Accurate, relevant and timely information is critical to effective decision-making. Modern systems rely on the rapid transfer of information, using well curated data, to deliver impact and value.

Fire and emergency services support decision making through the generation of intelligence using data and information from a wide range of sources. The appropriate application and analysis of data amplifies the provision of timely advice and warnings, enhancing

national consistency, and improving community and operational safety.

Data insights generated by emergency services enriches community messaging, improves risk and mitigation planning, strategic planning, and operational decision making. This in turn supports individuals and communities to make appropriate, informed, and timely decisions to enhance safety.

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

## SACFS – Emergency Management (EM) Merge Project

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Following After Action Reviews of major incidents, CFS is improving incident management functionality. CFS currently operates across field command, incident management, Regional Command and State Command; a hierarchy which is inefficient and human resources intensive. CFS seeks to develop more efficiency by consolidating a level of command and strengthening linkages through to field-based command.

### — AIM

To deliver:

- > efficient rostering using fewer people to manage fatigue
- > streamlined communication and systems to capture field information and share this seamlessly
- > linkages with partner agencies to deliver multiagency IMTs
- > enhanced agency capability across AIIMS roles.

### — FEATURES

The EM Merge Project has used working groups to guide investment in field command and field-based technology. This will overcome the tyranny of distance which has traditionally necessitated IMTs to be established near the fire. CFS is working with Microsoft to develop innovative solutions to operating in the field while working in extreme conditions and areas with limited connectivity.

The project is dedicated to increasing the level of training of staff to better analyse the data received as part of the intelligence gathering and refining the endorsement process, with emphasis on exercise-based validations (by incorporating practical, real-world scenarios into the validation stages).

Recognizing the complexity and scale of this initiative, CFS is actively seeking partnerships with various other agencies and stakeholders to maintain incident management skills for other agencies. By providing this opportunity, CFS will gain access to additional resources to fill rosters.

### — OUTCOMES

The outcome of the CFS EM Merge Project is expected to be multifaceted, with several key benefits.

- > Enhanced field command and technology integration: the project will likely result in advanced field command capabilities and improved field-based technology. Improved operational efficiency by streamlining and refining the endorsement process through exercise-based validations, to ensure that all systems and protocols are robust and reliable in real-world conditions.
- > Innovation in extreme conditions: the collaboration with Microsoft and other partners will lead to the development of innovative solutions tailored for operation in extreme conditions and areas with limited connectivity.
- > Strengthened partnerships: through collaboration with various agencies and stakeholders, the project will build stronger networks and enhance additional expertise and resources.
- > Increased preparedness and response capabilities: the improvements in technology and process validation will enhance the readiness and responsiveness of CFS and its partners, leading to better management of emergencies and a more agile response to incidents.

The CFS EM Merge Project aims to significantly advance field operations, operational processes, and collaborative efforts, ultimately leading to a more effective and responsive emergency management system.

## EMV – VicEmergency Plus – A pilot to improve language and accessibility of the VicEmergency app for diverse communities

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Access to timely, tailored, relevant and accessible information is vital for all Victorians before, during and after emergencies.

The VicEmergency Plus pilot was developed following multiple sector reviews that recommended an uplift was needed to improve what the VicEmergency channels could offer for diverse communities.

The recommendations included enhancing the VicEmergency app and website for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, investigating options for disseminating critical information across a range of emergencies in multiple languages, and implementing processes to help at-risk communities to access information in an emergency.

The pilot was also recommended to test the capability of AI translations to provide critical warnings and information, as well as provide tested examples to further inform the Victorian Government’s translation guidelines.

### — AIM

To improve language and accessibility of the VicEmergency app for diverse communities.

### — FEATURES

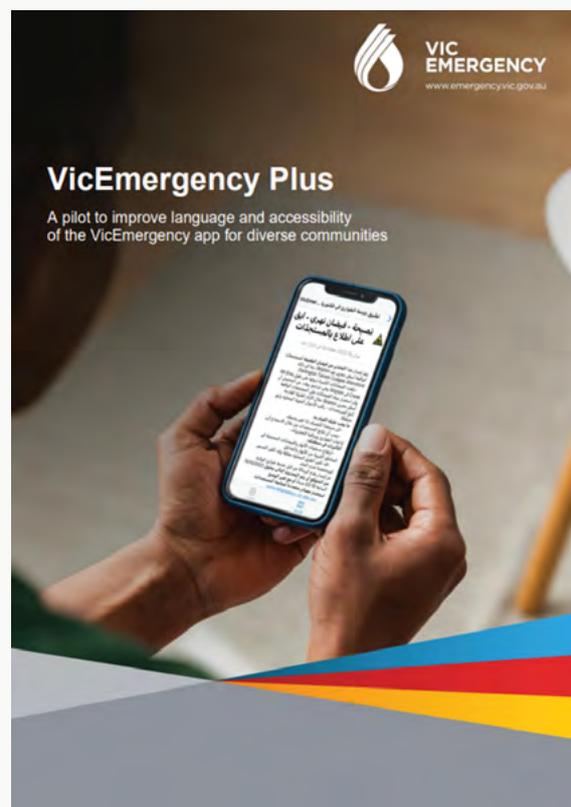
The pilot focussed on the development of a new VicEmergency app, labelled VicEmergency Plus. It was based on the current VicEmergency app but enhanced to test:

- > language: automated translation of warnings through the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to target multicultural communities – simplified Chinese and Arabic.
- > accessibility: improved accessibility features to better cater to people with disabilities.
- > display: concepts to reduce the amount of data shown on the map at any one time, to manage the potential of users becoming overwhelmed when under stress.

