

# *Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements*

## Final Report

5 December 2023

**Dr Robert Glasser**

Chair

Independent Review of National Natural Disasters Governance Arrangements



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## Acknowledgements

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I'd like to begin by acknowledging the other two members of our Governance Review Team, Gill Savage, the Review Deputy Lead, and Erica Boyles, the Project Director. Gill and Erica are not only vastly experienced professionals, but also wonderful colleagues. The Review has benefited enormously from their numerous contributions, as have I from their friendship and support.

I also want to acknowledge the members of the Governance Review Working Group, made up of senior representatives from every jurisdiction, including the Commonwealth, which met regularly throughout the process. Their suggestions, feedback, and—most importantly—reality-checking of our emerging recommendations, was invaluable.

Numerous senior government officials and other stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, foundations, and the hazards research community, among others, were extremely generous in spending time with us—in some cases frequently—to provide feedback, improve our awareness of the larger operating and political environment, and to share their ideas.

I want to also acknowledge the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM) members, and particularly Senator the Hon Murray Watt, the Minister for Emergency Management and Chair, for their leadership in the emergency management sphere, reflected, among many other ways, in the commissioning of this Review.

Finally, I want to thank Mr Brendan Moon AM, the NEMA Coordinator-General, and his senior NEMA colleagues for their commitment to the Review and openness to new ideas and ways of working. Other NEMA colleagues were hugely helpful, but I want to particularly acknowledge Julie Edwards, who's deep institutional memory in this sector helped us to avoid re-inventing square wheels!

In conclusion, I want to thank my wife Kirsten Anker for her support and understanding throughout the time-consuming process culminating in the production of this Final Report.

Dr Robert Glasser  
Independent Chair of the Review

# 1 Executive summary

In this Review of Australia's National Natural Disaster Governance, we have identified several ways to improve current practice, which are summarised below. The findings have emerged from extensive consultations, including with both Commonwealth and States and Territories Ministers and Senior Officials, Commissioners and Chief Officers and with many stakeholders from the private sector, foundations, civil society, and the hazards research community (see Appendix A).

“Emergency management” includes everything from preparedness and disaster response, to relief, recovery, and resilience. Issues such as “resilience” clearly extend across government mandates, and this is reflected in the Terms of Reference (TORs, see Appendix B) for the Review, which notes the need to ‘consider the extent to which existing Ministerial Forums have the ability to direct strategic policy initiatives with purpose and urgency, effective shared responsibility and effective collective action.’

Our core task in this Review has been to determine if our national natural disaster governance arrangements are fit-for-purpose, including into the future. Given the pressing need to prepare for a rapid and dramatically changing climate, it is critical to look beyond the present. In this respect the governance arrangements require major changes.

## The context: increasing climate risk

Our planet has just experienced its warmest 12 months in at least the last 120,000 years. To put this in perspective, the Great Pyramids were built 4,500 years ago, the development of agriculture began about 12,000 years ago, and Neanderthals roamed Eurasia until about 40,000 years ago.

The climate is continuing to warm rapidly. We are now entering uncharted waters, where our historical experience in a broad array of areas, including our experience of disasters, is no longer a reliable guide for what lies ahead. This has enormous consequences for how we prepare for these extreme events and for how we structure and manage our national governance arrangements.

It's not just the increasing severity of individual hazard events that's the problem, but how they will compound and interact with other climate-amplified hazards and have broader cascading impacts across society. We're already seeing evidence of this. *Black Summer*, which involved multiple simultaneous, record-setting hazards, directly affected close to 60% of Australians<sup>1</sup>. It had major cascading consequences for the economy, biodiversity, and public health. It also nearly triggered a major water security crisis when the fires threatened Warragamba Dam, the source of 80% of Sydney's supply.

The Australian Government's *2011 National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* stated that ‘It is uncommon for a disaster to be so large that it is beyond the capacity of a state or territory government to deal with effectively.’ Those words, and the systems, policies and funding and governance arrangements underpinning them, are now out of date.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/23/bushfire-crisis-more-than-half-of-all-australians-found-to-have-been-directly-affected>

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Climate change makes it fundamentally necessary to discard the notion that national-scale natural disasters happen only infrequently; they will rapidly become *annual* occurrences, with less and less “down time” for first responders to recover, relief supplies and emergency equipment to be replenished, infrastructure to be re-built, and for communities to re-establish their resilience.

The litmus test of the effectiveness of Australia’s emergency management planning, investments, capacities, and governance arrangements, at every jurisdictional level across Australia, should be the extent to which we are mitigating the risks of intensifying, increasingly national-scale, year-round hazards, in which emergency preparedness, response, relief, and recovery will be required simultaneously.

Our overarching conclusion in this Review is that our governance arrangements do not adequately take this threat to our national resilience into account. This is reflected in a variety of ways described in the report:

- Siloed approaches to address risks and threats that should be integrated.
- Agendas and discussions in governance meetings focused on immediate challenges, to the detriment of emerging, more fundamental, and therefore more urgent, challenges.
- Underinvestment in risk reduction and resilience.
- Insufficient consideration of the sweeping changes and innovations required to address the emerging risks.

We present below the main findings and recommendations of this Review, commencing with overarching recommendations to strengthen coherence for national resilience. This is followed by a summary of our findings concerning the core national governance structure overseeing emergency management, the National Emergency Management Ministers’ Meeting (NEMMM), a Ministerial Council reporting to the National Cabinet, and its supporting senior officials’ body, the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC).

Our Terms of Reference have also asked us to comment on several issues emerging from findings of the recent *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*. We provide these comments, followed by some concluding recommendations about resourcing the national governance structure.

## Findings and Recommendations:

### A. Strengthening coherence for natural hazards and other risks and hazards that threaten national resilience

**Finding 1:** *There is currently no “home” for resilience at National or Commonwealth levels of governance, which is undermining the efficiency and coherence of national efforts to prepare the country for rapidly accelerating risks.*

“Resilience” means different things to different people, reflecting the broad range of risks and threats perceived by various government departments and at different levels of government and across sectors of society.

The gravest threat to resilience for a remote rural community may be the closure of a business that is the major employer. For national security planners it includes risks associated with the changing regional security environment, critical supply chain disruptions, cyber threats, and terrorism. The emergency management sector and climate adaptation planners are deeply concerned about accelerating and intensifying natural hazards.

International best practice is to take an all-hazards approach to risk and resilience. Hazards can trigger other hazards and poorly risk-informed responses to one hazard can exacerbate the risk of others. If we could put on a pair of glasses that magically enabled us to see climate, disaster and other risks, the risks would not fit neatly into bureaucratic, sectoral, jurisdictional, or organisational silos, but rather cut across them. Organising our efforts under the rubric of “resilience” enables us to address the risks coherently.

The coherence of the Commonwealth’s own resilience work has an important impact on national effectiveness. Many initiatives are underway at Commonwealth level in various departments to build Australia’s resilience to the most significant threats Australia faces, but this work is generally happening within departmental silos. Efforts are proceeding to map out this work, identify the gaps, the connections across silos, and to communicate the importance to the Australian public. The same silo dynamic that affects the federal government’s resilience work exists at each jurisdictional level.

We recommend the following steps to strengthen national coherence in this critical area (see Appendix C for a complete list of the Recommendations):

**Recommendation 1:** The National Cabinet should take a leadership role in coordinating resilience initiatives across the Federation.

**Recommendation 2:** The National Cabinet should task Ministerial Councils to include resilience activities in their annual reporting, with the NEMMM contribution focussing on natural hazards.

**Recommendation 3:** The First Secretaries, on behalf of the National Cabinet, should oversee (via a subordinate Deputy Secretaries Group) the development of an annual *Australian National Resilience Report (ANRR)* that combines the Ministerial Council resilience reporting, existing resilience strategies in jurisdictions and new initiatives.

**Recommendation 4:** The ANRR should be a National Cabinet product focused on climate and disaster risk as well as other key resilience risks agreed by the Commonwealth and the jurisdictions.

**Recommendation 5:** The Commonwealth together with the States and Territories should identify their shared high-level resilience objectives and develop indicators to monitor national progress in achieving them. The ANRR should also provide annual updates on progress in achieving the objectives.

**Recommendation 6:** At least once each year, coinciding with the production of the ANRR, the National Cabinet should evaluate progress in bolstering national resilience.

**Recommendation 7:** The Commonwealth Government should direct the Secretaries Board to ensure the overall coherence and efficiency of the Government’s resilience efforts, spanning both the climate adaptation/disaster risk reduction and the national security domains. A Secretaries Sub-committee on Resilience should be established to support this work.

## B. The National Emergency Management Ministers Meeting (NEMMM)

**Finding 2:** *The NEMMM should sharpen and strengthen its focus on resilience, reduce its consideration of transactional matters, place greater emphasis on addressing strategic risks and establish an ambitious agenda that delivers a more disaster resilient nation.*

Our consultation with NEMMM members and senior officials supporting the NEMMM suggest that its agenda has been heavily focused on disaster response and preparedness for disaster response, less so on issues of recovery, and least of all on disaster risk reduction and resilience.

In part this reflects the enormous political pressures ministers feel from their constituencies during and in the aftermath of disasters. In part it reflects the membership of the NEMMM (see Appendix D for NEMMM Terms of Reference). The one thing all NEMMM Ministers have in common is their jurisdictional responsibility for emergency preparedness and response, but few have responsibility in their jurisdictions for recovery and resilience.

We recommend several measures to increase NEMMM’s focus on resilience, such as by clarifying its core role in broader national resilience efforts, including other resilience stakeholders in its meetings and changing the structure of its agendas and meetings. We also identify several recommendations to strengthen its strategic impact.

**Recommendation 8:** The next iteration of NEMMM’s Five Priorities for Action should be explicit and measurable, bold but achievable and focused on national outcomes, rather than outputs. They should:

- Be formulated in terms such as “By 2026 we will have established...which will have reduced...”, etc.
- Be developed through a process that includes consultations with key stakeholders, including First Nations organisations, civil society, the private sector, foundations, and key entities active in the emergency management space, such as Australian Red Cross and the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (formerly the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council or AFAC).
- Be highly compelling for each jurisdiction, large and small.
- Directly address our rapidly accelerating disaster risk environment, in which we can anticipate yearly, national-scale disasters with preparedness, response, recovery and resilience occurring simultaneously, year-round.
- Include at the approval stage the initial estimates of the resourcing required to achieve the outcomes and the sources of the funding.



**Recommendation 9:** NEMMM’s leading role in the wider national resilience effort should focus on disaster risk reduction, and it should engage as a core stakeholder in a wider range of other resilience issues. It should further elaborate this focus with respect to:

- Prospective risk management (higher infrastructure standards, environmental protection, etc.),
- Corrective risk management (retrofitting, reinforcing, and remedial measures),
- Compensatory risk management (risk financing and transfer), and
- Reactive risk management (early warning systems and effective response and recovery).

**Recommendation 10:** Each NEMMM agenda should have a standing item on disaster risk reduction/resilience and at least one full meeting each year should be devoted to *Disaster Resilience and Recovery*. Some jurisdictions have established separate ministers responsible for recovery and resilience, and they should be invited to attend these recovery and resilience meetings.

**Recommendation 11:** NEMMM should co-convene a joint Ministerial Council meeting with climate change adaptation ministers to promote greater coherence between NEMMM’s resilience work and climate adaptation—two key components of a future national resilience strategy. This should be a face-to-face meeting.

**Recommendation 12:** NEMMM agendas should ensure that discussion of urgent tactical challenges don’t crowd-out consideration of the strategic challenges.

- NEMMM should request ANZEMC, facilitated by NEMA, to conduct “stress-testing” scenario planning of the consequences (e.g., exhausted emergency workers, insufficient emergency housing and shortages of trades people) of year-on-year increases in consecutive and intensifying national-scale disasters.

**Recommendation 13:** Given the importance of NEMMM’s work, meetings should occur quarterly and be in-person at least twice yearly, be of sufficient length to allow for issues to be properly canvassed and discussed and be preceded by an opportunity for the NEMMM members to meet informally alone together.

**Recommendation 14:** NEMMM’s Terms of Reference should be amended to reflect the recommendations above.

## C. The Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC)

**Finding 3:** *ANZEMC needs to strengthen its focus on strategic risks in support of the NEMMM, elevate the importance of disaster risk reduction and resilience, narrow its agenda, reduce the rigidity of its structure.*

ANZEMC is the peak senior officials' organisation responsible to the NEMMM. Its membership is comprised of two senior officers from each Australian, state and territory government and one senior officer each from the New Zealand government and the Australian Local Government Association (see Appendix E for Terms of Reference).

Our consultations with ministers, ANZEMC members and other stakeholders highlighted themes consistent with the feedback we received on the NEMMM, particularly on the need to increase its focus on risk reduction and resilience and minimise transactional discussions in favour of more strategic matters. We developed several recommendations to address these issues and others, also strongly supported in our consultations, to better focus ANZEMC's role, simplify and decrease the rigidity of its structure and to ensure it is resourced to deliver the priority outcomes determined by the NEMMM.

**Recommendation 15:** ANZEMC's core mission should be narrowed to:

- 1) Supporting the NEMMM, particularly to identify its five priorities for action and ensuring they are implemented; and
- 2) Providing a forum for key senior officials to address other nationally (e.g., cross-jurisdictionally) pressing, emerging and longer-term challenges.

**Recommendation 16:** The ANZEMC workplan and meeting agendas should be explicitly organised under two headings: "Disaster Resilience and Recovery" and "Preparedness and Capabilities Policy".

**Recommendation 17:** The government members of ANZEMC should be senior officials (Commissioners, Deputy Secretaries or Heads of Agencies) from agencies that have the lead jurisdictional responsibility for preparedness and response and resilience and recovery.

**Recommendation 18:** Each jurisdiction should be allowed a maximum of three senior officials on ANZEMC to enable the inclusion of these jurisdictional responsibilities (see Appendix F for Summary of State and Territory responsibilities).

**Recommendation 19:** ANZEMC should meet four times each year, including twice face-to-face, with one of the in-person meetings devoted predominantly to "Disaster Resilience and Recovery." The face-to-face meetings should be preceded by an opportunity for the ANZEMC members to meet informally.

**Recommendation 20:** The Commonwealth should allocate a significant budget to ANZEMC to support implementation of the NEMMM's five priorities for action. The States and Territories should contribute as well, with their support, such as contributions in-kind and other resourcing, proportionate to the size of the jurisdiction.

**Recommendation 21:** ANZEMC should establish time-limited, flexible task forces, reporting directly to ANZEMC, to implement NEMMM’s five priorities for action and essential other initiatives, comprised of diverse membership (e.g., government, private sector, academia, civil society), determined by the requirements of the task.

**Recommendation 22:** The current ANZEMC Sub-committees and other subsidiary bodies should be reconceptualised as “communities of practice” and important sources of expert advice, rather than as national governance bodies.

**Recommendation 23:** ANZEMC should map out the many existing time-limited working groups and reference and advisory groups and the communities of practice, to identify which are no longer required and should be discontinued, which should continue and be officially sanctioned by ANZEMC, which should continue as informal interest groups, and to identify potential gaps.

**Recommendation 24:** ANZEMC’s Terms of Reference should be amended to reflect the recommendations above.

## D. Responses to findings related to the Royal Commission on National Natural Disaster Arrangements

The Terms of Reference for this Review also asked us to examine several additional questions linked to specific issues identified in the 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. The Royal Commission’s recommendation 3.1 called on Australian and state and territory governments to restructure and reinvigorate ministerial forums with a view to enabling timely and informed strategic decision-making in the natural disaster management sphere.

The Royal Commission Recommendation 3.2 found that in a crisis the National Cabinet should be able to request advice directly from an authoritative disaster advisory body, noting that ANZEMC could not fulfill this function because of its focus on policy, rather than operations. Our summary findings and recommendations on these two Royal Commission recommendations and on other matters related to the Royal Commission, are presented below:

*Royal Commission Recommendation 3.1 relating to restructuring and reinvigorating ministerial forums:*

**Finding 4:** *The National Cabinet’s decision to extend and broaden the mandate of the NEMMM to encompass strategic issues and challenges of national significance across the disaster management spectrum, as an on-going Ministerial Council reporting to the National Cabinet, is an effective response to Royal Commission Recommendation 3.1.*

*Royal Commission Recommendation 3.2: “Need to establish an authoritative disaster advisory body to provide advice to National Cabinet in a crisis”:*

**Finding 5:** *There is no need to establish a new authoritative disaster advisory body to advise National Cabinet in a crisis. The National Coordination Mechanism is the right mechanism to ensure that the National Cabinet has access to appropriate authoritative expertise in a crisis.*

*Should the National Crisis Committee (NCC) be refreshed?*

**Finding 6:** *The NCC has been replaced by the National Coordination Mechanism. We do not believe the NCC needs to be re-established.*

*Examine the strategic relationship between NEMMM and the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) and its Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee (CCOSC):*

**Finding 7:** *Planning needs to accelerate on the likelihood that national facilitation and coordination of both emergency response and relief and early recovery will become increasingly essential given more frequent and destructive national-scale disasters.*

**Recommendation 25:** NEMA with CCOSC should investigate ways to better integrate and align CCOSC and the NRSC with the national coordination capacity.

- This should include building on the existing arrangements in exceptional circumstances to outpost NRSC staff as liaison officers to the Australian Government National Situation Room.
- This should also include identifying event thresholds that would trigger the need for greater integration.

**Recommendation 26:** The Commonwealth should identify the longer-term resourcing and organisational requirements to build coordination capacity for relief and early recovery.

*Royal Commission views about AFAC’s with respect to the development of public policy:*

**Finding 8:** *Governments should take the lead in developing public policy for disaster management on issues of national significance, including by encouraging entities, such as AFAC, to contribute ideas and facilitate discussions in their areas of expertise.*

## E. Resourcing the national governance arrangements.

**Finding 9:** *NEMA is inadequately resourced to facilitate the delivery of strong outcomes from the governance structure.*

**Recommendation 27:** In light of the fact that NEMA is a small agency with far fewer options than much larger government departments to reallocate resources for their Ministerial Council Secretariats, the Commonwealth should consider supplementing NEMA's funding for this purpose.

- The NEMA Secretariat should be staffed by a well-resourced team with high-level public policy experience across the preparedness and response and recovery and DRR/resilience agendas.
- The Secretariat should be led by a senior executive, with the high-level policy, communication and facilitation skills and experience, as the core function of that person's job.
- A significant travel budget should be included for the Secretariate to enable regular in-person engagement with the jurisdictions.
- NEMA should identify options, including incentives, to reduce staff turnover in these critical Secretariat functions.

**Recommendation 28:** The Commonwealth should allocate a significant program budget to the Ministerial Council to enable effective implementation of its five national priorities for action.

- To achieve this, it should consider, in consultation with the States and Territories, renewing the *Disaster Risk Reduction Package* (DRRP) fund, which expires in June of next year and includes a major component focused on national-level efforts to reduce disaster risk.
- An allocation on the order of \$10m per year would be a reasonable approximation of the level of funding required to support implementation of the NEMMM's five national priorities for action.

**Recommendation 29:** Jurisdictions should also contribute resourcing to implement the priorities for action, such as contributions in-kind and other funding, proportionate to the size of the jurisdiction. Funding should not be sourced from the *Disaster Ready Fund* given the dependence local government has on that funding source.

**Recommendation 30:** It is appropriate that NEMA should be able to draw on its administered funding to support implementation across jurisdictions of projects associated with delivering the five national priorities for action. NEMA should explore this option.

## 2 Introduction

This is the Final Report of the *Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements*, commissioned by the Australian Government on behalf of the National Emergency Management Ministers’ Meeting (NEMMM), a Ministerial Council of the National Cabinet (Appendix D).

This report details the key themes that emerged through consultations with ministers from each State and Territory, members of the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (including Commissioners/Chief Officers) and other senior officials from the States and Territories, as well as with senior Commonwealth government officials and stakeholders from the private sector, foundations, and civil society organisations (Appendix A). The consultations have highlighted specific problems with the current governance arrangements and some potential solutions.

We have also examined previous governance reviews to inform our findings. These reviews, and what we’ve gleaned from them, are summarised in Appendix G.

We begin the Report (Chapter 3) with a summary of the context for the Review, highlighting the accelerating risk associated with climate change, which is critical in determining the adequacy of the current operational and governance arrangements.

This is followed by our findings and recommendations under the headings of “Strengthening coherence for national resilience” (Chapter 4); “Enhancing NEMMM” (Chapter 5); and “Improving ANZEMC” – which is the senior officials body supporting the NEMMM in the governance structure (Chapter 6).

In the Terms of Reference for the Review, the NEMMM has also asked us to comment on several findings from the recent *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*. We do so in Chapter 7 and then conclude this Report with recommendations on resourcing of the governance structure (Chapter 8).

### 3 The context for the Review: accelerating climate risk

We have completed this Review at a time when the planet has just experienced its warmest 12 months in at least the last 120,000 years. To put this in perspective, the Great Pyramids were built 4,500 years ago, the development of agriculture began about 12,000 years ago, and Neanderthals roamed Eurasia until about 40,000 years ago.

The climate is continuing to warm rapidly. We are now entering uncharted waters, where our historical experience in a broad array of areas, including agriculture, health, national security, trade, economic development, and “natural” disasters, is no longer a reliable guide for what lies ahead. This has enormous consequences for how Australia and other countries prepare for and respond to natural hazards—and for this Governance Review, which was tasked to determine if our national natural disaster governance arrangements are fit-for-purpose, including into the future.

The climate science suggests that globally we can anticipate, among other things, more frequent, longer and hotter heatwaves; coastal flood risks from accelerating sea-level rise as well as torrential downpours and intensifying storms causing flooding; altered distribution of pests and pathogens; ocean heating and acidification; hotter and longer bushfire seasons; and longer and drier droughts.

Australians are already highly exposed to a broad range of the hazards that climate change is amplifying. Twenty per cent of our national GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 3.9 million of our people are in areas with high to extreme risk of tropical cyclones, 28% of GDP and 25% of our population reside in LGAs at high to extreme risk of floods, and about 11% of GDP and 2.2 million people are in places with high and extreme risk of bushfire.

Even without climate change, the impact of natural hazards is enormous. More than 500 Australians<sup>2</sup>, about the same number who died in the Vietnam War, die each year from heat stress alone. The annual economic costs of natural disasters are projected to increase to \$39 billion by 2050<sup>3</sup>, which is roughly equivalent to what the Australian government spends annually on defence.

Climate change will dramatically increase the frequency and severity of many of these hazards. The number of record hot days in Australia has doubled in the past 50 years, and heatwaves have become longer and hotter<sup>4</sup>. Extreme fire weather days have increased in recent decades in many

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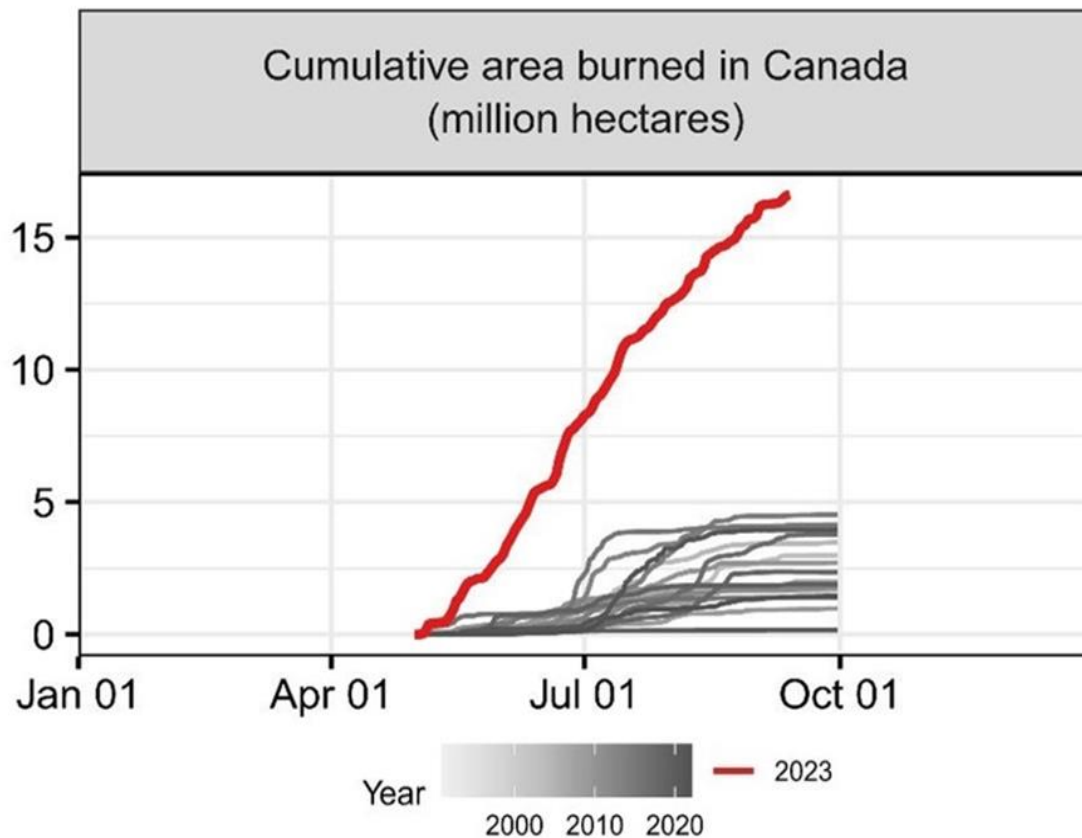
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-25/heat-stress-deaths-rise-following-australia-day/7113030>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/perspectives/building-australias-natural-disaster-resilience.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/9901f6614a2cac7b2b888f55b4dff9cc.pdf>

regions of Australia. Short and more intense rainstorms that trigger flash floods and urban flooding are also becoming more frequent<sup>5</sup>, and sea levels have been rising at an accelerated rate<sup>6</sup> since 1993.

We need to anticipate that climate-driven hazards will increasingly be record-setting, often by surprisingly large margins. Some recent events that have been linked to climate change illustrate this point. The 2023 Canadian fires (Figure 1) shattered the previous annual records of area burned by nearly three-fold:



Source: Ripple et al., 'The 2023 state of the climate report: Entering uncharted territory', *BioScience*, 2023.

Figure 1 – Cumulative area burned in Canada 2023

The unprecedented rapid intensification of Hurricane Otis, the strongest storm in recorded history to strike the Pacific coast of Mexico, defied (the dotted line in Figure 2, below) the predictions of numerous models, which expected it to remain relatively weak and then dissipate.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180730120245.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.science.org.au/learning/general-audience/science-climate-change/6-how-are-sea-levels-changing>



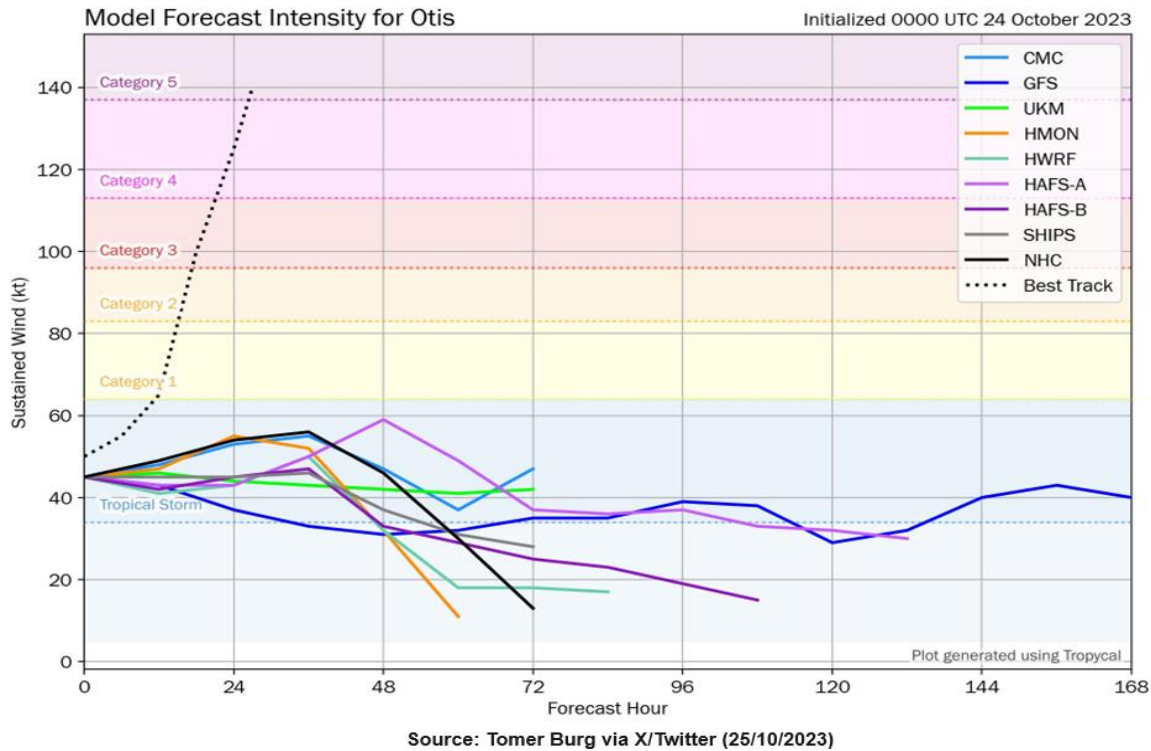


Figure 2 – Model Forecast Intensity for Otis

Extraordinary spikes in Australia’s extreme heat events are increasing rapidly (with 2023 now likely to become the hottest year on record):

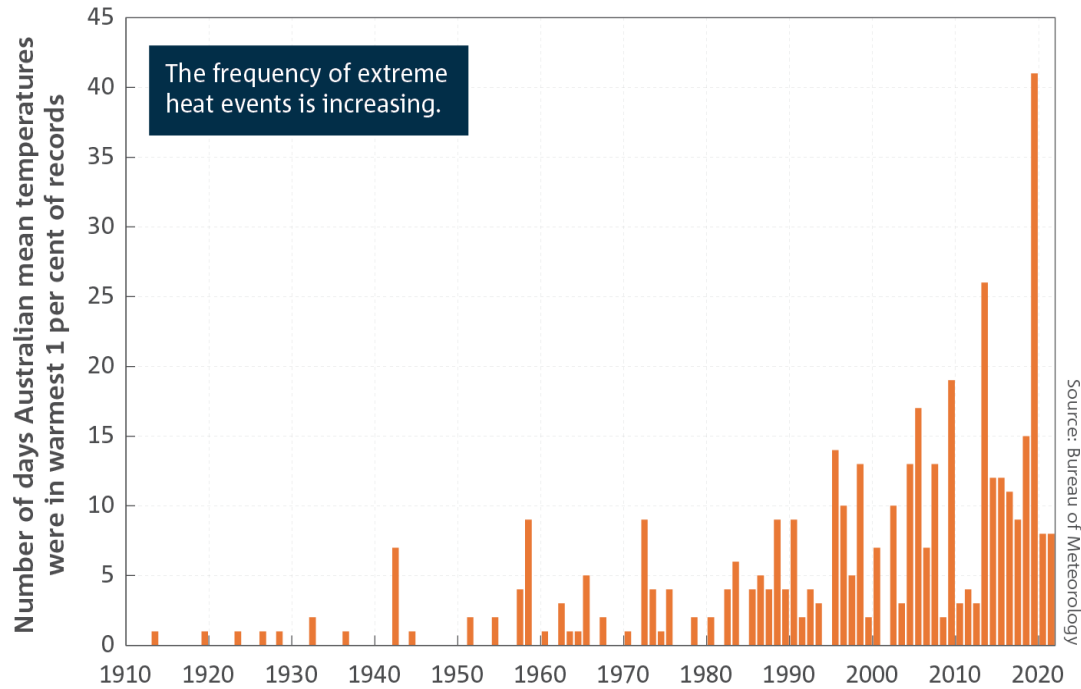


Figure 3 – Frequency of Extreme Heat Events in Australia

It's not just the increasing severity of individual hazard events that's the problem, but how they will compound and interact with other climate-amplified hazards. This can happen in several ways, including:

- Different types of hazards happening *simultaneously* at the same place, like a combination of low rainfall and extreme heat causing a severe drought and contributing to bushfires.
- *Successive* hazards, such as destructive wildfires, followed by heavy rainfall on the burned areas leading to mudslides that damage infrastructure.
- Hazards happening at the same time or close together, but *in different places*, such as large fires in multiple States and Territories occurring simultaneously with a severe cyclone elsewhere in the country, overwhelming national capacity to respond.
- Extreme events happening *on top of longer-term trends*, such as higher sea levels, increased precipitation, and changing storm patterns, leading to more frequent and severe coastal flooding.

More frequent and severe compounding hazards will also increasingly have major cascading impacts across Australian society. We're already seeing evidence of this. Black Summer, which involved multiple simultaneous, record-setting hazards, directly affected close to 70% of Australians. It had major cascading consequences for the economy, biodiversity, and public health. It also nearly triggered a major water security crisis when the fires threatened Warragamba Dam, the source of 80% of Sydney's supply.

Climate change makes it fundamentally necessary to discard the notion that major natural disasters happen only infrequently. They will rapidly become annual occurrences, with less and less "down time" for first responders to recover, relief supplies and emergency equipment to be replenished, infrastructure to be re-built, and for communities to re-establish their resilience.

While the stakeholders we canvassed for this Review appreciate that the risks are increasing, we believe that even the disaster management community; which is most sensitive to this issue, will be surprised by how rapidly this happens. Even minor changes in sea-level, for example, can have major human impacts. A recent New Zealand study noted that a 10cm rise will turn a 1-in-100-year extreme flooding event into a 1-in-33-year event and a 20cm rise into a 1-in-11-year event.

The UN projects sea levels will rise by 30cm within less than three decades, turning these extreme floods into annual events in many parts of the world (much sooner to our immediate north, where sea-levels are rising many times faster than the global average, with enormous consequences for countries such as densely populated Indonesia and its neighbours).

From only 1 degree of warming, extreme heating events mushroomed 90-fold over the past decade, relative to the previous three. We are on-track for 2-3 degrees, with about half of that already locked-in due to the inertia in the climate system. A recent ABARES<sup>7</sup> report illustrates the implications. It found that Australian farms have already lost on average about \$30,000 each year in profits over the past two decades due to climate change.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-07-29/abares-climate-change-costs-30k-per-farm/100331680>

The Australian Government's 2011 *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*<sup>8</sup> stated that 'It is uncommon for a disaster to be so large that it is beyond the capacity of a state or territory government to deal with effectively.' Those words, and the systems, policies and funding and governance arrangements underpinning them, are now out of date. The frequency of national-scale disasters is increasing and at an accelerating rate.

This is a fundamental challenge for Australia's disaster management systems and for the governance of those systems. But it is also an important opportunity for governments to engage all Australians, including First Nations peoples who have deep historical experience managing natural hazards, in the empowering challenge of building our nation's resilience.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-strategy-disaster-resilience.pdf>

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## 4 Strengthening coherence for national resilience

Our Review has been tasked to consider governance arrangements across the emergency management spectrum, including with respect to strengthening “resilience.” That term means different things to different people, reflecting the broad range of risks and threats addressed by various government departments and at different levels of government and across sectors of society.

The gravest threat to resilience for a remote rural community may be the closure of a business that is the major employer. For national security planners it includes risks associated with the changing regional security environment, critical supply chain disruptions, cyber threats, and terrorism. The emergency management sector and climate adaptation planners are deeply concerned about accelerating and intensifying natural hazards.