The pilot involved EMV who brought the emergency knowledge, CI&T who did the technology development, 2M who provided the AI translation, translators and multicultural engagement elements, and Vision Australia who supported the improvements for accessibility.

### — OUTCOMES

Determining the location and debris type provided sugarcane farmers with reliable intelligence for safely cleaning up fields and safely disposing of waste prior to burning and harvesting the crop, enabling the harvest rotation to continue without risk of damage to harvesting equipment.



## FRV – Developing and embedding our Values, Together

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

FRV was created as a new organisation on 1 July 2020. Since this time, the focus has been on establishing FRV as a modern fire and rescue service that meets the needs of twenty-first century Victoria.

Through reform there have been many changes, however, what has defined, inspired, and enabled FRV to continue serving the Victorian community has not changed. It was time to establish a set of values that are truly those of FRV.

### — AIM

To establish a set of values that will define FRV's behaviours and decisions moving forward. These values will reflect the organisation's history and make a lasting and positive difference for the employees, stakeholders and Victorian communities.

### — FEATURES

FRV invited every employee to get involved.

200 leaders came together to design activities to connect and engage with their teams.

66% of FRV's people engaged in activities forming our values.

### — OUTCOMES

A set of values that guide FRV's behaviour and decisions. The values inform how to treat each other and the community with respect.

The program provides FRV with a cohesive set of principles that unify everyone with a common purpose.

'We serve the Community. We value Teamwork. We have Integrity. We show Respect. We are Accountable.'



# NSW SES – Ensuring Rapid and Effective Emergency Response: the role of the myAvailability app

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## — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The initiative is driven by the organisation’s mission to save lives and create safer communities. To achieve this, NSW SES reliably and effectively supports communities during emergencies, including floods, storms, and tsunamis.

The myAvailability platform is essential in realising the agency’s vision of being a trusted, volunteer-based emergency service by ensuring the right people are deployed, with the right skills, to the right locations, thereby delivering excellence in community preparedness and emergency response.

Unique to this solution is the extensive involvement of grassroots members and end users. Across all stages of the project lifecycle, members have been instrumental in the design, decision-making, feature prioritisation, and business requirements, as well as driving change management campaigns. This approach has ensured that the solution is truly built by members, for members, fostering stronger adoption and a sense of ownership among end users.

## — AIM

To streamline and enhance resource management processes within NSW SES by creating a reliable, unified system, that would provide real-time visibility of member availability and capabilities.

The goal was to improve the agency’s preparedness, response time, and overall effectiveness in handling emergencies, with the intention of reinforcing the community’s trust in NSW SES, and their ability to provide immediate and competent assistance, ultimately contributing to safer communities and a more resilient emergency response system.

## — FEATURES

The myAvailability platform is a digital solution designed to enhance the efficiency of NSW SES members in managing their availability and responding to activation requests. It allows members to update their availability status and view the availability of other members across the organisation, ensuring optimal resource planning.

The platform enables real-time activation requests, allowing members to receive and acknowledge these requests directly on their mobile devices, as well as view estimated arrival times of team members for improved coordination. The app provides navigation features,

offering directions to incidents, the ability to view the locations of other members, and a built-in chat function for communication with team members.

Seamlessly integrating with existing NSW SES operational and support systems like SAP HR, Beacon, and aXcelerate, the platform supports unified data management complying with NSW government ICT standards for data security and privacy. The platform also provides detailed dashboards and reports to aid in strategic planning, resource allocation, and decision-making.

## — OUTCOMES

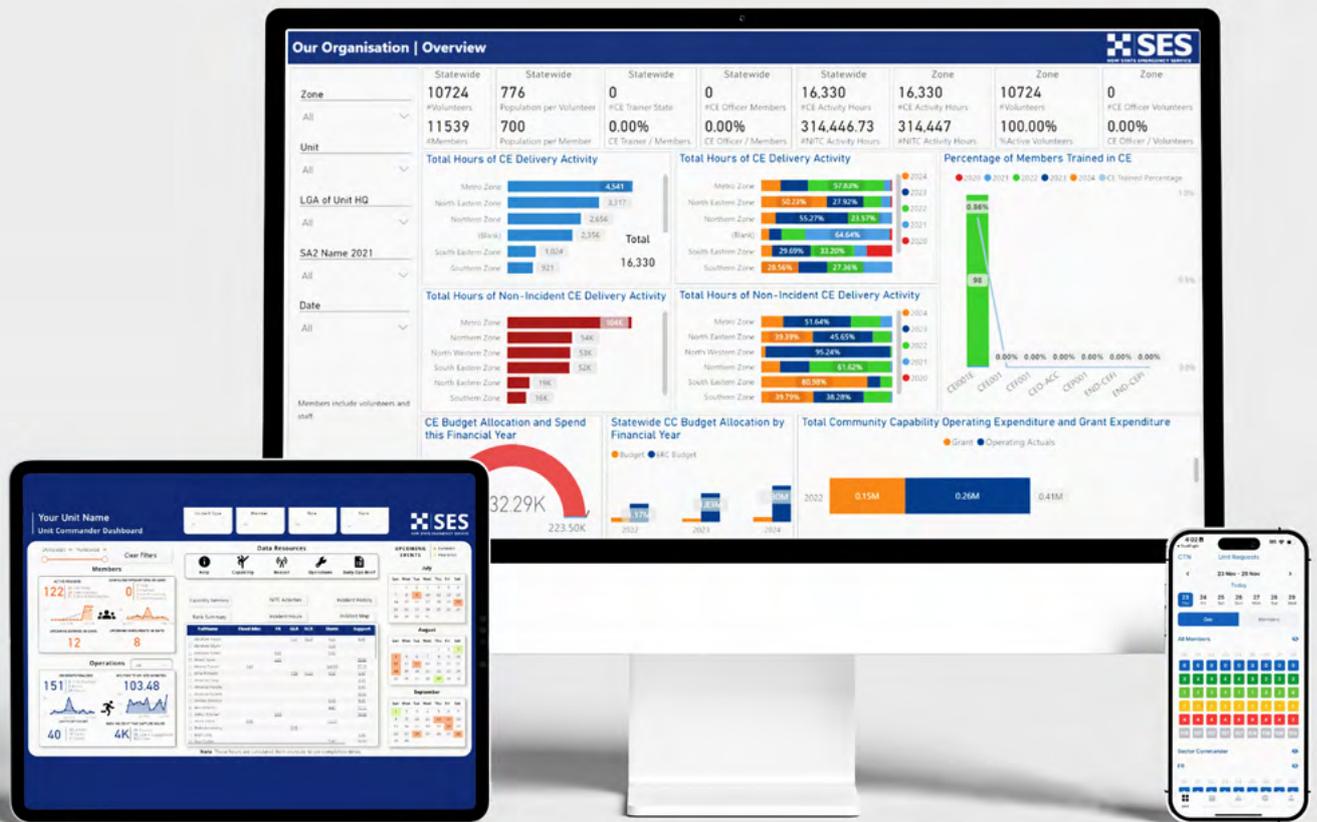
NSW SES has significantly enhanced its ability to respond to emergencies quickly and efficiently, ultimately saving lives and protecting communities. The platform has enabled the organisation to make data-driven decisions, ensuring the rapid deployment of the nearest and most suitable resources, which has reduced response times and improved overall operational efficiency.

**Key achievements include:** myAvailability enabled 2,433 member responses to operational requests in a single week during a recent Sydney weather event. Activating 305 members for operational tasks within the same timeframe. A total of 7,550 hours of availability updates were logged, demonstrating the tool’s effectiveness in quickly managing and mobilising resources.

### Key statistics:

- > The percentage of operationally active members who have installed the app exceeds 8,000 + downloads.
- > Approximately 80% of members are updating their availability data on an ongoing basis as of June 2024.
- > 100% of Beacon incidents (mobilisation requests) are sent through the myAvailability platform.
- > 90% of mobilisation responses are sent through the myAvailability platform during or leading up to operational events.
- > 100% of member’s availability can be viewed in a single statewide view.
- > 100% of member’s mobilisation activity can be viewed in a single statewide view.

In addition to operational improvements, the platform has also strengthened internal transparency and communication, providing members with clear insights into availability and deployment processes. This has alleviated administrative burdens on leaders and fostered a more cohesive and informed team environment.



## NSW EPA – Eyes in the Sky: drone surveillance of Hawkesbury River post-flooding April 2024

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Following the 2021–22 flood events, the NSW EPA's lead agency for the Environmental Services Functional Area commissioned aerial surveillance by both fixed-wing and rotor aircraft. Data obtained from surveillance informed the need for clean-up programs, program design and prioritised areas for focus.

### — AIM

To determine the amount and type of debris and levels of erosion in the Hawkesbury River post-flood, in partnership with Surf Life Saving Australia. A key objective was to assess the suitability of drones for the EPA's specific role related to response, clean up and remediation.

### — FEATURES

The project trialled remote drone technology for post-flood aerial surveillance. Advantages of drone surveillance compared to helicopter surveillance included better debris identification, resulting in more reliable intelligence. Disadvantages included surveillance speed and cost by area. The project also tested the abilities of SLS drone operators for this purpose.

### — OUTCOMES

The project observed low levels of debris and erosion in the Hawkesbury River compared to previous flood events in 2021–22. The project tested and proved the suitability of drones for aerial surveillance and the ability of the Australian UAV Service of Surf Life Saving Australia to conduct rapid damage assessments in response to disaster events. This increases the capacity, capability and flexibility of future disaster response by the NSW EPA.





Image: FRNSW

## DIRECTION FOUR

# Safe, capable and diverse workforce

- > DFES – Digital Volunteer Recruitment Campaign
- > CFA – Leading for Wellbeing learning module
- > FENZ – Cultural Capability Uplift pilot
- > FRV – Policy development around support for women in the fire service
- > FRNSW – Culturally inclusive community risk reduction

## Overview

Australia’s fire and emergency services workforce consists of approximately 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. When combined with personnel from the broader emergency management sector, the total workforce increases significantly. This well-organised and trained workforce provides the nation with substantial surge capacity during disasters and emergency events.

This national capability is achieved through the contribution of dedicated volunteers, career, retained and part-time staff, all training and working together safely with other government organisations, not-for-profits and communities, both within and across borders, to respond to these events. In addition to providing a

response capacity in time of need, this workforce also engages and supports community-led initiatives to help build resilience during these disasters and emergencies, and in supporting recovery within communities.

Fire and emergency services are committed to building an inclusive culture and a diverse workforce that represents the community it serves. This workforce recognises the significant outcomes that can be achieved by engaging with the community to bring people from diverse backgrounds and different points of view together to innovate, collaborate, and develop evidence-based and locally based practices that represent the collective needs. Governance and resource management of this significant capability needs to be contemporary, flexible, inclusive, defensible and accountable.

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

## DFES – Digital Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

DFES aims to attract a diverse range of volunteers by offering flexible, engaging opportunities that fit various life stages and commitments. By leveraging digital platforms, DFES connects with potential volunteers where they are, showcasing the vital role they can play in safeguarding their communities. This campaign emphasises the value of volunteerism, the support and training provided, and the personal and community benefits of joining as an emergency services volunteer.