The coherence of the Commonwealth’s own resilience work has an important impact on national effectiveness. Many initiatives are proceeding at Commonwealth level in various departments to build Australia’s resilience to the most significant threats Australia faces, but this work is generally happening within departmental silos. Efforts are underway to map out this work, identify gaps, connections across silos, and opportunities to strengthen the coherence and to communicate the importance to the Australian public.

These efforts are essential. If we could put on a pair of glasses that magically enabled us to see climate, disaster and other risks, the risks would not fit neatly into bureaucratic, sectoral, jurisdictional, or organisational silos, but rather cut across them. Organising our efforts under the rubric of “resilience” enables us to do this.

International best practice is to take an all-hazards approach to disaster risk management. Hazards can trigger other hazards and poorly risk-informed responses to one hazard can exacerbate the risk of other hazards. However, Australia’s national governance arrangements for hazards are generally siloed, rather than integrated.

Three examples illustrate some of these connections across silos:

### Natural hazard silos

Natural hazards can be slow-onset, such as drought and sea level rise, or sudden on-set, such as cyclones, floods, and bushfires. They are intricately connected: For example, drought can contribute to the outbreak of bushfires and sea-level rise can exacerbate flooding from storm surge. But the responsibilities for these hazards are often managed and governed through different processes and departments. For example, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is responsible for drought and NEMA for bushfires.

### Natural hazards and national security threats

Responses to national security threats have important connections to domestic disaster-response preparations. The Government’s decision to narrow contexts in which the Australian Defence Force contributes to domestic disaster relief efforts (e.g., only as a force of last resort), a reflection of the worsening regional security outlook, increases the need to bolster Australia’s civilian domestic natural disaster response capacity. Similarly, in some contexts,

terrorists and cyber-attacks can place demands on first responders and volunteers that more typically respond to natural disasters.

#### Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

There's enormous overlap between climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction; both are attempting to address many of the same hazards. Yet, at the Commonwealth level, the two issues are managed by different organisations, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and NEMA. Despite a collaborative working relationship, each is developing separate strategies to address the hazards, and each has a different national governance structure (an interdepartmental committee has been established to better integrate this work).

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) is actively engaged in addressing this cross-government coherence, working closely with the Department of Home Affairs, which is developing a national resilience framework, and other government departments, such as DCCEEW and NEMA. At the ministerial level, the Minister for Emergency Management chairs the Australian Government Ministerial Committee for Emergency Management (AGMCEM) which, among other things, will contribute to cross-portfolio coherence and coordination of the Commonwealth's disaster resilience work. Ultimately, the Australian Government should determine how it wishes to govern at ministerial level the Commonwealth's broader resilience efforts. We have not addressed this point in our Review, other than with a focus at senior officials' level, where we recommend a role for the Secretaries Board in overseeing the coherence and efficiency of the Commonwealth's efforts.

### National governance of resilience

The Terms of Reference for this Review include the need to 'consider the extent to which existing Ministerial Forums have the ability to direct strategic policy initiatives with purpose and urgency, effective shared responsibility and effective collective action. We believe that the national governance structure is not adequately configured to address the urgent challenge of building national resilience. The same silo dynamic that affects the federal government's resilience work exists at each jurisdictional level.

There is currently no "home" for resilience at National or—notwithstanding the significant efforts underway described above—Commonwealth levels of governance. Given how rapidly Australia's risk environment is worsening, this should be addressed as a matter of priority. We believe the National Cabinet should task Ministerial Councils to report annually on their resilience work. This reporting, together with similar reporting by Commonwealth and State and Territory governments on their key resilience initiatives that are progressing outside of national governance structures, should be combined to produce the first ANRR. It would be primarily descriptive.

We also recommend that the Commonwealth, together with the States and Territories, should identify their shared high-level resilience objectives and develop indicators to monitor national progress in achieving them. Subsequent ANRRs should include updates on progress in achieving the objectives.

Ultimately, this work should establish a foundation for national investments and other decisions shaped by national strategy and underpinned by evidence and data.

A significant opportunity also exists for jurisdictions to collaborate on identifying a range of practical, operational measures to strengthen resilience, such as incorporating resilience in “Charter Letters” sent from the Prime Minister/Premiers to their ministers, changes to departmental administrative arrangements, developing standard methodologies for incorporating resilience in Request for Proposals (RFPs) for government funding and establishing a unit within cabinet departments to review cabinet submissions through a whole-of-government, all-hazards “resilience” lens.

**Finding 1:** *There is currently no “home” for resilience at National or Commonwealth levels of governance, which is undermining the efficiency and coherence of national efforts to prepare the country for rapidly accelerating risks.*

**Recommendation 1:** The National Cabinet should take a leadership role in coordinating resilience initiatives across the Federation.

**Recommendation 2:** The National Cabinet should task Ministerial Councils to include resilience activities in their annual reporting, with the NEMMM contribution focussing on natural hazards.

**Recommendation 3:** The First Secretaries, on behalf of the National Cabinet, should oversee the development of an annual ANRR that combines the Ministerial Council resilience reporting, existing resilience strategies in jurisdictions and new initiatives.

**Recommendation 4:** The ANRR should be a National Cabinet product focused on climate and disaster risk as well as other key resilience risks identified by the jurisdictions.

**Recommendation 5:** The Commonwealth together with the States and Territories should identify their shared high-level resilience objectives and develop indicators to monitor national progress in achieving them. The ANRR should also provide annual updates on progress in achieving the objectives.

**Recommendation 6:** At least once each year, coinciding with the production of the ANRR, the National Cabinet should evaluate progress in bolstering national resilience.

**Recommendation 7:** The Commonwealth Government should direct the Secretaries Board to ensure the overall coherence and efficiency of the Government’s resilience efforts, spanning both the climate adaptation/disaster risk reduction and the national security domains. A Secretaries Sub-committee on Resilience should be established to support this work.

## 5 Enhancing the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting

The national natural disaster governance structure (Figure 4) is comprised of the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM), which is a Ministerial Council reporting to the National Cabinet, and the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC), which is a senior officials' body that supports the NEMMM. ANZEMC is, in turn, supported by two Sub-committees, the Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee (CORS) and the Mitigation and Risk Sub-committee (MaRS), as well as by many time-limited working groups, reference groups, and advisory bodies.

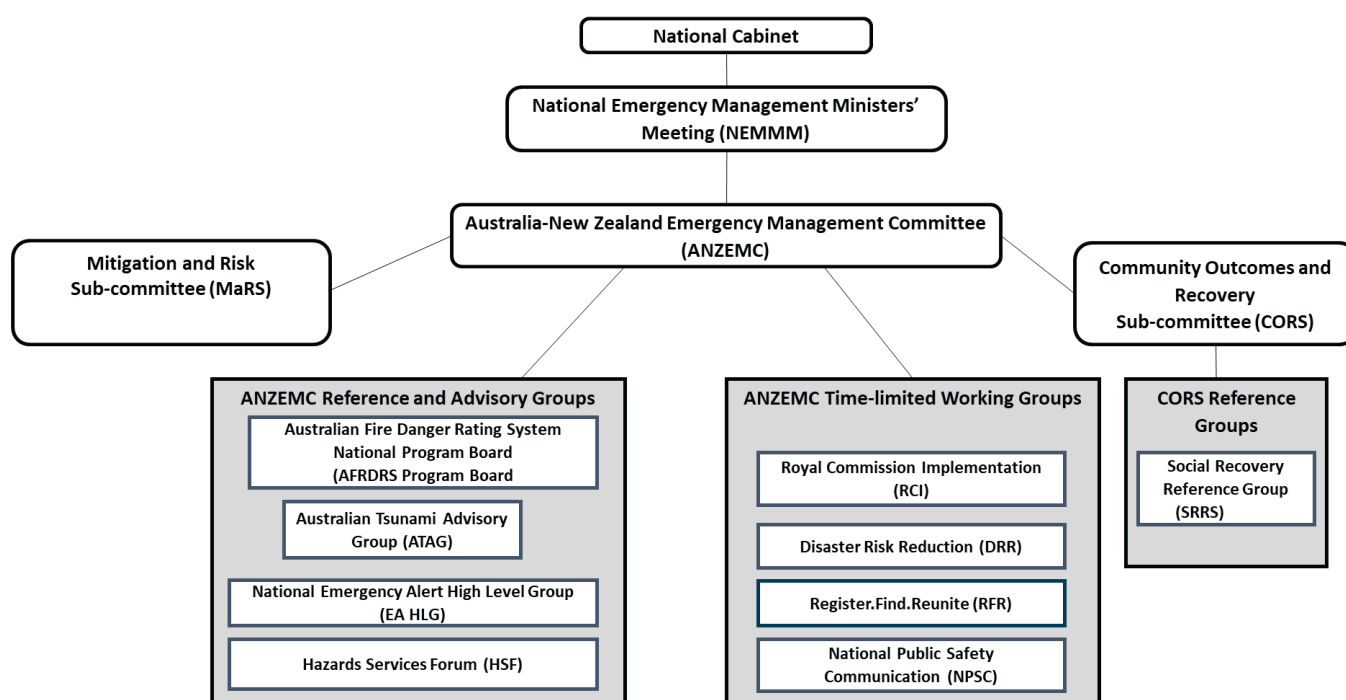


Figure 4 – National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements

The NEMMM facilitates emergency management portfolio ministers from their respective jurisdictions to work collaboratively to drive national cooperation and consistency on enduring strategic issues in emergency/disaster management (which includes disaster preparedness, response, relief, recovery, and risk reduction) and on resilience. Its Terms of Reference (Appendix D) note that this mandate may include cross-portfolio issues, such as building, planning, land management, infrastructure, communications, data and digital, health, science, research, environment, and education. In addition to the ministers, the President of the Australian Local Government Association is a member.

Ministers and senior officials commented positively on the recent change they've noticed in the NEMMM. They describe greater targeted discussions and a generally revitalised, collaborative, and positive approach. They also sense a new "appetite for issues-driven solutions."

The ministers and senior officials shared many ideas about how the NEMMM could be improved. Virtually all agreed that it should be more strategic and enable a “deeper conversation”, including on issues such as “Where are we today?” and “Where do we need to be in 10 years?” To enable this, some said that the agendas should include fewer transactional issues. Others suggested more strategic discussions would require more frequent face-to-face meetings. This latter point would be consistent with other Ministerial Councils, which meet more often than the NEMMM and more often face-to-face. For example, the Energy and Climate Ministerial Council meets in-person four times each year.

One fundamental issue that has arisen as we examined the NEMMM is that its agenda has been heavily focused on disaster response and preparedness for disaster response, less so on issues of recovery, and least of all on disaster risk reduction and resilience.

This raises two problems. The first is that NEMMM’s mandate includes the *full spectrum* of responsibilities, from emergency preparedness and response to relief, recovery, and resilience, each of which should receive appropriate attention.

The second problem is the urgent need for Australia to significantly increase its focus on risk reduction and resilience in the face of climate change. As the earlier section in this report pointed out, climate impacts are accelerating rapidly. Opportunities to reduce disaster risk and build resilience exists across the emergency management spectrum, but if we focus primarily on emergency preparedness and response to meet this threat, we will very rapidly become overwhelmed by the scale of the hazards that climate change is amplifying. It is revealing that the *Interim Report of the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding* (the “Colvin Review”) has found that only about 7% of overall funding addresses disaster risk reduction and resilience.

What accounts for this emphasis on emergency response in the NEMMM? Clearly one explanation is that the urgency and associated political pressures linked to responding to emergencies, relief and reconstruction have often trumped efforts to strengthen longer-term resilience. Ministers and officials feel these pressures and the NEMMM and ANZEMC governance agendas have tended to reflect this imbalance.

The imbalance also reflects the membership of the NEMMM. The one thing all NEMMM Ministers have in common is their jurisdictional responsibility for emergency preparedness and response, but few have responsibility in their jurisdictions for recovery and resilience.

Ministers generally have broad perspectives across their jurisdictions and the senior officials who support them regularly consult across departments within their jurisdictions. Nevertheless, it’s significant that much of the discussions we observed at both the NEMMM and ANZEMC were heavily focused on the disaster cycle and issues of the moment, rather than on the longer-term resilience challenges.

There is an important evolution underway across the States and Territories, driven by increasingly severe disasters. Many are reviewing their disaster legislation, improving their operational capacity, and creating new permanent bodies to professionalise their responses. NSW, for example, has established the NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSWRA) to lead the state’s work on recovery and resilience, like Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority



(QRA) established following the unprecedented natural disasters that struck Queensland over the summer months of 2010-11.

The Minister responsible for QRA and senior officials leading this work are not currently represented on NEMMM or ANZEMC. In NSW, the Minister for Emergency Services is jointly responsible for this work with the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and, as with the QRA, the NSWRA senior officials are not currently represented on the ANZEMC. In Victoria, the Minister for ERV is broadly responsible for emergency management, but the ERV senior official is not on ANZEMC. One of our recommendations below is designed to rectify this.

In addition, we recommend that each NEMMM agenda should have a standing item on “disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience” and at least one full meeting each year should be devoted to “recovery and DRR/resilience. As currently few NEMMM ministers have responsibility for “resilience” in their jurisdictions, these meetings would benefit from including those (currently two) additional ministers who do have responsibility for recovery and/or resilience in their jurisdictions.

If, as we have proposed above, the National Cabinet takes a leadership role in coordinating resilience initiatives across the Federation, with each of the Ministerial Councils responsible for contributing to the resilience priority, it will be important to distinguish NEMMM’s contribution. We believe that NEMMM should be the *lead* Ministerial Council on *disaster risk reduction* efforts across the emergency management spectrum, including preparedness, recovery (e.g., building back better) and various risk reduction and resilience measures linked to programs managed by the emergencies management sector, such as the Disaster Resilience Fund.

NEMMM should be considered a *core stakeholder* in the cross-portfolio areas listed in its current mandate (e.g., planning, land management, infrastructure, communications, data and digital, health, science, research, environment, and education), with unique insights to contribute, including concerning *failures* of resilience, gleaned from Australia’s extensive experience in disasters. The NEMMM also has a compelling interest to engage in these wider issues to reduce the future need for emergency response and recovery.

We have also received feedback from stakeholders outside of government, from the private sector, civil society and elsewhere that the governance structure should find ways to incorporate a whole-of-society voice in its work. We were informed that non-government stakeholders, such as in the private sector, First Nations bodies, civil society organisations, foundations and the research community are engaged across jurisdictions, including at Commonwealth level in a range of ways, such as in projects, on advisory bodies and as part of consultation processes.

Nevertheless, we believe that this engagement should include helping the NEMMM to identify its top strategic priorities. The NEMMM, as with the other Ministerial Councils, develops up to five priorities for action. We believe the next iteration of these priorities should be preceded by consultations with these key stakeholder groups. The consultations should be structured to focus on both disaster preparedness and capabilities and recovery and disaster risk reduction/resilience. The States and Territories should lead these consultations in their jurisdictions while the Commonwealth should consult with appropriate national stakeholder groups.

The five priorities for action identified by NEMMM should be highly compelling for each jurisdiction, large and small. They should be explicit and measurable, bold but achievable, and move us forward

as a nation. They should directly address our rapidly accelerating disaster risk environment, in which we can anticipate yearly, national-scale disasters with preparedness, response, recovery and resilience occurring simultaneously, year-round.

As indicated in the discussion of bureaucratic “silos” presented in an earlier section of this Report, there is significant overlap between the issues of climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Much work is underway in the Commonwealth to integrate this work more effectively. We believe it would be useful for the NEMMM to co-convene a joint Ministerial Council meeting with climate change adaptation ministers to promote greater coherence between NEMMM’s resilience work and climate adaptation—two key components of a future national resilience strategy. Ideally this would be a face-to-face meeting. The agenda for the discussion and recommendations would be developed by the relevant senior officials’ bodies and secretariats supporting the respective Ministerial Councils.

NEMMM ministers often discuss urgent issues emerging in their jurisdictions. This is a useful practice because the issues tend to affect numerous Australian communities and require cross-jurisdiction responses. Nevertheless, particularly given the rapidly accelerating impact of climate change, the NEMMM should ensure that urgent tactical discussions don’t crowd-out the strategic ones. It should consider both the immediate needs associated with, for example, exhausted emergency workers, insufficient emergency housing and shortages of skilled tradespersons, and the strategic question of what to do if these immediate challenges become intensifying, annual occurrences with no respite.

The litmus test of the effectiveness of Australia’s emergency management planning, investments, capacities, and governance arrangements, at every jurisdictional level across Australia, should be the extent to which we are mitigating the risks of unrelenting, intensifying, increasingly national-scale, year-round hazards, in which emergency preparedness, response, relief, and recovery will be required simultaneously.

Our consultation across other ministerial councils suggests that establishing strong working relationships among ministers is an important factor for effectiveness. Given the growing importance of NEMMM’s work, it should consider meeting at least four times each year, including face-to-face at least twice (other Ministerial Councils do so). The formal face-to-face meetings should be preceded by an opportunity for the NEMMM members to meet informally alone together. These informal occasions not only help to build the personal relationships, but also, they create a casual setting for the members to address key unresolved issues.

**Finding 2:** *The NEMMM should sharpen and strengthen its focus on resilience, become less transactional, place greater emphasis on addressing strategic risks and establish an ambitious agenda that delivers a more disaster resilient nation.*

**Recommendation 8:** The NEMMM’s Five Priorities for Action should be explicit and measurable, bold but achievable and focused on national *outcomes*, rather than *outputs*. They should:

- Be formulated in terms such as “By 2026 we will have established...which will have reduced...”, etc.
- Be developed through a process that includes consultations with key stakeholders, including First Nations organisations, civil society, the private sector, foundations, and key entities active in the emergency management space, such as Australian Red Cross and AFAC.
- Be highly compelling for each jurisdiction, large and small.
- Directly address our rapidly accelerating disaster risk environment, in which we can anticipate yearly, national-scale disasters with preparedness, response, recovery and resilience occurring simultaneously, year-round.
- Include at the approval stage the initial estimates of the resourcing required to achieve the outcomes and the sources of the funding.