### — AIM

To boost volunteer numbers in emergency services by appealing to a broader audience and addressing the unique challenges of modern volunteerism. The campaign seeks to inspire community members to take action by emphasising the essential contribution volunteers make to public safety. It focuses on making volunteering more accessible, whilst fostering a strong sense of purpose and community connection among prospective volunteers.

The goal is to create a sustained and engaged volunteer force ready to respond to emergencies.

### — FEATURES

DFES currently uses a hyper-localised regional volunteer recruitment campaign strategy, in direct response to the recruitment requirements of individual brigades, groups and units.

DFES uses this approach to mobilise people into action and encourage them to act, registering their interest on DFES' Volunteer Recruitment Website.

The 2023-24 campaign was delivered to five Western Australian regions.

### — OUTCOMES

Data post-campaign indicates an increased awareness of emergency services volunteering. Specifically, 48 brigades, groups and units from five regions participated, with 89 individual volunteer roles advertised which received 910 expressions of interest.

## CFA – Leading for Wellbeing learning module

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The Leading for Wellbeing learning module is part of the CFA Mental Health Literacy Program, which is comprised of six workshops and two eLearning modules. It aims to equip CFA leaders with skills to foster psychological safety and support CFA members effectively.

The program promotes early help-seeking and a safe, inclusive workplace by integrating evidence-based strategies with relatable experiences to enhance mental health literacy and resilience.

### — AIM

To equip CFA leaders with tools to prioritise psychological safety and understand their roles in maintaining a healthy work environment.

The module ensures leaders can effectively manage psychosocial hazards, support their teams' mental health, and contribute to a psychologically safe and inclusive CFA.

### — FEATURES

Delivered as a face-to-face workshop or eLearning module, Leading for Wellbeing emphasises psychological health and safety. Leaders learn practical strategies to support team well-being, including recognising early signs of mental health issues and the benefits of leading with psychological safety.

Real-life stories from CFA members makes content relatable and impactful. The training is concise, accessible, and integrates into other CFA programs, ensuring leaders are well equipped to foster a supportive environment.

### — OUTCOMES

The module has strengthened CFA leaders' ability to create a psychologically safe workplace.

Leaders are now better equipped to recognise and address mental health risks, support their teams effectively, and foster a culture of mental well-being across the CFA, which has resulted in increased mental health literacy, resilience, and overall psychological safety within the organisation.

## FENZ – Cultural Capability Uplift pilot

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Māori are disproportionately affected by unwanted fires and emergencies in New Zealand, and with almost half of their asset base invested in climate sensitive industries, iwi (tribes) and hapū (sub-tribes) are also highly impacted by climate change related fires. With this knowledge, FENZ was compelled to strengthen its service to deliver better outcomes for Māori.

### — AIM

To raise awareness of FENZ’s commitment to working with Māori as tāngata whenua and improving their personnels cultural capability to better engage with Māori when designing and delivering services.

### — FEATURES

He Tīmatanga Kōrero - An introductory guide to Kaupapa Māori (Māori initiatives) for FENZ is an illustrated resource, providing understanding around the commitment and what kaupapa Māori looks like within the organisation. The resource and it’s online module gives kaimahi (our people) beginner knowledge regarding the use of te reo Māori (Māori language), tikanga (traditional customs), New Zealand’s history, and building enduring relationships based on a mutual understanding.

To accompany the resource, a Tohu (wearable award) was designed to visually represent the commitment made by the wearer to the kaupapa and their progression in their cultural education journey. As the participants complete one stage (online knowledge module), they are encouraged to take another step, and then another.

All these steps accumulate and result in having a greater appreciation, understanding and execution of language and Māori culture, in turn, serving Māori communities more authentically.

### — OUTCOMES

- More than 2,700 personnel have completed the online module and have been awarded their Tohu since July 2021.
- The current average of 52 monthly completions was achieved largely without active promotion.
- Volunteer fire brigades are independently adopting the kaupapa as part of their training nights e.g. Hokitika Volunteer Fire Brigade achieved a 100% completion rate.



## FRV – Policy development around support for women in the fire service

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Fire Services globally face challenges attracting, recruiting and promoting women career firefighters. 5.6% of FRV's operational workforce are women, with fewer in management and leadership roles.

FRV had to consider options to address and resolve this issue.

### — AIM

- > Increase gender diversity by developing recruitment campaigns and pre-recruitment support for women.
- > Boost retention and promotion through leadership development programs, mentorship, and inclusive policies.
- > Provide support through life stages such as pregnancy, child-rearing, and menopause.

These efforts create an inclusive environment where women can thrive and advance.

### — FEATURES

FRV has created an Action Plan based on five principles of diversity and inclusion. These are as follows:

- > recruitment and retention strategies
- > valuing diversity and inclusion

- > leadership and accountability
- > building a diverse and inclusive workforce to improve cultural capability
- > responsive systems, policies and services to support culture.

### — OUTCOMES

FRV has developed and implemented strategies and initiatives, including comprehensive policies on pregnancy, breastfeeding, and menopause. These initiatives have empowered FRV to better support our growing cohort of women firefighters. Significant efforts have also been made to enhance women firefighter health, with a focus on post-partum rehabilitation and menopause strength coaching and awareness programs.

As a result of this work, the WSU has seen a 39% increase in women firefighter applicants, with numerous women applying for promotions, and the successful assistance of 32 women in operational duties following/during pregnancy and childbirth.

The policy development portion of the unit's work has been well received both internally and externally with multiple jurisdictions opting to adopt FRV's policies.

## FRNSW – Culturally inclusive community risk reduction

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The 2023 Australian Census reveals significant cultural diversity with one in three residents born overseas, and one in four speaking a language other than English at home. However, traditional risk reduction approaches have been informal and ad hoc. Further research was needed to understand how cultural practices, combined with socio-economic disadvantage, low English proficiency, age, and disability contribute to fire risk.

### — AIM

To enhance the capacity to foster community resilience through culturally inclusive approaches, improve communication accuracy with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, validate impact of cultural practices on risk, and explore the role of a co-designed smartphone app in emergency preparedness.

### — FEATURES

- Gathered insights from CALD communities on fire safety and communication needs through focus groups.
- Collected input from firefighters on cultural competence challenges.
- Established a multi-agency reference panel for feedback and dissemination.

- Fostered cultural and technological fluency through co-design with CALD communities.

### — OUTCOMES

- Development of the Cultural Awareness, Lived Experience, Engagement, Applicability and Relationships (CLEAR) model to enhance firefighter capacity for culturally competent communication.
- Fostered trust through co-design and collaboration with CALD groups and stakeholders.
- Focused on building long-term, meaningful engagement to avoid tokenism.
- Recommendations for:
  - Integrating targeted messages for children in languages other than English (LOTE) families and embedding fire safety into the Adult Migrant Education Program curriculum.
  - Scalability of ‘Ready, Set, Go!’ app: refining the business case for expanding the risk reduction app.
  - Cultural competence training: incorporating cultural competence into recruit-level training at FRNSW.
  - Organisational development links: leveraging workforce diversity to enhance service delivery.





Mogo Testing June 2024 – CFA Ford Ranger Prototype Ultra-Light Tanker Image: ACT ESA

## DIRECTION FIVE

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# Informed by knowledge, innovation and research

- > AIDR – What’s New In Knowledge
- > AFAC and CFA – Ultra-light tanker burn-over crew protection system design and development
- > NSW SES – Community Risk Assessment
- > FRNSW – Online Training Program for Emergency Responders at Electric Vehicle Fires
- > QFD – Australian Warning System grassroots community-led warnings awareness pilot programs

## Overview

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Emergency Management operates in a dynamic environment with major shifts in technology, demography, and community expectations. Australia and New Zealand are experiencing extremes of weather like never before, increasing in frequency and severity.

To continually anticipate and respond to these challenges, fire and emergency services collaborate across Australia and internationally to strengthen opportunities and partnerships to enable members to participate in research and leverage emerging knowledge and innovations.

Research needs are identified through our collaboration network, focusing on a broad range of issues including occupational health and safety, capability gaps, community safety, sociology, landscape ecology, systems and decision support tools, and predictive capabilities.

Fire and emergency services monitor how research is used across the sector and supports evaluation of its effectiveness at producing the desired outcome.

Fire and emergency services are informed by knowledge, innovation and research by:

## AIDR – What’s New In Knowledge

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Evidence based, high-quality knowledge is the foundation for effective decision making, governance, policy, and practice. Building and maintaining this knowledge base is essential in AIDR’s efforts to reduce disaster risk and disaster impacts. This is also recognised in Australia’s Second National Action Plan for implementing the *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework*. Outcome two calls for ‘an effective and connected disaster risk reduction knowledge system that provides a solid foundation for action.’

### — AIM

To provide a monthly round up of national and international reports, research, and public interest journalism pieces for disaster risk reduction and emergency management professionals.

### — FEATURES

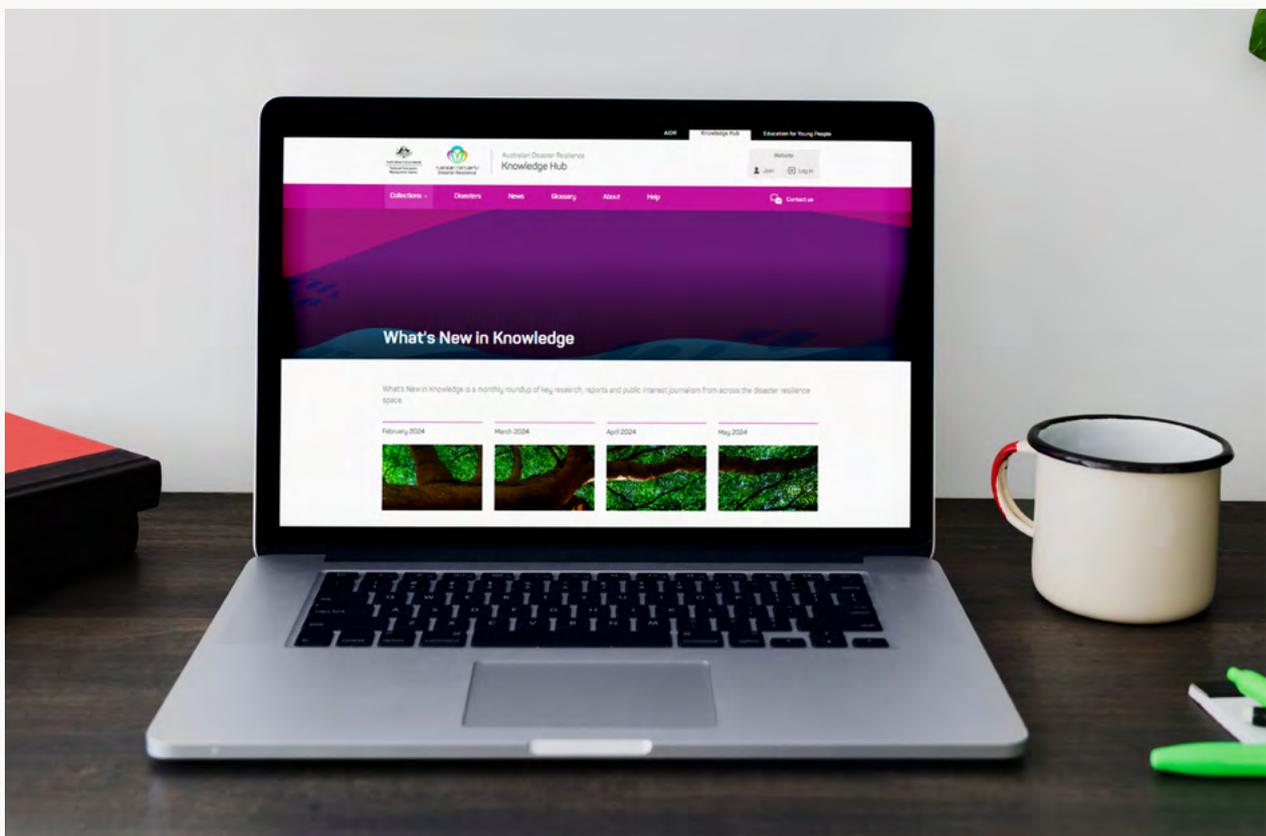
Trusted sources of information from the UNDRR Prevention Web, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, The Conversation academic based news service, and various other sources provides content for the 2000-word monthly blog piece.