**Recommendation 9:** NEMMM’s leading role in the wider national resilience effort should focus on *disaster risk reduction*, and it should engage as a core stakeholder in a wider range of other resilience issues. It should further elaborate this focus with respect to:

- Prospective risk management (higher infrastructure standards, environmental protection, etc.),
- Corrective risk management (retrofitting, reinforcing, and remedial measures),
- Compensatory risk management (risk financing and transfer), and
- Reactive risk management (early warning systems and effective response and recovery).

**Recommendation 10:** Each NEMMM agenda should have a standing item on disaster risk reduction/resilience and at least one full meeting each year should be devoted to *Disaster Resilience and Recovery*. Some jurisdictions have established separate ministers responsible for recovery and resilience, and they should be invited to attend these recovery and resilience meetings.

**Recommendation 11:** NEMMM should co-convene a joint Ministerial Council meeting with climate change adaptation ministers to promote greater coherence between NEMMM’s resilience work and climate adaptation—two key components of a future national resilience strategy. This should be a face-to-face meeting.

**Recommendation 12:** NEMMM agendas should ensure that discussion of urgent tactical challenges do not crowd-out consideration of the strategic challenges.

- NEMMM should request ANZEMC, facilitated by NEMA, to conduct “stress-testing” scenario planning of the consequences for national response, relief, and reconstruction *capabilities* (e.g., exhausted emergency workers, insufficient emergency housing and shortages of trades people) of year-on year increases in consecutive and intensifying national-scale disasters.

**Recommendation 13:** Given the importance of the NEMMM’s work, meetings should occur quarterly and be in-person at least twice yearly, be of sufficient length to allow for issues to be properly canvassed and discussed and be preceded by an opportunity for the NEMMM members to meet informally alone together.

**Recommendation 14:** NEMMM’s Terms of Reference should be amended to reflect the relevant recommendations above.

## 6 Improving the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee

Not surprisingly, the feedback from our consultations on ANZEMC often mirrored many of the NEMMM issues identified above, including the need for ANZEMC to focus less transactionally and to increase its focus on risk reduction and resilience. Many of our recommendations concerning ANZEMC are designed to align it with the changes we have proposed for the NEMMM.

ANZEMC's Terms of Reference (Appendix E) describe it as the peak committee responsible to the NEMMM, but its TORs currently include an overly broad mandate that includes, among many other things, influencing and advocating for national priorities and capabilities with respect to both natural and human caused events. Its membership comprises a maximum of two senior officers from each Australian, state and territory government and one senior officer each from the New Zealand government and the Australian Local Government Association.

One of the key strategic questions about ANZEMC is: Does it exist primarily to serve the needs and priorities of the NEMMM, or to be the main forum for important cross jurisdictional work; including advocacy and the broad array of other issues described in its current Terms of Reference; or for both purposes? Our consultations with key stakeholders helped us to answer this question.

We believe that ANZEMC has two primary roles. First, it is the peak committee supporting the NEMMM. In this capacity, it assists the NEMMM to identify its five priorities for action and ensures the priorities are implemented, providing regular updates on progress. Second, it is a forum for key senior officials to address other nationally (e.g., cross-jurisdictionally) pressing, emerging and longer-term challenges. Some of these challenges will be able to be progressed solely at officials-level and others will require NEMMM's engagement and endorsement.

Although ANZEMC will need to regularly consider a broad range of transactional matters, it is very important that its focus on implementation of the five priorities for action is not undermined by a heavy burden of additional work. In this regard, we note the findings of a previous review of ANZEMC that it should "set no more than 5-8 strategic project/program priorities at the commencement of each two-year policy/project cycle and, as good practice, it should remove or expedite completion of an existing priority in order to add another." We agree with this point. A streamlined work program will have the additional benefit of not overwhelming the capacity of smaller jurisdictions to engage effectively. See Appendix G for research into previous reviews.

In accordance with this view, there was also very broad support for moving away from a standing Sub-committee structure in favour of a nimbler model. We agree and recommend that ANZEMC should move to a flexible task-force model to implement the NEMMM's five priorities for action with diverse membership (e.g., government, private sector, academia, civil society) determined by the requirements of the task. Any additional nationally significant initiatives ANZEMC takes on should also use this task force model, with each task force reporting directly to ANZEMC.

In this model the existing ANZEMC Sub-committees and other subsidiary bodies would not be part of the formal governance structure. Nevertheless, many of these bodies play an essential role, not only in facilitating national coherence and in pursuing important cross-jurisdictional work, but also in establishing relationships and a positive culture that improves the quality of outcomes. This is

reflected in the very broad interest across jurisdictions in some of their work. They are “communities of practice” and sources of expertise that deserve jurisdictional support.

We recommend that ANZEMC, facilitated by NEMA, should map out and rationalise the many existing time-limited working groups and reference and advisory groups and the communities of practice, by identifying which are no longer required and should be discontinued, which should continue and be officially sanctioned by ANZEMC, and which should continue as informal interest groups. It should also determine if there are gaps in the areas of expertise that it regularly requires that need to be filled.

Disaster “resilience” also emerged prominently in our consultations, with a need to balance the current emphasis on preparedness and the disaster cycle with a focus on longer-term risk reduction. As with the NEMMM, the ANZEMC representatives from each jurisdiction are not necessarily from departments that have responsibilities across the emergency management spectrum from response, relief, and reconstruction to risk reduction and resilience.

We propose several changes to address this. First, the ANZEMC workplan and each meeting agenda should be structured under two headings: “Preparedness and Capabilities Policy” (PACP) and “Disaster Resilience and Recovery” (DRAR). Second, ANZEMC should meet four times each year, including twice face-to-face, with one of the in-person meetings devoted predominantly to DRAR.

Third, the government members of ANZEMC should be senior officials (Commissioners, Deputy Secretaries or Heads of Agencies) from agencies that have the lead jurisdictional responsibility for preparedness and response and recovery and resilience. As indicated earlier, some jurisdictions have designated the responsibility for preparedness and response and recovery and resilience to separate agencies (e.g., New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria), we recommend that jurisdictions should be allowed a maximum of three senior officers on ANZEMC so that each of these critical areas can be adequately represented.

Our consultations with stakeholders who have long experience with the governance structures and our discussions with the secretariats of other Ministerial Councils, have (not surprisingly) highlighted that the structures work best when they are adequately resourced. Other Ministerial Councils have annual, multi-million-dollar budgets allocated for the initiatives and projects carried out by their subsidiary bodies. We recommend that the Commonwealth allocates an annual program budget for the ANZEMC Task Forces to implement the five priorities for action. The States and Territories should contribute resourcing as well and this will be more likely to happen if the five priorities for action are truly shared top priorities for them. Their relative support, such as contributions in-kind and other resourcing, should be proportionate to the size of their jurisdiction.

**Finding 3:** *ANZEMC needs to strengthen its focus on strategic risks in support of the NEMMM, elevate the importance of disaster risk reduction and resilience, narrow its agenda, reduce the rigidity of its structure, and ensure it has adequate funding to carry out its work.*

**Recommendation 15:** ANZEMC’s core mission should be narrowed to:

- 1) Supporting the NEMMM, particularly to identify its five priorities for action and ensure they are implemented; and
- 2) Providing a forum for key senior officials to address other nationally (e.g., cross-jurisdictionally) pressing, emerging and longer-term challenges.

**Recommendation 16:** The ANZEMC workplan and meeting agendas should be explicitly organised under two headings: “Disaster Resilience and Recovery” and “Preparedness and Capabilities Policy”.

**Recommendation 17:** The government members of ANZEMC should be senior officials (Commissioners, Deputy Secretaries or Heads of Agencies) from agencies that have the lead jurisdictional responsibility for preparedness and response and recovery and resilience.

**Recommendation 18:** Each jurisdiction should be allowed a maximum of three senior officials on ANZEMC to enable the inclusion of these jurisdictional responsibilities.

**Recommendation 19:** ANZEMC should meet four times each year, including twice face-to-face, with one of the in-person meetings devoted predominantly to “Disaster Resilience and Recovery.” The face-to-face meetings should be preceded by an opportunity for the ANZEMC members to meet informally.

**Recommendation 20:** The Commonwealth should allocate a significant budget to ANZEMC to support implementation of the NEMMM’s five priorities for action. The States and Territories should contribute as well, with their support, such as contributions in-kind and other resourcing, proportionate to the size of the jurisdiction.

**Recommendation 21:** ANZEMC should establish time-limited, flexible task forces, reporting directly to ANZEMC, to implement NEMMM’s five priorities for action and essential other initiatives, comprised of diverse membership (e.g., government, private sector, academia, civil society), determined by the requirements of the task.

**Recommendation 22:** The current ANZEMC Sub-committees and other subsidiary bodies should be reconceptualised as “communities of practice” and important sources of expert advice, rather than as national governance bodies.

**Recommendation 23:** ANZEMC should map out the many existing time-limited working groups and reference and advisory groups and the communities of practice, to identify which are no longer required and should be discontinued, which should continue and be officially sanctioned by ANZEMC, which should continue as informal interest groups, and to identify potential gaps.

**Recommendation 24:** ANZEMC’s Terms of Reference should be amended to reflect the relevant recommendation above.

## 7 Findings associated with issues identified by the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

The Terms of Reference for this Review also asked us to examine several important questions linked to specific issues identified in the 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Our comments, findings and recommendations on these items are presented below.

### The NEMMM and Royal Commission Recommendation 3.1

The Royal Commission's recommendation 3.1 called on Australian and state and territory governments to restructure and reinvigorate ministerial forums with a view to enabling timely and informed strategic decision-making in the natural disaster management sphere. The Royal Commission found that a subordinate group of ministers could lead and monitor and track progress of the development of long-term, national strategic policy aimed at making Australia more resilient to natural disasters.

The NEMMM was established by National Cabinet on 13 November 2020, in the wake of this finding but with the narrow, time-limited focus of coordinating the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations. The National Cabinet subsequently re-visited this. It decided to extend and broaden the mandate of the NEMMM to encompass strategic issues and challenges of national significance across the disaster management spectrum, as an on-going Ministerial Council reporting to the National Cabinet, is sensible, timely and important. We strongly support this decision.

**Finding 4:** *The National Cabinet's decision to extend and broaden the mandate of the NEMMM to encompass strategic issues and challenges of national significance across the disaster management spectrum, as an on-going Ministerial Council reporting to the National Cabinet, is an effective response to Royal Commission Recommendation 3.1.*

### Royal Commission Recommendation 3.2: "An authoritative disaster advisory body"

The Royal Commission found that in a crisis the National Cabinet should be able to request advice directly from an authoritative disaster advisory body, noting that ANZEMC could not fulfill this function because of its focus on policy, rather than operations.

We do not recommend establishing a new authoritative disaster advisory body to advise the National Cabinet in crises. There is already a flexible means in-place to achieve this objective: the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM). The NCM brings together agencies of the Australian Government, state and territory governments and industry and private sector stakeholders, as required. It provides coordination, communication, and collaboration in crises.

The expertise required will vary enormously with the nature of the crisis (e.g., cybersecurity threat, terrorism, biosecurity, natural disaster, etc.). The NCM selects the expertise that is most appropriate for the crisis. Depending on the scale of a natural disaster(s), it will often make sense to include Commissioners/Chief Officers, or their deputies, from one, several or all jurisdictions on the NCM to



facilitate coordination and provide expert advice that can be shared by the NEMA Coordinator General with the Australian Government Cabinet and, as necessary, with the National Cabinet.

**Finding 5:** *There is no need to establish a new authoritative disaster advisory body to advise the National Cabinet in crises. The National Coordination Mechanism is the appropriate mechanism to ensure that the National Cabinet has access to appropriate authoritative expertise in a crisis.*

## Should the National Crisis Committee be refreshed?

The National Crisis Committee (NCC) has been replaced by the NCM, which brings together agencies of the Australian Government, state and territory governments and industry and private sector stakeholders, as required. It provides coordination, communication, and collaboration in crises. Our consultations suggest that jurisdictions endorse the NCM mechanism and are not seeking to re-establish the NCC. With this in mind, we do not see a need to “refresh” the NCC.

**Finding 6:** *We do not believe the National Crisis Committee needs to be re-established.*

## Examine the strategic relationship between NEMMM and the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) and its Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee (CCOSC)

The Royal Commission raised several concerns about AFAC’s role in facilitating operational responses in emergencies through its subsidiary body, the CCOSC and the National Resource Sharing Centre (NRSC) the CCOSC oversees. We have been asked in this Review to examine the strategic relationship between NEMMM, AFAC and its subsidiary bodies.

AFAC is a not-for-profit organisation whose members include the government fire, emergency service and land management organisations from each jurisdiction in Australia and New Zealand. Among other things it supports the development of standards and doctrine and facilitates collaboration among its members.

CCOSC plays an important operational role in emergencies, such as facilitating the strategic coordination of interstate and international resource sharing including aircraft, either by direct discussions, or by approving operating plans, via its NRSC.

Feedback from virtually all key AFAC stakeholders suggests that the organisation, through its subsidiary bodies, the CCOSC, the NRSC, and the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC), plays a very useful operational role, including in crises. However, climate change is rapidly increasing the frequency of simultaneous and consecutive disasters on a national scale. Under these circumstances the requirement for resource-sharing and for crisis coordination to be integrated, not just among the States and Territories’ fire and emergency services, but across multiple sectors and work-force capacities will increase exponentially. The federal governments capacities and facilitation will become increasingly essential.

With this emerging future in mind, NEMA with CCOSC should investigate ways to better integrate and align CCOSC and the NRSC with the national coordination capacity. This could include building on the existing arrangements in exceptional circumstances to outpost NRSC staff as liaison officers to the Australian Government National Situation Room (where they would continue to be accountable

to their respective States and territories) to facilitate coordination, collaboration, and communication between the Australian Government and affected jurisdictions. This could also include identifying event thresholds that would trigger the need for greater integration.

The need for greater coordination in this rapidly emerging environment applies not only to emergency response but also increasingly to the relief and early-recovery stages of disasters, where the NCM is already playing an important role. The Commonwealth should identify the longer-term resourcing and organisational requirements to build this broader coordination capacity.

**Finding 7:** *Planning needs to accelerate on the likelihood that national facilitation and coordination of both emergency response and relief and early recovery will become increasingly essential given more frequent and destructive national-scale disasters.*

**Recommendation 25:** NEMA with CCOSC should investigate ways to better integrate and align CCOSC and the NRSC with the national coordination capacity.

- This should include building on the existing arrangements in exceptional circumstances to outpost NRSC staff as liaison officers to the Australian Government National Situation Room.
- This should also include identifying event thresholds that would trigger the need for greater integration.

**Recommendation 26:** The Commonwealth should identify the longer-term resourcing and organisational requirements to build this broader coordination capacity for relief and early recovery.

## AFAC and the development of public policy

We've been asked to comment on the Royal Commission finding that development of public policy for disaster management that has national implications should be led by governments. The Royal Commission expressed concern that in some contexts AFAC, a not-for-profit organisation, was taking the lead.

We agree with the Royal Commission's view that governments are best placed to lead the development of public policy of national significance. We also believe that this should not preclude AFAC (or for that matter many other non-governmental industry bodies and think tanks) from contributing to public policy debates and the development of policy. Often governments commission work of this kind to develop policy options or they may receive input or perspectives from a range of sources. Ultimately, they can accept or reject the policy advice they receive. As such, AFAC should be encouraged to contribute ideas and facilitate discussions associated with the development of public policy in its areas of expertise.

**Finding 8:** *Governments should take the lead in developing public policy for disaster management on issues of national significance, including by encouraging entities, such as AFAC, to contribute ideas and facilitate discussions in their areas of expertise.*

## 8 Resourcing the national governance arrangements

NEMA needs funding for two distinct purposes to enable the governance arrangements to work effectively:

- 1) to enable the NEMA Secretariat to manage the administration of the national governance arrangements and facilitate strong outcomes; and
- 2) to enable effective programmatic implementation of the NEMMM's five priorities for action.

The Secretariat functions carried out by NEMA for the national governance structure are fundamentally important to enable effective outcomes. Most of the NEMMM and ANZEMC governance meetings are conducted virtually, for only a couple of hours—barely enough time for several opportunities to canvass views around the table. Under these circumstances, the advance work of NEMA staff in consulting with jurisdictions, including face-to-face, establishing relationships of trust, identifying common ground, exploring alternatives, and clarifying priorities is fundamentally important.

We believe the level of resources available to support NEMA's Secretariat function is inadequate. As a relatively small agency, it has far fewer options than do much larger government departments to reallocate resources for this purpose. The Secretariat work is extremely time-consuming and very difficult. It requires well-resourced senior staff who are analytical, systems thinkers, and facilitators of outcomes with strong organisational, policy and people skills. Resourcing and executing this work effectively will increase the likelihood of accurately identifying shared priorities for action across the jurisdictions and of ensuring papers that come before ANZEMC and NEMMM will be approved smoothly. It will enable the ministers to focus their discussion on increasing the ambition beyond what is proposed in the (agreed) recommendations.

NEMA colleagues currently in these roles are highly dedicated and hard-working but are under-resourced and have multiple additional responsibilities. Without having examined the significant competing demands for funding within NEMA, it would be inappropriate for us to be categorical in our recommendation, but clearly this work is essential in the context of the rapidly emerging extreme hazard environment.

We recommend that the NEMA Secretariat should be led by a senior executive, with the high-level policy and other attributes described above and whose primary role is to facilitate and enable cross-jurisdiction, cross sector outcomes in support of NEMMM and ANZEMC. This should include a budget for regular travel to jurisdictions. The senior executive should be supported by a well-resourced team with high-level public policy experience across the preparedness and response, and recovery and DRR/resilience agendas.