Content is arranged according to a number of themes, including systemic risk, hazards, impacts and consequences, inequity, disaster risk reduction.

The blog also features a focus on past disasters.

### — OUTCOMES

Policy and practice decisions are evidence informed.



# AFAC and CFA – Ultra-light tanker burn-over crew protection system design and development

## — INITIATIVE DRIVER

For many years now, most AFAC member fire agencies have been fitting vehicle burn-over crew protection systems to their fleets of larger rural fire fighting appliances. Standard reference material is covered under AFAC Guideline 3031 *Rural firefighting vehicles burn-over protection*. The system utilises on-board water as one of several layers of protection to mitigate the impact of direct radiant heat and flame. It is effective for vehicles with large water volumes (>1,000L), but cannot be reasonably practicably applied to small vehicles with less than 1,000L because of the restrictive operational limitations a water-based system would introduce.

For many years, AFAC members have been seeking a solution for their fleets of small quick-attack vehicles typically on 4WD car licence appliances (Toyota Landcruiser or the like) that hold approx. 500L of fire-fighting water.

### Background

Original system development, testing, and validation followed the tragic loss of life of five firefighters in 1998 at Linton, Victoria.

Since then, numerous reported near-miss burn-over events have occurred. Most notably during the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires (7 Feb 2009).

Where crew protection systems were fitted, no loss of life or serious injury occurred.

## — AIM

To develop a new system to effectively make use of the limited water supply on smaller fire-fighting vehicles that typically have less than 1,000L on-board water.

Over the past 10 years, the CFA Engineering team, in collaboration with CSIRO and Industry partners, has been

developing, trialling, and testing a new Compressed Air Foam (CAF) based deluge system that uses significantly less water to achieve a similar outcome.

Laboratory experimentation was followed by forest fire trials (Bucknell 2017) and a series of standard referential tests using the NSW RFS owned, and CSIRO operated, gas-fuelled flame front simulator located within the Hot Fire Training Facility at Mogo NSW.

## — FEATURES

The system includes:

- > traditional cabin internal radiant heat curtains with innovative means of stowage to mitigate cabin occupant head space intrusions
- > cabin accessible fire blankets
- > a new CAF based external deluge system covering vulnerable cabin glassed and tyre surfaces
- > replacement of venerable appliance plastic elements
- > system controls.

The CAF deluge system utilises approx. 1/10 the volume of water of a traditional water only system without compromising effectiveness.

## — OUTCOMES

CFA has now validated the system against standard referential testing and has commenced a mass retrofit to its fleet of approx. 250 quick attack ultra-light tankers.

The retrofit is expected to be completed mid-2025 and will become a standard fitment to all new like vehicles.

Other AFAC members have expressed interest in this technology with one utilising collaborative procurement agreements (AFAC Clause) to initiate their own program.

# NSW SES – Community Risk Assessment

## — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Tailoring response and resourcing to meet local needs and ensure consistent and effective delivery of operational activities.

## — AIM

To ensure that capability planning takes a risk and evidence-based approach, whilst considering the needs of unique communities.

## — FEATURES

- > A community risk assessment research project informed subsequent implementation work.
- > Development of accessible community-based risk analysis data utilising hazard, exposure and vulnerability information.
- > Delivery of a consistent and data-driven resource planning and prioritisation structure providing localised and state-wide views of needs and responses.
- > Implementation of formal localised targets for core field operator roles, improving effectiveness of member recruitment and training.

- > Enhanced understanding of current capability components and gaps through accessible and accurate data summaries and targets.
- > Development of effective and collaborative capability planning with measurable outcomes, utilising data alongside local plans.

## — OUTCOMES

The right things, in the right place, at the right time to support the right people to make the right decision.

Enabling optimised service delivery, use of resources and planning for future capability needs through:

- > common language, clarity and doctrine around capability
- > standardised and holistic understanding of unit roles and activity levels
- > comprehensive and consistent target-based member skillset and training needs analysis
- > classification and targets utilised for resource planning across areas such as facilities, fleet, equipment
- > insights and improvements to current data collection and reporting.



## FRNSW – Online Training Program for Emergency Responders at Electric Vehicle Fires

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Recognising a lack of understanding of the unique hazards of electric vehicles, FRNSW worked with TAFE NSW to educate all emergency responders who may be involved in responding to an electric vehicle incident.