Staff turnover can significantly undermine NEMA's ability to establish the necessary relationships with jurisdictions required for effective outcomes. NEMA should explore creative ways, such as career-path incentives to resource this critical national work.

Some Ministerial Councils have multi-million-dollar budgets allocated to support the programmatic work of the senior officials' committees. For example, the Energy and Climate Ministerial Council has \$10m per year provided by the Commonwealth, with additional funding allocated by the

jurisdictions, to carry out its work. Similarly, Australia-New Zealand Counterterrorism Committee allocates about \$15m per year for its programmatic work.

Our consultations with officials with long institutional memories suggest that the emergency management governance structure worked best previously when budgets were available to support the workplans.

**Finding 9:** *NEMA is inadequately resourced to facilitate the delivery of strong outcomes from the governance structure.*

**Recommendation 27:** In light of the fact that NEMA is a small agency with far fewer options than do much larger government departments to reallocate resources for their Ministerial Council Secretariats, the Commonwealth should consider supplementing NEMA's funding for this purpose.

- The NEMA Secretariat should be staffed by a well-resourced team with high-level public policy experience across the preparedness and response and recovery and DRR/resilience agendas.
- The Secretariat should be led by a senior executive, with the high-level policy, communication and facilitation skills and experience, as the core function of that person's job.
- A significant travel budget should be included for the Secretariat to enable regular in-person engagement with the jurisdictions.
- NEMA should identify options, including incentives, to reduce staff turnover in these critical Secretariat functions.

**Recommendation 28:** The Commonwealth should allocate a significant program budget to the Ministerial Council to enable effective implementation of its five national priorities for action.

- To achieve this, it should consider, in consultation with the States and Territories, renewing the *Disaster Risk Reduction Package* (DRRP) fund, which expires in June of next year and includes a major component focused on national-level efforts to reduce disaster risk.
- An allocation on the order of \$10m per year would be a reasonable approximation of the level of funding required to support implementation of the NEMMM's five national priorities for action.

**Recommendation 29:** Jurisdictions should also contribute resourcing to implement the priorities for action, such as contributions in-kind and other funding, proportionate to the size of the jurisdiction.

**Recommendation 30:** NEMA should be able to draw on its administered funding to support implementation across jurisdictions of projects that deliver the five national priorities for action. NEMA should explore this option.

## 9 Conclusion

It is human nature to draw upon historical experience to shape our expectations of the future. But in a rapidly warming world this tendency can become dysfunctional. As historian J.R. McNeil<sup>9</sup> recently observed of climate change, ‘There is no precedent in human history for a global disaster that affects whole societies in multiple ways at many different locations at once.’

It’s not just our trust in historical experience that we need to overcome to prepare for climate impacts, but also our strong tendency to prioritise the short term at the expense of the future. All the operational pressures, the financial markets, and the politics; and our hard-wiring, lead us in this direction. As one observer<sup>10</sup> has remarked:

when offered \$50 now instead of \$100 in a month, most people will choose the fifty bucks. If you translate this syndrome into hurricane planning, we prefer buying flashlight batteries the next time we see a TV warning about a hurricane threatening our area with power cuts, versus investing money in levees and flood-control infrastructure that might well prevent the destruction of our house, and even our own death, five or ten years hence.

Our emergency management systems are currently more focused on the “batteries” than the “levees”. The core message in this Report is that Australia’s national natural disaster governance arrangements need to establish the space for the sector to consider and prepare for this challenging future. In this Report we have recommended several changes to the governance structure to move us in this important direction.

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<sup>9</sup> E.g., J.R. McNeill. “[Can History Help Us with Global Warming?](#)” in *Climatic Cataclysm: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Climate Change*, ed. Kurt Campbell (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 26–48.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shut-and-listen/201806/humans-cant-plan-long-term-and-heres-why>

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## Appendix A: Stakeholder engagement

In addition to briefings during NEMMM meetings, Table 1 outlines engagement with individual NEMMM members:

Table 1: NEMMM Members					
Jurisdiction	Role	Position		Organisation	Date/s
Commonwealth	Chair	Senator the Hon Murray Watt	Minister for Emergency Management Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Office of Senator the Hon Murray Watt	6 Jun 2023 25 Jul 2023
NSW	Member	The Hon Jihad Dib MP	Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice	Office of the Hon Jihad Dib MP	15 Jun 2023
Victoria	Member	The Hon Jaclyn Symes MP	Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services	Office of the Hon Jaclyn Symes MP	7 Jun 2023
Queensland	Member	The Hon Mark Ryan MP	Minister for Fire and Emergency Services	Office of the Hon Mark Ryan MP	8 Jun 2023
WA	Member	The Hon Stephen Dawson MLC	Minister for Emergency Services; Innovation and ICT; Medical Research; Volunteering	Office of the Hon Stephen Dawson MLC	1 Jun 2023
SA	Member	The Hon Joe Szakacs MP	Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services	Office of the Hon Joe Szakacs MP	29 May 2023
Tasmania	Member	The Hon Felix Ellis MP	Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management	Office of The Hon Felix Ellis MP	5 Jun 2023
ACT	Member	Mr Mick Gentleman MLA	Minister for Police and Emergency Services	Office of Mick Gentleman MLA	20 Jun 2023
NT	Member	The Hon Kate Worden	Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services	Office of the Hon Kate Worden	22 Jun 2023
Australian Local Government Association	Member	Councillor Linda Scott	President	Australian Local Government Association	6 Jun 2023

Throughout the Independent Review, regular meetings of the ANZEMC Governance Review Working Group were convened.

In addition to briefings during ANZEMC, Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee, Social Recovery Reference Group, and Royal Commission Implementation Time-limited Working Group meetings, Table 2 outlines engagement with ANZEMC and Sub-committee members:

Table 2: ANZEMC Members					
Jurisdiction	Role	Name	Position	Organisation	Date/s
Commonwealth	Co-Chair	Brendan Moon AM	Coordinator-General	National Emergency Management Agency	Regularly throughout the Independent Review
	Member	Michael Crawford	Acting First Assistant Secretary, Resilience and Crisis Management Division	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	18 May 2023
NSW	Member	Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell APM	Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Management	NSW Police Force	Unavailable
	Member	Sam Toohey	Acting Executive Director, Emergency Management Policy and Coordination	Department of Premier and Cabinet (NSW)	15 Jun 2023
Victoria	Member	Commissioner Andrew Crisp AM APM	Emergency Management Commissioner	Emergency Management Victoria	26 Jun 2023
	Member	Dr Tabitha Frith	Director, Community Security and Emergency Management Branch	Department of Premier and Cabinet (VIC)	26 Jun 2023
Queensland	Member	Commissioner Greg Leach AFSM	Commissioner	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services	8 Jun 2023
	Member	Rebecca McGarrity	Deputy Director-General, Policy Division	Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Qld)	14 Jun 2023
WA	Member	Commissioner Darren Klemm AFSM, FES	Commissioner, Fire and Emergency Services Chair of ANZEMC's Chair of Mitigation and Risk Sub-committee	Department of Fire and Emergency Services	2 Jun 2023 1 6 Oct 2023
	Member	Amanda Pickrell	Acting Deputy Director General, Intergovernmental Relations & COVID-19	Department of Premier and Cabinet (WA)	2 Jun 2023
SA	Member	Julia Waddington-Powell RN MIPH MHM	Chief Executive Officer Chair of ANZEMC's Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee	South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission	12 Sep 2023

ANZEMC Members					
Jurisdiction	Role	Name	Position	Organisation	Date/s
	Member	Nari Chandler	Executive Director, Intergovernmental Relations and Diplomatic Relations	Department of Premier and Cabinet (SA)	30 May 2023
Tasmania	Member	Dermot Barry ESM (resigned)	Chief Officer, Tasmania Fire Service	Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management	5 Jun 2023
	Member	Todd Crawford	Executive Director, Resilience and Recovery Tasmania	Department of Premier and Cabinet (TAS)	5 Jun 2023
ACT	Co-Chair	Commissioner Georgeina Whelan AM, CSC and Bar	Commissioner	ACT Emergency Services Agency	20 Jun 2023
	Member	Jon Peach	Executive Group Manager, Security and Emergency Management Division	Justice and Community Safety Directorate	20 Jun 2023 31 Oct 2023
NT	Member	Fleur O'Connor	Director Northern Territory Emergency Service	Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services	6 Jun 2023
	Member	Len Darragh CSC	Director, Security and Emergency Recovery	Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet	6 Jun 2023
ALGA	Member	Monica Telesny	Director, Policy	Australian Local Government Association	5 Oct 2023
New Zealand	Member	John Price ONZM	Deputy Chief Executive, Emergency Management	National Emergency Management Agency (NZ)	21 Jun 2023 22 Aug 2023



Table 3: Sub-committees, Working Groups and Reference Groups

Name	Position	Date
Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee (CORS) members, advisors and additional nominated representatives	Part of the Independent Review of National Natural Disasters Governance structure	9 Oct 2023
Julie Waddington-Powell	Chair Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee (CORS)	12 Sep 2023
Darren Klemm	Chair Mitigation and Risk Sub-committee (MaRS)	16 Oct 2023
Julie Edwards	Chair Royal Commission time-limited Working Group	13 Oct 2023
Alexandra Nichols	Chair Sendai time-limited Working Group	15 Oct 2023
Royal Commission Implementation Time-limited Working Group (RCI TLWG)	Working Group members and support staff	16 Oct 2023
Social Recovery Reference Group (SRRG)	Reference Group members and support staff	19 Oct 2023

In addition to briefings for NEMA executives and to the Commonwealth Inter-departmental Committee on National Emergency Management and Climate Adaptation, the following outlines engagement with Commonwealth departments and agencies:

Table 4: Commonwealth Departments and Agencies			
Name	Position/Division/Branch/Section	Department/Agency	Date/s
Kendra Morony	Acting Deputy Secretary National Security and Resilience	Department of Home Affairs	17 May 2023
James Robinson	Acting First Assistant Secretary, National Resilience Taskforce		17 May 2023 19 Jul 2023 8 Sep 2023
Michael Merriman	Director, Review Taskforce		
Melissa McKenzie	Director, Review Taskforce	National Emergency Management Agency	17 May 2023
Toa Lavaka	Review Taskforce		
Jo Hutchinson	Acting Assistant Coordinator-General, Policy and Design Branch		
Raoul Raward	Acting Director, Policy and Design Branch		
Lizzy O'Shea	Director, Policy and Design Branch		
Peter Giugni	Acting Director, Policy and Design Branch		
Michael Crawford	Assistant Secretary, Recovery and Resilience Division	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	18 May 2023 16 Jun 2023
Sally Kuschel	Acting Assistant Secretary, Resilience and Crisis Management Division		
Jessica Raine	Senior Adviser, Recovery, Resilience and Crisis Management Division		18 May 2023

Commonwealth Departments and Agencies			
Name	Position/Division/Branch/Section	Department/Agency	Date/s
Bec Hosking	National Emergency Management Agency Seconded, AGCMF (Australian Government Crisis Management Framework) Review Taskforce		
Priyanka Gupta	Adviser, Recovery, Resilience and Crisis Management Division	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	18 May 2023
Joe Buffone	Deputy Coordinator-General, Emergency Management and Response Group	National Emergency Management Agency	24 May 2023 6 Sep 2023 1 9 Oct 2023
Dr Rina Bruinsma	Deputy Coordinator-General, Disaster Resilience and Recovery Group		24 May 2023 22 Jun 2023 1 2 Sep 2023
Jo Evans	Deputy Secretary	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	14 Jun 2023 1 Nov 2023
Kathryn Smith	Assistant Secretary, National Adaptation Policy Office		14 Jun 2023
Andrew Colvin	Independent Reviewer, Commonwealth Disaster Funding Review	Deloitte (contracted to NEMA)	16 Jun 2023 7 Sep 2023 18 Oct 2023
Tayanah O'Donnell	Commonwealth Disaster Funding Review		7 Sep 2023
Vicki Woodburn	Group Executive	Bureau of Meteorology	19 Jun 2023
Dr Andrew Johnson	Chief Executive Officer and Director of Meteorology		
Alex Green	Nous Group, National Bushfire Recovery Fund Evaluation Report, Deep Dive Findings and Key Findings Summary	Nous Group (contracted to NEMA)	3 Aug 2023
Paul Box	Social Architecture Science Lead	CSIRO	
Jo Hutchinson	Policy and Design	National Emergency Management Agency	
Melissa Mckenzie	NEMA team member		
Paul Giugni	NEMA team member		
Kanupriya Hehir	NEMA team member		

Commonwealth Departments and Agencies			
Name	Position/Division/Branch/Section	Department/Agency	Date/s
Janet Quigley	First Assistant Secretary, Resilience and Crisis Management	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	2 Aug 2023 17 Oct 2023
Nadine Williams	Deputy Secretary		2 Aug 2023
Hope Peisley	Assistant Secretary, Commonwealth State Relations Branch		28 Aug 2023 4 Sep 2023 18 Oct 2023
Sarah Norris	First Assistant Secretary, Emergency Management	Department of Health and Aged Care	28 Aug 2023 18 Oct 2023
Jason Dymowski	Assistant Secretary, Response, Recovery and Resilience	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	28 Aug 2023
Vivien Thomson	Adviser, Resilience and Crisis Management		
Olivia Howell	Senior Director, Counter-Terrorism and Capability	Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee, Department of Home Affairs	24 Jul 2023
Jessica Young	Acting Director, Counter-Terrorism and Capability		
Alexandra Nichols	Director, Strategic International Policy Programs	National Emergency Management Agency	27 Jul 2023
Dylan Anderson	Acting Assistant Secretary, Industry and Infrastructure Branch	The Treasury	31 Jul 2023
Rosemary Cranney	Policy Analyst, Industry and Infrastructure Branch		
Emma Cully	Acting First Assistant Secretary, AgVet Chemicals	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	5 Sep 2023
David Porritt	Acting Assistant Secretary		
Vidoshi Jana	Chief Operating Officer	National Emergency Management Agency	26 Oct 2023 13 Nov 2023
Russ Wise	Principal Sustainability Economist	CSIRO Land and Water	24 Aug 2023

Consultations also included round table discussions with the Australian Local Government Association Council and representatives, Australian Industry Group members, Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council, and Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee. Discussions were held with the following:

Table 5: Other Government/NGO/Research/Business				
Area	Name	Role	Organisation	Date/s
New Zealand	John Price	Director and Deputy Chief Executive Emergency Management	National Emergency Management Agency (NZ)	28 Aug 2023
	Dave Gawn	CEO		22 Aug 2023
	Professor Tom Wilson	NEMA Chief Science Advisor		22 Aug 2023
Royal Commission	Mark Binskin	Chair of Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements	N/A	15 Aug 2023
	Dominique Hogan-Doran	Counsel Assisting Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements		
Commonwealth	Nicole Thomas	Emergency Climate Management Committee	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	15 Aug 2023
Research	Andrew Gissing	CEO	Natural Hazards Research Australia	22 Aug 2023
	Iain MacKenzie	Chair		
Queensland	Alistair Dawson	Inspector General	Emergency Management Queensland	22 Aug 2023
NGO	John Sukkar	Head of Fire and Flood Foundation	Minderoo	23 Aug 2023
	Rania Poulos	Fire Shield Lead		
	Matthew Chesnais	Resilient Communities Mission Lead, Fire and Flood Resilience Initiative		
Commonwealth	Fiona Dunston	Manager of National Community Engagement	Bureau of Meteorology	23 Aug 2023
Academia	Lisa Gibbs	Professor of Public Health	University of Melbourne	23 Aug 2023
	David Sanderson	Researcher	University of New South Wales	23 Aug 2023
	Briony Rogers	Director of Water	Professor at Monash Sustainable Development Institute	23 Aug 2023
NGO	Andrew Coghlan	Head of Emergency Services	Australian Red Cross	23 Aug 2023

Other Government/NGO/Research/Business				
Area	Name	Role	Organisation	Date/s
AFAC	Rob Webb	CEO	National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC)	15 Jul 2023 24 Jul 2023 23 Aug 2023
Queensland	Jimmy Scott	General Manager	Queensland Reconstruction Authority	23 Aug 2023
	MAJGEN Jake Ellwood (RTD)	CEO		
Victoria	Amanda Leck	Deputy Emergency Management Commissioner	Emergency Management Victoria	24 Aug 2023
National Institution	Margaret Moreton	Executive Director	Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience	21 Jul 2023 24 Aug 2023
	Katelyn Samson	Acting Executive Director		21 Jul 2023
	John Richardson	Manager, Knowledge Development		24 Jul 2023
	Melissa Matthews	Manager, Knowledge Impact and Capability		
Academia	Marta Yebra	Associate Professor	Environmental Engineering, Fenner School of Environment & Society and the School of Engineering, Australian National University	24 Aug 2023
Research	Catherine Gearing	National Consultant	Disaster Recovery for the Social Recovery Reference Group	24 Aug 2023
Academia	Mel Taylor	Project Leader	Research funded by Natural Hazards Research Australia - Community Experiences of the 2022 Eastern Australian Floods (2022-2023), Macquarie University	24 Aug 2023
Commonwealth	Russ Wise	Principal Sustainability Economist	CSIRO Land and Water	24 Aug 2023
Western Australia	Shelby Robinson	Disaster Preparedness	WA Council of Social Services	23 Aug 2023
Academia	Michelle Villeneuve	Disability-Inclusive Community Development Research Workstream	University of Sydney	23 Aug 2023
NGO	Nina O'Brien	Disaster Resilience and Recovery Lead	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal	24 Aug 2023

Other Government/NGO/Research/Business				
Area	Name	Role	Organisation	Date/s
Academia	John Handmer	Honorary Professor, Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions	Australian National University	27 Jul 2023
	Stephen Dovers	Director, Fenner School of Environment and Society		
	Roslyn Prinsley	Head of Disaster Solutions, Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions		
	Mark Crosweller	Associate Professor, College of Asia and the Pacific		27 Jul 2023 31 Jul 2023
Consultant	Greg Mullins	Former head AFAC	Emergency Leaders for Climate Action and Climate Council	5 Sep 2023
New South Wales	Matt Conrow	Chief Financial and Operating Officer	NSW Reconstruction Authority	4 Oct 2023
	Tim Duck	Health Ministerial Council Secretariat	NSW Department of Health	13 Oct 2023
Consultant	Matt Cahill	Review Lead, Independent Review of Capability	Contracted by NEMA	17 Oct 2023
Victoria	Kate Fitzgerald	Deputy Secretary	Emergency Management Victoria	26 Oct 2023
ACT	Jason Jones	Commissioner	ACT Emergency Services Agency	31 Oct 2023

Table 6: Australian Local Government Association Council and Representatives, Australian Industry Group members, Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council, and Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee

Name	Position	Date
Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)	Australian Local Government Association Council and representatives	5 Oct 2023
Australian Industry Group (AIG)	Australian Industry Group members	12 Sep 2023
National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC)	National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) members	24 Oct 2023
Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee (CCOSC)	Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee members	25 Oct 2023

## Appendix B: Review Terms of Reference

### REVIEW OF NATIONAL NATURAL DISASTER GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

Endorsed by NEMMM 9 December 2022

#### CONTEXT

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (Royal Commission) provided recommendations for how the Australian, state, territory and local governments should work together to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from naturally occurring, rapid onset events that cause serious disruption to communities or regions. The increasing frequency and severity of disaster events will likely result in consecutive and compounding events impacting communities and regions that will place increasing stress on existing emergency management arrangements.

The Royal Commission noted the importance of effective national coordination to support Australia's natural disaster arrangements and decision making. This includes informed and strategic leadership, timely policy advice to elected officials, and a robust and accountable approach to national coordination.

In light of these findings the Royal Commission recommended the re-evaluation of national governance arrangements in relation to natural disasters to ensure that arrangements are equipped to cope with the increasing disaster risks and relevant policy matters.

Recommendations included:

#### **Recommendation 3.1 – Forum for Ministers**

*Australian, state and territory governments should restructure and reinvigorate ministerial forums with a view to enabling timely and informed strategic decision-making in respect of:*

- 1) *Long-term policy improvement in relation to natural disaster*
- 2) *National preparations for, and adaptation to, natural disasters, and*
- 3) *Response to, and recovery from, natural disasters of national scale or consequence, including, where appropriate, through the National Cabinet or equivalent intergovernmental leaders' body.*

The Royal Commission found that a subordinate group of ministers could lead, monitor and track progress of the development of long-term, national strategic policy aimed at making Australia resilient to natural disasters, reporting to first ministers. On 13 November 2022, National Cabinet established the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM) to drive and coordinate implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations. There is a need to consider the extent to which complex challenges that inhibit progress on strategic national policies can be escalated by the NEMMM to the Prime Minister and first ministers for consideration where necessary. There also remains a need to consider the extent to which existing ministerial forums have the ability to direct strategic policy initiatives with purpose and urgency, effective shared



responsibility and effective collective action, noting that some national frameworks and strategies have taken years to gain national endorsement. Considerations need to be consistent with the broader Federation Architecture governance and structure, including findings of the Conrad Review and outcomes of the Ministerial Councils Review being undertaken by First secretaries.

### **Recommendation 3.2 – Establishment of an authoritative disaster advisory body**

*Australian, state and territory government should establish an authoritative advisory body to consolidate advice on strategic policy and relevant operational considerations for ministers in relation to natural disasters.*

The Royal Commission found that to respond to a crisis, the Prime Minister and first ministers should have the ability to request advice directly from an advisory body. The functions of the new advisory body should align with the NEMMM (or relevant forum that meets the intent of Recommendation 3.1) so that there is clear authority for the advisory body to collate efforts across governments. The Royal Commission found that the structure and processes of the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) are not appropriate for the new advisory body given the ANZEMC's focus on policy matters rather than operational decision making.

### **Objective**

Using the findings of the Royal Commission as its foundation, the Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements (Review) will focus on how national governance arrangements can be more effective to serve the current and future state of national natural disaster preparedness, adaptation, response, recovery, resilience and long-term policy requirements in Australia.

Specifically, the Review will identify opportunities to broaden the remit of the NEMMM (or relevant forum that meets the intent of recommendation 3.1) consistent with the intent of Recommendation 3.1, noting this recommendation spans a range of long-term strategic policy issues that are broader than the time-limited implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations. It will also consider opportunities to address Recommendation 3.2 regarding establishment of an authoritative disaster advisory body, noting the Royal Commission's finding that the ANZEMC is not the appropriate mechanism.

A review of national governance arrangements for disaster management, risk reduction and recovery should consider the extent to which the various governance bodies and subsidiary committees are conducive to effective decision-making and collaboration between jurisdictions, promote effective implementation and delivery of outcomes supporting collective responsibility and collective action, and whether they have the correct membership, resourcing and scope of responsibilities to achieve this.

### **Scope**

1. The Review will take a broad view of disaster management governance arrangements and with regard to the existing bodies of NEMMM, ANZEMC, the Mitigation and Risk Sub-committee of ANZEMC, the Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee of ANZEMC, and all ANZEMC Working Groups and Reference Groups; including how they can be improved or if alternate governance structures would be more effective for national coordination across the disaster management continuum (prevention, preparedness, response, relief, recovery, reconstruction, risk reduction) and across both policy and operational matters. The Review should also clarify the role these bodies should play during a major crisis, including how they

interact with the national governance arrangements for other types of specific disasters or crises.

2. It will also examine the strategic relationship between NEMMM and entities such as the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) and the Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee (CCOSC).
3. It will also examine whether the role of the National Crisis Committee (NCC) should be refreshed to ensure national coordination is supported by arrangements that are nationally endorsed, and accountable, noting the Royal Commission's finding in this regard (paragraph 3.97 of the Royal Commission's report).
4. It will also have regard to the Royal Commission's finding that development of public policy for disaster management that has national implications should be led by governments and their agencies so that the policy development process can benefit from consideration of all aspects of natural disasters, and ensure appropriate accountability, noting that a body such as AFAC is a not-for-profit company representative of fire and emergency services members who are primarily operationally driven. AFAC has expertise in emergency management but limited ability to consider holistically broader risks in which the sector does not have expertise.
5. The Review should consider the role of an authoritative advisory body, and how that would fit into the broader governance architecture. This may result in changes to ANZEMC, or consideration of alternative arrangements.
6. The Review will consider the findings of any other relevant reviews such as the First Secretaries review on the role of Ministerial Councils in progressing national priorities, the Conran Review and/or prior reviews of ANZEMC and its functions.
7. The Review will consider the strategic policy, project and administrative support required by the national governance arrangements to support the delivery of the arrangements and functions of the constitutive bodies.
8. The Review will consider the need for national governance bodies to oversee strategic programs of work and the scope of the resources, funding and capacity required to deliver and support this.

## **Governance and reporting**

This Review will be led by an Independent Review Lead. A Working Group consisting of representatives from the Australian, state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association will be established to support the Review on behalf of the NEMMM, led by the Independent Review Lead. The Independent Review Lead will, through this Working Group, host a series of focused discussions, and include the private sector and academia where appropriate.

The Independent Review Lead will deliver a report to the Australian Government Emergency Management Minister as the Chair of NEMMM in the first half of 2023. The report will then be provided to NEMMM for consideration, providing recommendations and practical steps to be taken to ensure national governance arrangements are fit-for-purpose for the current and future state of natural disasters in Australia. Any revisions to national governance arrangements will be progressed to First Ministers for agreement.

## Appendix C: List of Recommendations

Table 7: List of recommendations	
Number	Recommendation
1	The National Cabinet should take a leadership role in coordinating resilience initiatives across the Federation.
2	The National Cabinet should task Ministerial Councils to include resilience activities in their annual reporting, with the NEMMM contribution focusing on natural hazards.
3	The First Secretaries, on behalf of the National Cabinet, should oversee (via a subordinate Deputy Secretaries Group) the development of an annual Australian National Resilience Report (ANRR) that combines the Ministerial Council resilience reporting, existing resilience strategies in jurisdictions and new initiatives.
4	The ANRR should be a National Cabinet product focused on climate and disaster risk as well as other key resilience risks agreed by the Commonwealth and the jurisdictions.
5	The Commonwealth together with the States and Territories should identify their shared high-level resilience objectives and develop indicators to monitor national progress in achieving them. The ANRR should also provide annual updates on progress in achieving the objectives.
6	At least once each year, coinciding with the production of the ANRR, the National Cabinet should evaluate progress in bolstering national resilience.
7	The Commonwealth Government should direct the Secretaries Board to ensure the overall coherence and efficiency of the Government's resilience efforts, spanning both the climate adaptation/disaster risk reduction and the national security domains. A Secretaries Sub-Committee on Resilience should be established to support this work.
8	<p>The next iteration of NEMMM's Five Priorities for Action should be explicit and measurable, bold but achievable and focused on national outcomes, rather than outputs. They should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be formulated in terms such as "By 2026 we will have established...which will have reduced..." , etc.</li> <li>• Be developed through a process that includes consultations with key stakeholders, including First Nations organisations, civil society, the private sector, foundations, and key entities active in the emergency management space, such as Australian Red Cross and AFAC.</li> <li>• Be highly compelling for each jurisdiction, large and small.</li> <li>• Directly address our rapidly accelerating disaster risk environment, in which we can anticipate yearly, national-scale disasters with preparedness, response, recovery and resilience occurring simultaneously, year-round.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include at the approval stage the initial estimates of the resourcing required to achieve the outcomes and the sources of the funding.</li> </ul>
9	<p>NEMMM's leading role in the wider national resilience effort should focus on <i>disaster risk reduction</i>, and it should engage as a core stakeholder in a wider range of other resilience issues. It should further elaborate this focus with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prospective risk management (higher infrastructure standards, environmental protection, etc.),</li> <li>• Corrective risk management (retrofitting, reinforcing, and remedial measures),</li> <li>• Compensatory risk management (risk financing and transfer), and</li> <li>• Reactive risk management (early warning systems and effective response and recovery).</li> </ul>
10	<p>Each NEMMM agenda should have a standing item on disaster risk reduction/resilience and at least one full meeting each year should be devoted to <i>Disaster Resilience and Recovery</i>. Some jurisdictions have established separate ministers responsible for recovery and resilience, and they should be invited to attend these recovery and resilience meetings.</p>
11	<p>NEMMM should co-convene a joint ministerial council meeting with climate change adaptation ministers to promote greater coherence between NEMMM's resilience work and climate adaptation—two key components of a future national resilience strategy. This should be a face-to-face meeting.</p>
12	<p>NEMMM agendas should ensure that discussion of urgent tactical challenges don't crowd-out consideration of the strategic challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMMM should request ANZEMC, facilitated by NEMA, to conduct "stress-testing" scenario planning of the consequences (e.g., exhausted emergency workers, insufficient emergency housing and shortages of trades people) of year-on-year increases in consecutive and intensifying national-scale disasters.</li> </ul>
13	<p>Given the importance of NEMMM's work, meetings should occur quarterly and be in-person at least twice yearly, be of sufficient length to allow for issues to be properly canvassed and discussed and be preceded by an opportunity for the NEMMM members to meet informally alone together.</p>
14	<p>NEMMM's Terms of Reference should be amended to reflect the relevant recommendations above.</p>
15	<p>ANZEMC's core mission should be narrowed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Supporting the NEMMM, particularly to identify its five priorities for action and ensure they are implemented; and</li> </ol>

	2) Providing a forum for key senior officials to address other nationally (e.g., cross-jurisdictionally) pressing, emerging and longer-term challenges.
16	The ANZEMC workplan and meeting agendas should be explicitly organised under two headings: “Disaster Resilience and Recovery” and “Preparedness and Capabilities Policy”.
17	The government members of ANZEMC should be senior officials (Commissioners, Deputy Secretaries or Heads of Agencies) from agencies that have the <u>lead</u> jurisdictional responsibility for preparedness and response and resilience and recovery.
18	Each jurisdiction should be allowed a maximum of three senior officials on ANZEMC to enable the inclusion of these jurisdictional responsibilities (see Appendix F for Summary of State and Territory responsibilities).
19	ANZEMC should meet four times each year, including twice face-to-face, with one of the in-person meetings devoted predominantly to “Disaster Resilience and Recovery.” The face-to-face meetings should be preceded by an opportunity for the ANZEMC members to meet informally.
20	The Commonwealth should allocate a significant budget to ANZEMC to support implementation of the NEMMM’s five priorities for action. The States and Territories should contribute as well, with their support, such as contributions in-kind and other resourcing, proportionate to the size of the jurisdiction.
21	ANZEMC should establish, time-limited, flexible task forces, reporting directly to ANZEMC, to implement NEMMM’s five priorities for action and essential other initiatives, comprised of diverse membership (e.g., government, private sector, academia, civil society), determined by the requirements of the task.
22	The current ANZEMC Sub-Committees and other subsidiary bodies should be reconceptualised as “communities of practice” and important sources of expert advice, rather than as national governance bodies.
23	ANZEMC should map out the many existing time-limited working groups and reference and advisory groups and the communities of practice, to identify which are no longer required and should be discontinued, which should continue and be officially sanctioned by ANZEMC, which should continue as informal interest groups, and to identify potential gaps.
24	ANZEMC’s Terms of Reference should be amended to reflect the relevant recommendation above.
25	<p>NEMA with CCOSC should investigate ways to better integrate and align CCOSC and the NRSC with the national coordination capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This should include building on the existing arrangements in exceptional circumstances to outpost NRSC staff as liaison officers to the Australian Government National Situation Room.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This should also include identifying event thresholds that would trigger the need for greater integration.</li> </ul>
26	The Commonwealth should identify the longer-term resourcing and organisational requirements to build this broader coordination capacity for relief and early recovery.
27	<p>In light of the fact that NEMA is a small agency with far fewer options than much larger government departments to reallocate resources for their Ministerial Council Secretariats, the Commonwealth should consider supplementing NEMA's funding for this purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NEMA Secretariat should be staffed by a well-resourced team with high-level public policy experience across the preparedness and response and recovery and DRR/resilience agendas.</li> <li>The Secretariat should be led by a senior executive, with the high-level policy, communication and facilitation skills and experience, as the core function of that person's job.</li> <li>A significant travel budget should be included for the Secretariat to enable regular in-person engagement with the jurisdictions.</li> <li>NEMA should identify options, including incentives, to reduce staff turnover in these critical Secretariat functions.</li> </ul>
28	<p>The Commonwealth should allocate a significant program budget to the Ministerial Council to enable effective implementation of its five national priorities for action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To achieve this, it should consider, in consultation with the States and Territories, renewing the <i>Disaster Risk Reduction Package (DRRP)</i> fund, which expires in June of next year and includes a major component focused on national-level efforts to reduce disaster risk.</li> <li>An allocation on the order of \$10m per year would be a reasonable approximation of the level of funding required to support implementation of the NEMMM's five national priorities for action.</li> </ul>
29	Jurisdictions should also contribute resourcing to implement the priorities for action, such as contributions in-kind and other funding, proportionate to the size of the jurisdiction. Funding should not be sourced from the <i>Disaster Ready Fund</i> given the dependence local government has on that funding source.
30	It is appropriate that NEMA should be able to draw on its administered funding to support implementation across jurisdictions of projects associated with delivering the five national priorities for action. NEMA should explore this option.