### — AIM

To better inform all agencies including industry, the community, and emergency responders, on the dangers present when responding to an incident involving an electric vehicle.

### — FEATURES

FRNSW worked in a collaborative manner with other emergency service organisations across NSW to assist

TAFE NSW and Training Services NSW to fund, develop, and roll-out a comprehensive online training program.

This has enabled emergency responders and other agencies to develop confidence in new technologies and maintain theirs and the community's safety.

### — OUTCOMES

Through proactive engagement with the community, government and industry, FRNSW has established the need for fire service involvement in the development of policies supporting the rollout of new technologies.

Most importantly, emergency responders, industry, and the community are better prepared for incidents involving new technologies leading to a confident and safe energy transition.

## QFD – Australian Warning System grassroots community-led warnings awareness pilot programs

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Community education featured in recommendations related to the Australian Warning System (AWS) implementation in:

- > *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report*
- > *South East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding Event February to March 2022 Review Report 1: 2022-2023.*

### — AIM

- > Deliver an AWS community education program considering the needs of all Queenslanders.
- > Increase community participation in education, particularly vulnerable communities.
- > Establish warnings redistributor networks.

### — FEATURES

Underpinned by the United Nation's World Meteorological Organization concept 'Warnings for All,' this project was delivered by QFD in collaboration with community groups across Queensland.

To ensure inclusivity and accessibility, community-led programs were run with vulnerable groups including:

- > First Nations
- > people with a disability
- > Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- > seniors
- > youth.

An innovative approach was used which empowered groups to identify the best ways to educate their own community, by asking:

'How would your community best learn about warnings?'

'How can we best work together to ensure public information and warnings get to your community members during emergencies?'

### — OUTCOMES

- > Learnings about barriers to accessing AWS warnings.
- > Active support of projects that promote warnings awareness.

Through the program with Queensland African Communities Council, nine culturally appropriate warnings awareness videos were developed.



Image: NSW EPA

## DIRECTION SIX

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# Effective and transparent governance

- > FRV – Victorian Fire Investigation Inter-Agency Agreement 2023
- > NSW EPA – Flood Programs Evaluation
- > NAFC – Development of a Cross-Border Airspace Management Guideline
- > Queensland Government – Disaster and Emergency Services Reform
- > DFES – Governance Committee Refresh: Aligning Committees for Strategic Transparency

## Overview

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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 fosters an environment that results in greater collaboration while delivering value through strategic and transparent business and procurement practices.

Fire and emergency services are committed to establishing documented statements of practice to ensure agencies and communities make informed decisions based on appropriate risk management practices.

To support this, the sector establishes strategic committees to develop underpinning governance and implement control measures and governance frameworks. These frameworks determine the use of operational capabilities involving personnel and international arrangements driven by operating plans, aligned with the National Capability Statement.

To achieve sector objectives, fire and emergency services must design and implement rigorous tools and reporting systems to support accountable operational and strategic decision making.

Through working closely with agencies and other stakeholders, the sector intends to provide transparent and accountable structures. Areas with increased transparency within the last 12 months include those with a focus on building stronger alignment of committees for strategic transparency, structural reforms in response to independent reviews, development of new national guidelines to assist in aerial fire-fighting operations and mitigation activities, continuous improvement through evaluation of floor recovery programs and an updated Inter-Agency Agreement to ensure coordinated fire investigation arrangements.

Fire and emergency services ensure effective and transparent governance by:

## FRV – Victorian Fire Investigation Inter-Agency Agreement 2023

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

With the formation of FRV, the Victorian Fire Investigation Inter-Agency Agreement 2016 required updating. FRV contributed to the review and update (led by Victoria Police on behalf of the State Coroner) of the agreement to ensure fire investigation in Victoria is coordinated effectively, with agencies being able to exercise their jurisdictional responsibilities.

### — AIM

The teamwork approach to fire investigation is critical in ensuring the safety of Victorians. Although a particular agency may have primacy of an investigation, a collaborative team approach by all agencies is seen as best practice. The agreement provides clear direction between agencies to ensure jurisdiction is defined whilst supporting agencies to exercise their statutory responsibilities.

### — FEATURES

The benefits of an all-agency integrated approach to fire scene examination and investigation include:

- > greater productivity and efficiency utilising existing resources
- > improved inter-agency cooperation
- > increased detection, apprehension, and conviction rates

- > reduction in the incidence of arson
- > cost savings to the community
- > better intelligence sharing
- > increased data holdings
- > earlier identification of trends
- > early identification of product related fault
- > identification of other fire causes
- > improved training and cross training techniques
- > improved reporting rates and processes.

### — OUTCOMES

Modernisation of the agreement to introduce both FRV (remove the former Metropolitan Fire Brigade) and DEECA (replacing the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), ensuring the operation reflects current statutory agencies.

The agreement reinforces agency collaboration and information sharing. In the past, fire investigation in Victoria tended to be conducted by various agencies operating in isolation. The teamwork approach to fire investigation articulated in the agreement supports a more collegial model. The agreement clearly articulates agency roles, information sharing between parties, evidence collection, agency integration, and joint media management.



## NSW EPA – Flood Programs Evaluation

### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Eight NSW EPA Flood Recovery Programs were delivered to assist communities recover following the 2021–22 floods. Evaluation of these programs supports continuous improvement and ongoing high standards of service delivery.

### — AIM

To evaluate the programs to gain a better understanding of the appropriateness of the design, efficiency of delivery, and effectiveness of achievement of outcomes to ensure programs meet requirements of the Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, supported best practice and delivered value to communities.