## Appendix D: National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting Terms of Reference

### National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting Final Endorsed Terms of Reference - 2023

<b>Authority</b>	The National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM) reports to National Cabinet in line with the First Secretaries Group's Review of Ministerial Council Final Report recommendations.
<b>Purpose and Strategic Priorities</b>	<p>The NEMMM facilitates emergency management portfolio ministers from their respective jurisdictions to work collaboratively to drive national cooperation and consistency on enduring strategic issues in emergency/disaster management and resilience.</p> <p>The NEMMM will also address emerging issues requiring cross-border collaboration and perform policy and standard setting functions. This may include cross-portfolio issues, such as building, planning, land management, infrastructure, communications, data and digital, health, science, research, environment and education.</p>
<b>Governance structure</b>	<p>The NEMMM reports to National Cabinet and is supported by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC), the peak senior officials' government committee responsible for emergency management (Refer to Figure 5).</p> <p>ANZEMC does not have a formal role in approving papers or reaching consensus on issues ahead of Ministerial consideration and reports to the NEMMM by way of an annual report.</p>

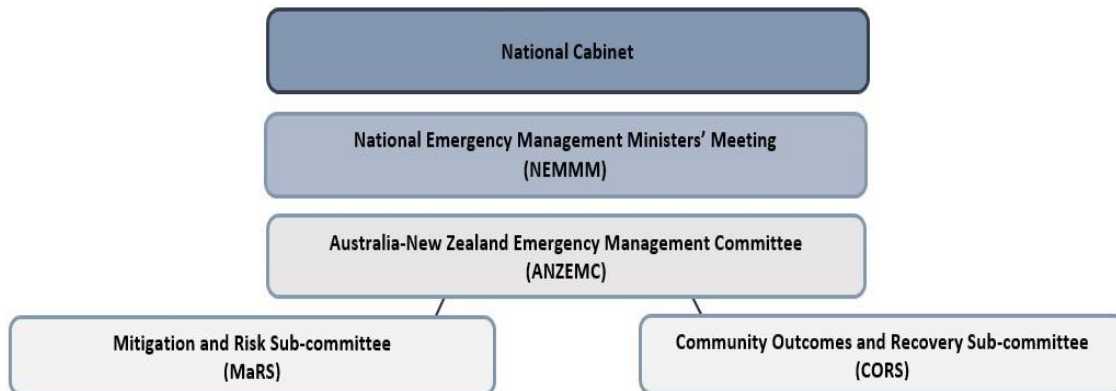
<b>Chairing arrangements</b>	<p><b>Chair</b></p> <p>The Commonwealth Minister with portfolio responsibility for Emergency Management will chair the NEMMM meetings, as well as represent the Commonwealth’s position in discussions and decision making.</p> <p>The Chair plays a strategic role in ensuring the Ministerial Council meeting operates effectively and collaboratively to deliver outcomes requiring joint action by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.</p> <p>The Chair’s responsibilities are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have a thorough understanding of the NEMMM forward work plan and maintain focus on achieving outcomes</li> <li>• finalise meeting agendas and ensure all agenda items are discussed within the allocated time</li> <li>• encourage full participation by all members</li> <li>• ensure contentious issues are debated in a professional manner and mediate when conflict arises, and</li> <li>• facilitate decision-making by consensus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Co-chair or Deputy Chair arrangement</b></p> <p>This option can be considered.</p>
<b>Membership</b>	<p>Membership comprises of Emergency Management portfolio ministers from the Commonwealth, States and Territories and the elected President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).</p>
<b>Decision-making</b>	<p>The NEMMM will promote a cooperative and collaborative relationship where all jurisdictions are equal partners in decision making. Consensus decision-making is preferred.</p> <p>Unless specified by legislation, and where appropriate, decisions should be principles-based and allow individual jurisdictions flexibility to determine the best way to achieve any agreed outcomes. Implementation of decisions is ultimately up to Ministers in each jurisdiction.</p> <p>Where consensus or resolution cannot be reached on an agenda item in the established timeframe, consideration should be given to progressing an item through agreement between the Commonwealth and a smaller group of members.</p> <p>Should an issue require escalation to National Cabinet, the Chair must write to the Prime Minister requesting National Cabinet consideration of the issue. Escalation should be made with the agreement of a majority of members, but may be initiated by the Chair in exceptional circumstances. Where an item is escalated, the NEMMM will identify clear options on courses of action to ensure that National Cabinet can adequately consider the issue. The progression of a matter to National Cabinet will ultimately be a decision of National Cabinet and State and Territory Ministers should inform their First Minister of the proposed escalation.</p>



<b>Accountability and reporting</b>	<p>The NEMMM will report annually to National Cabinet.</p> <p>The NEMMM Annual Report to National Cabinet will include updates in a maximum of five key achievements of the last 12 months and five key priorities for the upcoming year in a template provided by the National Cabinet Secretariat.</p> <p>For example, annual reporting requirements for early 2024 will be provided by the National Cabinet Secretariat in the final quarter of 2023 to meet the National Cabinet Secretariat timelines.</p> <p>The ANZEMC will report to the NEMMM annually by way of a brief report on key ANZEMC forward work plan matters.</p>
<b>Forward work plan</b>	<p>NEMMM members are responsible for producing a forward work plan that will comprise of matters that are of significance, or require national agreement.</p> <p>The forward work plan specifies up to five priorities per year and the timeframes for completion.</p> <p>Issues not substantially resolved within their designated timeframe will be removed from the forward work plan.</p> <p>NEMMM members will report to National Cabinet annually on the forward work plan as required.</p> <p>The NEMMM forward work plan should be shared with other relevant meetings to provide opportunity for potential collaboration on shared priorities and to avoid overlap or duplication of priorities.</p>

<p><b>Meetings</b></p>	<p><b>Frequency and format</b></p> <p>Full meetings will be held at least two times a year or as required to best address and resolve priority issues within agreed timeframes.</p> <p>Meeting will fall into two categories, scheduled meetings and extraordinary meetings.</p> <p>Extraordinary meetings may be called by the Chair to discuss urgent matters as required.</p> <p>Meeting dates will consider the impacts on smaller jurisdictions and will be held by video conference where required.</p> <p>Joint meetings with other groups on issues of shared responsibility may be held as required.</p> <p>Meetings can be held during a caretaker period but this should be avoided if possible. Attendance and decision-making will be assessed on a case by case basis consistent with caretaker conventions/guidelines in the relevant jurisdictions.</p> <p><b>Attendance</b></p> <p>NEMMM members will nominate to the Secretariat, any ministerial advisor/support and senior official attendees. However, NEMMM member nominations for attendees need to be kept to a minimum to support efficient administrative processes.</p> <p>NEMMM can nominate additional ministerial representatives based on the NEMMM forward work plan and annual report priorities.</p> <p>Wherever possible, all jurisdictions should be represented at meetings, including by proxy. A proxy must be an elected official or hold public office.</p> <p><b>Use of expert advisors</b></p> <p>Ministers may assemble experts to advise them as required, including presenting at meetings.</p> <p>Given the complexity of progressing cross-portfolio policy, attendance by additional elected representatives may assist with efficient and collaborative decision-making and information sharing.</p> <p>Ministers may delegate routine, technical or other matters to senior officials as considered appropriate.</p> <p>Any newly formed working group should be assembled for a specific purpose and timeframe.</p> <p>New Zealand Government representative(s) can be invited to attend where relevant.</p> <p><b>Agendas and papers</b></p> <p>The Chair is responsible for finalising meeting agendas and papers for scheduled meetings, extraordinary meetings and out-of-session items and will not deny any reasonable request by ministers to include an item on the agenda.</p>
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	<p>Members must set, control and review agenda nominations and papers and not delegate these responsibilities to officials.</p> <p>The agenda will remain flexible so as to include urgent or emerging issues if required.</p> <p>Items being considered by the NEMMM should be covered by a paper or presentation wherever possible, to facilitate discussion.</p> <p>In order to ensure all members are adequately prepared and able to actively engage in discussion and decision-making the Secretariat will endeavour to develop and circulate agendas for scheduled meetings four weeks prior to the meeting and papers two weeks prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Agendas and papers should not be circulated later than five days prior to the meeting.</p> <p><b>Outcomes and Communiqué</b></p> <p>Outcomes of meetings should be publicly communicated, either via a media release from the Chair or a short Communiqué agreed at the meeting or shortly afterwards.</p>
<b>Out-of-session process</b>	<p>NEMMM may employ an out-of-session process when items do not require discussion for decision making, or where the urgency of the item requires it to be finalised ahead of the next scheduled meeting.</p> <p>Routine, non-controversial or technical matters can be progressed out-of-session or be delegated to officials.</p> <p>A paper will be prepared by the lead jurisdiction member for an out-of-session matter and approved by the Chair for distribution to members.</p> <p>NEMMM will be provided with a minimum of two weeks to consider and respond to out-of-session matters where possible to do so.</p> <p>The decision-making arrangements outlined in 'Meetings' above apply for the out-of-session process.</p>
<b>Secretariat and recordkeeping</b>	<p>Records of meetings will be provided to members and be endorsed by members before being finalised.</p> <p>The National Emergency Management Agency will act as the Secretariat to the NEMMM.</p> <p>E: <a href="mailto:NationalGovernance@nema.gov.au">NationalGovernance@nema.gov.au</a></p> <p>T: 02 6113 9752</p>
<b>Disbandment</b>	<p>The NEMMM will continue unless otherwise determined by National Cabinet.</p>



*Figure 5 – Governance Structure as at 28 February 2023*

## Appendix E: Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee Terms of Reference

### ANZEMC

#### Terms of Reference - 2022

Scope	
Vision	A nation that is <b>prepared</b> for, and <b>resilient</b> to, natural and human caused <b>events</b> , in particular those with <b>severe</b> to <b>catastrophic</b> consequences.
Mission	ANZEMC is responsible for <b>influencing</b> and <b>advocating</b> for <b>national policies</b> and <b>capabilities</b> that <b>reduce disaster risk</b> , <b>minimise the potential for harm</b> and <b>uphold public trust and confidence</b> in emergency management arrangements.
Principles	<p>ANZEMC pursues its vision and undertakes its activities on the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Primacy of life:</b> The protection and preservation of human life takes priority over all other considerations.</li> <li>• <b>Help the vulnerable:</b> We work to support those who may be vulnerable to disaster or who have limited capacity to respond.</li> <li>• <b>Unity:</b> Governments at all levels should cooperate with each other and their stakeholders to strengthen the nations' resilience and deliver seamless capability.</li> <li>• <b>Shared responsibility:</b> Governments at all levels, businesses, communities and individuals each have different, but complementary and important, roles to play in disaster preparedness.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> Decision-makers should seek to understand and respect the knowledge and experiences of those affected and actively involve them in decision-making processes. Effective policies rely on governments, businesses and individuals understanding the wider social and economic context in which they make important decisions.</li> <li>• <b>Partnership:</b> Working together and drawing on the expertise and capacity of various partners produces far greater results than do individual efforts.</li> <li>• <b>Mutual benefit, mutual obligation:</b> Priority activities should provide a wider benefit to multiple jurisdictions, if not all, supported by equitable investment, practically or financially, to achieve the policy or capability outcome.</li> </ul>

<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the peak committee responsible to the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting (NEMMM), ANZEMC achieves its mission through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influencing strategic policy and national discussions on social risks and vulnerabilities.</li> <li>Developing and implementing strategies and plans to mitigate and respond to emergency events and disasters.</li> <li>Anticipating existing and emerging threats and identifying appropriate mitigation strategies and capabilities.</li> <li>Advising on legislative, capability and mitigation priorities for emergency management.</li> <li>Advising and delivering against national disaster and emergency management funding priorities.</li> <li>Influencing emergency management research priorities and innovation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>ANZEMC supports the NEMMM by implementing and reporting against agreed priorities, national strategies, plans, frameworks and other key documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Operation</b>	
<b>Co-chairs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared between Australian Government, represented by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and alternating ANZEMC members on a one year, rotational basis.</li> <li>The chairing schedule aligns with the relevant ministerial body's chair arrangements, with flexibility as required.</li> <li>The one year term may be extended with ANZEMC agreement.</li> <li>Proxies are permitted with full powers, unless otherwise directed by the co-chairs.</li> </ul>
<b>Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ANZEMC comprises of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A maximum of two senior officers (excluding co-chairs) from each Australian, state and territory government.</li> <li>A maximum of one senior officer from the New Zealand government and the Australian Local Government Association.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Members must hold positions (generally at Deputy Secretary, Assistant Commissioner or similar level) that appropriately represent the jurisdiction and can commit to an agreed course of action.</li> <li>New Zealand's participation in ANZEMC activities, including those of its Sub-committees, will be determined on a case by case basis by New Zealand.</li> <li>Proxies are permitted with full powers unless otherwise directed by the co-chairs.</li> <li>Observers are permitted at the discretion of the co-chairs.</li> <li>Presenters are permitted by invitation in relation to specific agenda items.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ANZEMC reports to the NEMMM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On matters of national interest, when required.</li> <li>By way of an annual report.</li> </ul> </li> <li>All members are to provide regular and timely reports to their respective ministers on the work and priorities of ANZEMC.</li> </ul>

<b>Decision-making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decisions are made by consensus.</li> <li>• Members may submit written comments when absent or when not represented by a proxy.</li> <li>• New Zealand is not in a position to influence or be subjected to the policy advice provided to Australian governments.</li> </ul>
<b>Governance and Procedural Arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ANZEMC may develop governance and procedural documents that it deems appropriate to fulfil its mission, roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• The Terms of Reference will be reviewed by ANZEMC every two years, and will be endorsed by the relevant ministerial body with responsibility for emergency management.</li> <li>• ANZEMC will produce a formal communique message following each face-to-face meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost and coordination of fares and travel-related expenses will be met by a member's agency.</li> <li>• New Zealand is not eligible for funding from Australian governments.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting Schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ANZEMC will generally meet three times a year, with two face-to-face meetings and one video/teleconference meeting, to support the work schedule of the relevant ministerial body.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, the use of video/teleconference meetings and out-of-session papers will be used to support the business needs of ANZEMC.</li> <li>• Face-to-face meetings should take place at least six weeks prior to the relevant ministerial meeting responsible for ANZEMC.</li> <li>• Face-to-face meetings will be held between Sydney and Melbourne on a rotational basis.</li> <li>• Extraordinary meetings or location changes are to be agreed by the co-chairs.</li> <li>• A draft agenda will be distributed 20 working days before the meeting date.</li> <li>• Agenda papers are to be submitted a minimum of 12 working days before the meeting date, except for urgent/extraordinary meetings/agenda items.</li> <li>• Final agenda and papers are to be distributed 10 working days before the meeting, except for urgent/extraordinary meetings/agenda items.</li> <li>• Draft meeting outcomes are to be distributed within ten working days of the meeting.</li> <li>• Final outcomes from each meeting are to be distributed within 20 working days of the meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting Agendas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chairs will agree agenda items for ANZEMC meetings.</li> <li>• As a guide for meeting agendas, the following set of criteria will be considered when determining whether a matter should be included on the agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The issue relates to NEMMM's responsibilities to the National Federation Reform Council (NFRC), or is listed for consideration by NEMMM or another relevant ministerial body that requires a decision or advice.</li> <li>○ The issue relates to an agreed NEMMM, ministerial or funding priority, or directly relates to ANZEMC's work plan.</li> <li>○ The issue is of national significance and/or affects multiple jurisdictions.</li> <li>○ The issue relates to an emerging issue that requires national consideration.</li> <li>○ The issue requires national consensus, decision, or support.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Secretariat, Policy and Program Management Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On behalf of ANZEMC, NEMA will:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Provide secretariat functions to ANZEMC and its Sub-committees, including providing templates and ensuring papers are endorsed by a member.</li><li>○ Coordinate reporting and facilitate policy and capability outcomes.</li><li>○ Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to identify, analyse and evaluate national policy and capability issues, needs and objectives.</li><li>○ Facilitate support from ANZEMC members on priority national actions to be pursued.</li><li>○ Monitor ANZEMC's work program and advise on strategic linkages, dependencies, risks and opportunities with other relevant stakeholders.</li></ul></li></ul>
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Sub-committees, Working Groups and Reference Groups	
<b>Sub-committees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-committees may be established by ANZEMC to support the delivery of projects and provide policy advice specific on their areas of expertise.</li> <li>• All Sub-committees will have an ANZEMC endorsed Terms of Reference</li> <li>• The Australian Government, represented by NEMA, holds the position of deputy-chair for each.</li> <li>• Each jurisdiction will meet their own costs associated with their involvement on a Sub-committee</li> </ul>
<b>Working Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only ANZEMC may agree to establish a working group.</li> <li>• Working groups will be time-limited to deal with a specific issue, task or to obtain an explicit outcome as directed by ANZEMC</li> <li>• Each jurisdiction will meet their own costs associated with their involvement on a working group.</li> </ul>
<b>Reference Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference Groups are sources of expertise not established or tasked by ANZEMC, but may be sponsored by the membership to submit items for consideration.</li> </ul>

## Appendix F: Summary of States and Territories responsibilities

Table 8: Provides an overview of the responsibilities of State and Territory departments and agencies. (Source: word search on the respective 'about' and 'role' web pages)

Jurisdiction	Preparedness	Response	Recovery	Resilience	Prevention / mitigation
ACT	ACT Emergency Services Agency	ACT ESA	ACT ESA	Responsibility shared across portfolios (e.g. planning, environment, services etc)	ACT ESA
NSW	NSW State Emergency Service NSW Rural Fire Service	NSW State Emergency Service NSW Rural Fire Service	NSW Reconstruction Authority	NSW Reconstruction Authority	
Qld	Queensland Reconstruction Authority	Led by Queensland Police Service Queensland Fire and Emergency Services	Queensland Reconstruction Authority	Queensland Reconstruction Authority	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
VIC	Emergency Management Victoria	Emergency Management Victoria	Emergency Management Victoria	Responsibility shared across portfolios (e.g. health, planning, economic, environment etc)	Cross-portfolio approach led by Emergency Management Victoria
SA	South Australia Fire and Emergency Services Commission	South Australia Fire and Emergency Services Commission	Recovery SA South Australia Fire and Emergency Services Commission	South Australia Fire and Emergency Services Commission	South Australia Fire and Emergency Services Commission
NT	NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services	NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services	Coordinated by Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet	Coordinated by Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet through Territory Emergency Management Council	
WA	Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Department of Fire and Emergency Services	
Tas	Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management	Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management	Coordinated by Department of Premier and Cabinet	Coordinated by Department of Premier and Cabinet	

## Appendix G: Research into previous reviews conducted on governance arrangements

This section explores the outcomes of reviews previously undertaken and considers the other governance arrangements in place in the disaster risk response, recovery and resilience area. In particular, this section responds to the Independent Review's sixth Term of Reference:

*Terms of Reference item 6. Consider the findings of any other reviews, such as the First Secretaries Review of Ministerial Councils in preparing national recommendations, the Conran Review and/or prior reviews of ANZEMC and its functions.*

### First Secretaries Group's Review of Ministerial Councils

National Cabinet tasked the First Secretaries' Group on 17 June 2022 to provide advice on the 'role of Ministerial Councils in progressing national priorities, with a sharpened focus on productivity improvements.' The First Secretaries' Group consists of the secretaries or directors general from the Commonwealth and each state and territory First Minister's department.<sup>11</sup>

A key requirement of that review was to build on the review of Council of Australian Government Councils (COAG) led by Peter Conran AM.

In undertaking their review, First Secretaries aimed to 'ensure that National Cabinet, Ministerial Councils and Commonwealth-state relations more broadly can operate under an enduring structure that promotes collaborative and results-driven decision making.'<sup>12</sup>

The report *A culture of cooperation: First Secretaries Group's Review of Ministerial Councils*<sup>13</sup> was considered by National Cabinet on 30 September 2022 and its recommendations were agreed. The report outlined a revised structure for Commonwealth-State ministerial engagement intended to 'remove areas of duplication and ensure Ministers can focus on issues of the highest priority.'

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<sup>11</sup> About First Secretaries Group, [online](#).

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *First Secretaries Group Review – Executive Summary*, [online](#).

The revised relationship architecture presented is outlined in Figure 6.

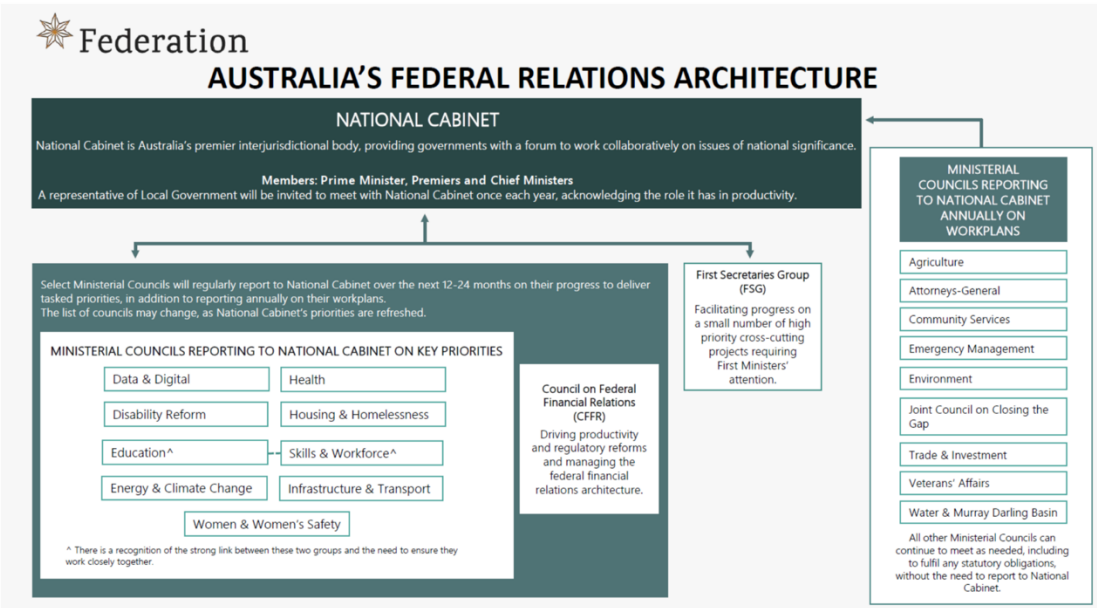


Figure 6: The Australian federal relations architecture<sup>14</sup>

The report priorities agreed by National Cabinet are outlined in Figure 7 below:



Figure 7: National Cabinet Priorities<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> First Secretaries Group Review – Executive Summary, [online](#).

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

Several of the above priorities could be considered as tactical (e.g. digital age government services) or foundational (e.g. labour market gender balance) rather than strategic. However, several have links to enhancing national resilience and achieving recovery outcomes.

In addition to establishing the priorities, National Cabinet agreed that ‘Select Ministerial Councils will regularly report to National Cabinet over the next 12-24 months on their progress to deliver tasked priorities, in addition to reporting annually on their workplans.’<sup>16</sup>

The review noted that the ‘Council on Federal Financial Relations supports National Cabinet by driving productivity and regulatory reforms, and managing the federal financial relations architecture.’<sup>17</sup> However, links between wider productivity and regulatory reform with disaster risk response, recovery and resilience are not clear. Improved integration provides an opportunity to leverage a whole of economy productivity agenda in driving in particular, preparedness, recovery and resilience.

The review also highlighted that the role of the First Secretaries Group in facilitating ‘progress on a small number of high priority cross-cutting projects requiring First Ministers’ attention.’ Again, this provides an opportunity for improved ‘whole-of-governments’ focus on preparedness, recovery and resilience.

### Conran Review

The *Review of COAG Councils and Ministerial Forums: Report to National Cabinet*<sup>18</sup> was finalised in October 2020 by Mr Peter Conran AM. A number of the report’s recommendations have particular relevance to this Review and relate to feedback raised by key stakeholders. Table 9 below, lists the relevant recommendations and the provides comments based on stakeholder feedback and the Review observations.

Table 9: Selected Conran Recommendations and Review Observations

Conran Report Theme and Recommendation	Independent Review Comment and Observations
<i>A Streamlined Intergovernmental Structure</i>	
4. The Australian Local Government Association and New Zealand should continue their involvement in relevant meetings.	ALGA and the NZ National Emergency Management Agency are members of NEMMM, ANZEMC and relevant Sub-committees.  However, the relevance of the NEMMM and ANZEMC agendas vary. Also, some stakeholders have cautioned that ALGA does not (and is perhaps unable to) reflect the diverse interests of all local and regional stakeholders and reinforces the need for wider stakeholder input in shaping a more strategic agenda for NEMMM.
<i>Other National Bodies</i>	
8. To manage emerging priorities requiring strategic intergovernmental collaboration, and noting that the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements has been asked to deliver its final report and recommendations in October 2020, National Cabinet should consider how best to deal with emergency	National Cabinet agreed to establish NEMMM on 13 November 2020 and in doing so, give it responsibility for ‘driving and coordinating implementation of the <i>Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements</i> (the Royal Commission) recommendations.’ <sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *A culture of cooperation: First Secretaries Group’s Review of Ministerial Councils – Final Report to National Cabinet*, [online](#).

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> *Review of COAG Councils and Ministerial Forums: Report to National Cabinet*, [online](#).

<sup>19</sup> Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, [online](#).

Conran Report Theme and Recommendation	Independent Review Comment and Observations
management from a coordinated national perspective. In the absence of a dedicated body, a meeting of Police and Emergency Management Ministers should continue with alignment to an appropriate group to deal with recovery issues.	The compounding, cascading and concurrency of the national natural emergencies that face Australia and the region today and into the future, require a ministerial council context broader than 'emergency management'.
<i>Interactions with the National Cabinet Infrastructure</i>	
9. All continuing meetings should resolve issues in their portfolio and should not have a reporting line to National Cabinet or the National Federation Reform Council, unless directly tasked by one of those bodies.	While this recommendation was likely intended to have the NEMMM and other councils deliver within their ministerial accountabilities and responsibilities, the wide-ranging implications of the disaster risk reduction and adaptation agenda, requires a 'whole-of-governments' approach.
<i>Mirroring and Building on the National Cabinet Model</i>	
12. Ministers must set, control and review agendas and not delegate these responsibilities to officials.	The extent to which NEMMM members are engaging with their agendas is not clear. However, stakeholders have questioned the strategic alignment between the NEMMM and ANZEMC agendas and the work programs of the ANZEMC Sub-committees. Feedback during the Review also indicates that there is a heavy emphasis on emergency response at the expense of recovery and resilience.
14. Where appropriate, decisions should be principles-based and allow individual jurisdictions to determine the best way to achieve agreed outcomes.	This is often a challenge for Commonwealth-State/Territory forums to achieve and was a recurring theme during stakeholder engagement with some feedback suggesting there was an overly heavy influence on 'Commonwealth' priorities as opposed to 'national' priorities.
15. Except where otherwise specified in legislation, decision-making should be on the basis of consensus. Where a consensus is not achievable the Commonwealth and smaller groups of States and Territories can reach agreement and move forward.	Stakeholder feedback and Review observations reinforce that NEMMM members engage collaboratively which ensures agreement is reached.
16. Regular meetings should have a strategic focus on two or three decision-making priorities of national importance. Initial indicative priorities have been identified for these meetings.	Review observations and stakeholder feedback reinforce that further work is needed to achieve a more strategic agenda to achieve focus on 'two or three decision-making priorities of national importance.'
17. A Commonwealth minister will chair meetings, unless otherwise decided by consensus between meeting members. The Chair will not deny reasonable requests for items to be included on agendas.	NEMMM has adopted an approach whereby the Commonwealth and a member jurisdiction co-chair meetings. This arrangement works well in practice and fosters positive engagement and collaboration.
18. Ministers should be supported by a maximum of one official, and where appropriate, one adviser, at meetings.	Multiple officials from several jurisdictions attend the NEMMM as observers however, this does not impede minister-to-minister engagement. Also, it is apparent that ministers engage on key matters prior to NEMMM when their officials are not present.
<i>Encouraging Delivery and Good Process</i>	
20. All items should have defined timeframes for when they should be resolved, no longer than 12 months.	This is an area that NEMMM and ANZEMC should place greater emphasis. If resolution of an item is anticipated to require greater than 12 months, NEMMM should agree key milestones of delivery at 12 months and beyond as appropriate.
21. Issues not substantially resolved within their designated timeframe should be removed from the work program.	Implementation of a number of the Royal Commission recommendations are outstanding. While the reason may be related to the original scope of the recommendations, NEMMM needs to rescope tasks to ensure timely deliver.
22. Routine, non-controversial or technical matters should be progressed out-of-session or be delegated to officials.	The Review has observed that NEMMM, through the Commonwealth Chair, is focused on ensuring a greater strategic emphasis by NEMMM.

Conran Report Theme and Recommendation	Independent Review Comment and Observations
23. Meeting papers should be drafted by the jurisdiction leading on the item and circulated in a timely manner. Consensus by officials is not required before papers proceed to ministers, but the Commonwealth departmental secretary should review before distribution.	This does occur in relation to drafting jurisdiction, however some jurisdictions have suggested that papers aren't always circulated in a timely manner. As such, appropriate consideration becomes a challenge particularly for small jurisdictions. Some States and Territories have also advised that priority papers are not always easily visible within the agenda paper packs.
<i>Reducing Bureaucracy</i>	
26. Formal dedicated secretariats should be abolished, with meeting support functions (scheduling meetings, distributing papers and recording and tracking outcomes) provided by the relevant Commonwealth Department under the direction of their secretary.	<p>The Review has observed that the NEMMM secretariat within NEMA does not have sufficient capability and resources to support the kind of strategic agenda that NEMMM needs to pursue.</p> <p>The scale and complexity of a strategic agenda for NEMMM requires the secretariat to go beyond the 'scheduling meetings, distributing papers and recording and tracking outcomes' and should actively facilitate strategic engagement, and understanding and resolution of key matters prior to NEMMM and ANZEMC discussions. Additional secretariat functions should include cross-jurisdiction strategic engagement, expert advice on emerging issues and good governance protocols.</p>
27. Given that the current numbers of Sub-committees of officials and reports were considered 'unacceptably high.... Ministers and departmental heads should rationalise these committees.'	<p>ANZEMC has undertaken a review of its Sub-committees and working groups and reduced the structure to encompass CORS, MaRS and a small number of time-limited working groups.</p> <p>However, reduction in the entities does not appear to have been accompanied by a need to ensure the prioritisation and strategic relevance of their work programs.</p>
28. Any meetings that are held must take account of the demands placed on smaller and more distant jurisdictions in servicing meetings of ministers and officials.	<p>This is a common issue across all Commonwealth and State/Territory engagements.</p> <p>During the Review, several States and Territories advised they were being 'bombarded' by the Commonwealth across this and related subject areas. While this is an obvious challenge for small jurisdictions, larger jurisdictions also commented on this aspect.</p>
<i>Maintaining a Streamlined and Fit-for-Purpose Structure</i>	
31. To ensure meetings remain essential, all regular ongoing ministers' meetings and their work programs should be reviewed every two years by the First Secretaries Group which will provide recommendations to National Cabinet.	While it is understood that this occurs, the whole-of-governments nature of risk reduction, recovery and resilience reinforces it is beyond the scope of NEMMM members who are largely focused on emergency response and management. This suggests the need for more active involvement of the First Secretaries Group.

## ANZEMC Review

ANZEMC agreed in April 2012 that the Commonwealth, Victoria and Queensland would coordinate an internal review of its governance arrangements. The findings of the review were articulated in *Enhancing the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee: Reform Position Paper* and included:

- ANZEMC's work program was 'congested' with competing narrow priorities that had a marginal affect on national disaster resilience outcomes.
- The ANZEMC membership was appropriate but that it doesn't always use the the forum to its advantage.



- The effectiveness of project/program management is variable, and a more rigorous project/program approach was needed.
- ANZEMC and its Sub-committees had a tendency to focus on process over delivery, and a risk averse culture stifled innovation.
- There was a lack of communication between and within Sub-committees.
- There was a need to connect ANZEMC and its role in the national natural disaster resilience policy environment with key stakeholders.
- There was strong support for more formal engagement between ANZEMC and key external stakeholders.

The review identified a range of recommendations with the those most relevant to this Independent Review being:

- ANZEMC should move to a structured two-year policy/project cycle.
- ANZEMC should set no more than 5-8 strategic project/program priorities at the commencement of each two-year policy/project cycle.
- ANZEMC should, as good practice, remove or expedite completion of an existing priority before adding another.
- Consideration should be given to the establishment of a national pool of funding (contributed by each jurisdiction proportionately) for allocation to those strategic priorities identified in the two-year cycle.
- Under a new structure, working groups should only be established by ANZEMC or Sub-committees to complete specific tasks within a specified period.
- These [expert] groups should be consistently named Reference Groups.
- An annual forum between ANZEMC and key stakeholders should occur alongside one of the two annual face-to-face ANZEMC meetings.

### **Australia's national midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 Report**

The key priorities of the Sendai framework are:

1. Understanding disaster risk
2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience
4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'build back better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.<sup>20</sup>

*Australia's national midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 Report* identified that '[I]mproved governance ... is a key enabler of risk reduction efforts' and that a

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<sup>20</sup> *Australia's national midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 Report*, [online](#).



recurring theme ‘was that friction can exist between levels of government’ given the different priorities and responsibilities of jurisdictions in relation to disaster risk reduction and management.<sup>21</sup>

The report elaborated with:

‘This friction was identified as a critical emerging issue which will impede Australia’s ability to achieve the outcome and goal of the Sendai Framework by 2030. The first step to address this is to broadly acknowledge that each jurisdiction has different levels of maturity and understanding of their localised disaster risks. Additionally, it was recommended that governance and institutional arrangements contain a degree of flexibility to account for this required localisation.’

The report also highlighted a need for ‘greater collaboration across all of society, which is supported by the strategic direction set by the Australian Government.’ However, this Review has observed, and reinforced during stakeholder engagement, that greater collaboration is needed with civil society, the business sector and non-government organisations more broadly. A key issue that has emerged during this Independent Review is that the ‘Australian Government’ should not set the strategic direction in isolation as implied by the Sendai report. Instead, the Commonwealth needs to position itself as one of all jurisdictions collaboratively defining and agreeing the strategic direction.

This does not contradict the findings of the Royal Commission, ‘which emphasised the need for the Australian Government to provide greater leadership across the disaster management sector.’<sup>22</sup> Instead, it more appropriately acknowledges the role that other levels of government play, and the further role civil society and business need to play.

While the midterm report on the Sendai framework acknowledges the value of wider stakeholder engagement including the establishment of an advisory group as recommended by the Royal Commission’s Recommendation 3.2, it fails to appreciate that one national-level advisory group also perpetuates engagement barriers for regional stakeholders and those with lived experience.

The midterm report does note the need for ‘[M]ore inclusive and interconnected governance and collaboration networks which assist in alignment of frameworks, disaster risk reduction strategies and plans across levels of government.’<sup>23</sup> However, to achieve such an outcome, governance arrangements need to reflect the ‘network’ nature of grass roots and local organisations active in the community rather than the hierarchical arrangements favoured within the public sector.

### **New Zealand Emergency Management Governance**

Prior to December 2019, the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management has responsibility for emergency management in New Zealand. The establishment of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA-NZ), ‘hosted’ by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, ensured a focus on ‘strategic leadership for risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery activities and building ‘emergency management capability and capacity.’<sup>24</sup>

The establishment of NEMA-NZ was in response to the Ministerial Review: *Better Responses to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies in New Zealand* released in August 2018 which identified 42

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<sup>21</sup> Australia’s national midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 Report, [online](#).

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> About National Emergency Management Agency, [online](#).

recommendations. The response by the NZ Government identified five key areas as part of a multi-year work program:

- Putting the safety and wellbeing of people at the heart of the emergency response system
- Strengthening the national leadership of the emergency management system
- Making it clear who is responsible for what, nationally and regionally
- Building the capability and capability of the emergency management workforce
- Improving the information and intelligence system that supports decision-making in emergencies.<sup>25</sup>

The NZ arrangements respond to the need for central coordination of governance in recognition of the wide-ranging implications of ‘risk reduction, readiness, response and recovery.’ In the Australian context there is significant investment and effort in achieving risk reduction, readiness, response and recovery objectives, however there is variable cross-program integration and little understanding of the gaps in national capability.

## Conclusion

The reviews discussed in this section represent a range of areas for improvement by NEMMM and ANZEMC including:

- Enhancing the strategic focus
- Better understanding of the interplay between national priorities and jurisdictional (Commonwealth, State and Territory) accountabilities
- Improving integration across and within jurisdictions
- Embracing a networked governance approach to enhance collaboration on national priorities with non-government and business stakeholders, as well as those with lived experience.

In response, the Independent Review makes the following suggestions:

1. To improve achievement of preparedness, recovery and resilience outcomes, First Ministers should seek to improve integration of resilience outcomes across Ministerial Councils.
2. NEMMM and ANZEMC should establish standing arrangements for collaboration with civil society, the business sector and non-government organisations more broadly.
3. The ANZEMC work program should reflect the small number of strategic priorities agreed by NEMMM.
4. Priority-specific task forces should be established, with justification, NGO and business membership, to deliver the articulated outcomes.

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<sup>25</sup> Ministerial Review: Better Responses to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies in New Zealand, [online](#).

5. The NEMMM and ANZEMC Secretariat should have the resources and capability to fulfil the strategic and administrative requirements of its role.
  - a. The secretariat should be led by a senior executive whose primary role is to facilitate and enable cross jurisdiction, cross sector outcomes agreed by NEMMM.
  - b. The secretariat should be staffed by officers from the Commonwealth, States and Territories with public policy experience across the risk reduction, readiness, recovery, and resilience agenda.
  - c. Funding for the secretariat should be shared across jurisdictions with the Commonwealth contributing 50%, and other jurisdictions contributing on a pro-rata basis.
  - d. The ANZEMC secretariat should adopt Conran Report recommendations 4, 8-9, 12 14-18, 20-23, 26-28 and 31.