### — FEATURES

An independent evaluation was undertaken in accordance with NSW Treasury Evaluation Policy and Guidelines. The review process demonstrates accountability to funders and beneficiaries, identifying

learnings and recommendations to inform future disaster recovery programs while continuously improving outcomes for communities.

### — OUTCOMES

The results of the evaluation were very positive with most responses to the key evaluation questions for each program determined as good (strengthening) or excellent (striving).

Stakeholder input allows diverse voices to inform program design that meets community expectations. Program specific recommendations are being incorporated into current programs and in preparation for future program roll-out. Publication of the executive summary report and recommendations allows the sharing of learnings and outcomes with stakeholders including councils and public land managers.

The evaluation reports have been provided as an evaluation example to Treasury for 2023–24, contributing to their evidence bank.



Flood debris clean-up under the EPA recovery programs. Images: NSW EPA

## NAFC – Development of a Cross-Border Airspace Management Guideline

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

Members of NAFC’s Aviation Safety Group identified airspace management as a key safety enhancement priority. Procedural differences and a gap in existing doctrine regarding the management of airspace near State and Territory borders were identified.

### — AIM

To develop a nationally consistent, relevant, and readily applicable guideline for the management of airspace and aircraft movements in the vicinity of State and Territory borders.

### — FEATURES

A working group of airspace management and air attack supervision subject matter experts from firefighting agencies throughout Australia was convened.

The group identified commonalities and procedural gaps, and then worked cooperatively to draft the Guideline,

incorporating identified best practice. Where changes may have been required to the operating procedures of some agencies, these were communicated and agreed.

Enhanced cooperation and communication between State Air Desks was noted as a particular benefit.

### — OUTCOMES

The group presented the draft Cross Border Airspace Management Guideline to the Aviation Safety Group (ASG) on 13 February 2024. The ASG endorsed the Guideline for referral to the NAFC Strategic Committee for approval.

The guideline was approved by the NAFC Strategic Committee on 10 April 2024 as a welcome initiative aligned to the committee’s safety statement.

This new doctrine is published on the NAFC website and promulgated by agency SMEs for incorporation into Standard Operating Procedures.



## Queensland Government – Disaster and Emergency Services Reform

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The Disaster and Emergency Services Reform followed recommendations from an independent review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) that examined the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of QFES and its associated volunteer services.

### — AIM

To ensure the long-term sustainability of emergency services for Queenslanders through:

- > modernising service delivery arrangements
- > simplifying operational structures
- > focused resources.

Ensuring Queensland is best placed to continue delivering exceptional services to all Queenslanders.

### — FEATURES

The changes will strengthen Queensland's response to fire, disaster management, and emergency services, while providing greater reassurance for Queenslanders when natural hazards and other emergencies impact the state.

The Queensland Government committed up to \$578 million over five years, including an uplift of almost 500 full-time positions to support fire and emergency service functions and dedicated budgets to boost resourcing across Queensland, ensuring the department can continue to support Queenslanders when they need it most.

### — OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the reforms include:

- > establishment of the QFD (from 1 July 2024) to focus on continuing to deliver world-class fire and rescue services to the people of Queensland
- > establishment of Marine Rescue Queensland, which brings together coast guard and marine rescue activities
- > expanding the QPS to incorporate additional disaster management functions, including the SES and Marine Rescue Queensland
- > boosted capability and capacity for the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to improve resilience.

## DFES – Governance Committee Refresh: Aligning Committees for Strategic Transparency

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### — INITIATIVE DRIVER

The realignment of DFES Governance Committees with the overarching DFES Strategy and AFAC Strategic Directions by undertaking a comprehensive refresh of the committees' structure, including Terms of Reference, membership, vision, purpose, and roles and responsibilities.

This initiative is designed to strengthen stakeholder engagement, enhance participation in governance processes, and foster thought leadership by leveraging diverse perspectives across the organisation.

### — AIM

To create a robust and dynamic governance framework that is aligned with both the DFES Strategy and AFAC Strategic Directions. By redefining the committees' structures, we seek to clarify roles and responsibilities, sharpen the focus on strategic priorities, and cultivate a culture of inclusivity and innovation.

This initiative aims to enhance the effectiveness of governance processes, ensuring that decision-making is informed by a broad spectrum of expertise and insights, driving more impactful and forward-thinking outcomes for DFES.

### — FEATURES

- > Revised Terms of Reference: clear and updated guidelines to ensure alignment with DFES strategic priorities.
- > Updated membership framework: balanced representation across key areas, promoting diversity and inclusion.
- > Renewed vision and purpose: a refreshed focus that underscores the strategic roles of the committees.

- > Defined roles and responsibilities: clear delineation of roles to enhance accountability and effectiveness.
- > Enhanced stakeholder engagement: mechanisms to improve participation and involvement in governance processes.
- > Regular review protocols: establishment of processes for continuous alignment with organisational and sector-wide goals.
- > Incorporation of best practices: integration of best practice governance standards to build a resilient and responsive framework.

### — OUTCOMES

The initiative is expected to yield several key outcomes, including enhanced strategic alignment with DFES Strategy and AFAC Strategic Directions, leading to more effective and cohesive decision-making.

By clarifying roles, responsibilities, and processes, the initiative will improve the overall effectiveness of governance, ensuring decisions are more impactful and reflective of organisational goals. Increased stakeholder engagement will result from a more inclusive and participatory environment, bringing diverse perspectives to the forefront.

This will strengthen thought leadership within DFES, driving innovation and strategic thinking. The initiative will also ensure sustained relevance and adaptability through regular review protocols, while the updated membership framework will foster diverse and inclusive representation. These outcomes will contribute to greater accountability, transparency, and a more resilient governance structure.





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