



Australian Government

National Emergency Management Agency

AUSASSISTPLAN

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OVERSEAS ASSISTANCE PLAN

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1. Acronyms

ABF	Australian Border Force
AGCMF	Australian Government Crisis Management Framework
AHPC	Australian Health Protection Committee
AUSMAT	Australian Medical Assistance Team
CASP	Crisis Appreciation and Strategic Planning
CCT	Australian Government Crisis Coordination Team
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DCG EMR	Deputy Coordinator General, Emergency Management and Response
Defence	Department of Defence
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DHDA	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
GWO	Global Watch Office
HOM	Head of Mission
HOP	Head of Post
HPD	DFAT Humanitarian Division
IDETF	Inter-Departmental Emergency Task Force
LO	Liaison Officer
MCT	Mission Coordination Team
NCM	National Coordination Mechanism
NCM-AUSGOV	Australian Government National Coordination Mechanism
NED	National Emergency Declaration
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHEMS	National Health Emergency Sub-Committee
NIC	Australian Government – National Incident Centre

NJCOP	National Joint Common Operating Picture
NSC	National Security Committee of Cabinet
NSR	Australian Government National Situation Room
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
RFA	Request for Assistance
WHS	Workplace Health and Safety

2. Definitions

Assistance	Emergency Australian Government organised physical assistance to overseas countries.
Australian Government Coordinating Agency	The agency required to lead the coordination across the Australian Government for a significant crisis caused by an identified hazard under the AGCMF. This agency also leads the consequence management activities within its agency functions and sector-specific responsibilities.
Australian Government Crisis Communication Guidelines	Provides guidance on coordinating whole-of-Australian Government crisis communication, including development and dissemination of talking points, media holding lines, and response strategies for media management and collaboration with state and territory operations centres.
Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF)	The Australian Government's capstone policy framing Australia's national crisis management arrangements.
Capability Owners	The parent agencies or organisations of a deployable capability. This can include private providers.
Command	Providing direction within a capability, typically within existing organisational structures, such as within a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) or an Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT).
Control	Providing overall direction across capabilities within the mission to ensure outcomes are met.
Coordination	Providing the functions across a mission to ensure the mission outcomes are met.
Code of Conduct for Overseas Service	Provides guidance to employees on their obligations under section 13(12) of the Public Service Act 1999.
Early recovery	The immediate and short-term measures for the restoration and improvement of the livelihoods, health, economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities of a crisis-affected community.
Enabling Agency	An Australian Government agency that administers relevant programs, provides specialist technical, scientific, intelligence or information capabilities, or conducts any other enabling activities to support consequence management activities.
Head of Mission (HOM)/Head of Post (HOP)	The senior Australian Government representative in any foreign country. When the Australian Government is involved in a disaster response, the HOM/HOP or an appropriate delegate will lead the response in-country.

Inter-Departmental Emergency Task Force (IDETF)	The peak senior officials' crisis coordination mechanism during Australian Government responses to international crises between Tiers 1 to 3. The IDETF continues to coordinate international elements in a Tier 4 crisis.
Lead Coordinating Senior Official	The designated senior official within an Australian Government Coordinating Agency who is responsible for leading the coordination for a significant crisis.
Lead Minister	The Australian Government minister responsible for leading coordination in response to a significant crisis caused by an identified hazard under the AGCMF.
Liaison Officer	Departmental officer deployed to a departure point, repatriation point or an Australian Government or state or territory coordination centre to support the coordinated action of operational arrangements.
Mission	The operational activity utilised to complete a tasking or achieve the required effect. Multiple missions may be undertaken to a single country, should the breadth of tasks require such a response. Task Requests may also require multiple missions or deployments to fulfil the requested effect.
Mission Coordination Team	Deployed Commonwealth officers who work to the Mission Coordinator to ensure the ongoing operation of the technical taskforce is: consistent with the mission objective; meeting Australian Government intent and expectations; in line with the wider Australian Government response; provided appropriate tasking and support from the Australian Government.
Mission Coordinator	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), or the DFAT appointed officer, answerable to the HOM/HOP for the overall coordination of deployed teams, including adherence to mission objectives.
National Coordination Mechanism (NCM)	The peak senior officials' crisis coordination mechanism providing a national picture of crisis to governments and key stakeholders. The NCM provides the convening mechanism to bring together Australian Government, state and territory government and nongovernment representatives immediately before, during and after a crisis.
Australian Government NCM (NCM-AUSGOV)	A specialised NCM that supports a shared whole-of-Australian Government picture of crisis, with participants drawn from across the Australian Government.
Physical Assistance	The provision of technical or specialised capabilities.
Preparedness	Near-term and longer-term arrangements to ensure that – should a crisis occur – the required resources, capabilities and services can be efficiently mobilised and deployed.

Response	Actions taken in anticipation of, during, or immediately after a crisis to ensure that its impacts are minimised, and that those affected are supported as quickly as possible.
Sector Lead Agency	An Australian Government agency that contributes to whole-of-Australian Government crisis coordination activities and leads the consequence management activities relevant to agency functions and sector-specific responsibilities.
Tasking	Provided by DFAT to NEMA to organise the resources for a mission in accordance with this Plan and the AGCMF.
Task Request	Issued by NEMA to capability owners to provide a capability. The capability is then known as a <i>tasked capability</i> .
Technical Team	A state or territory-based DART team, an AUSMAT or other state or non-state teams established for potential deployment under this plan. A team may consist of a single person.

3. Authorising Environment

3.1. Authority

The Australian Government Overseas Assistance Plan (AUSASSISTPLAN) derives its authority from the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF). The AGCMF outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government in preparing for, responding to and recovering from crises. It is the Australian Government's capstone policy framing Australia's national crisis management arrangements.

The AGCMF is underpinned by a range of national plans that set out hazard and sector-specific crisis management arrangements. AUSASSISTPLAN is one such plan.

AUSASSISTPLAN is prepared and maintained by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). AUSASSISTPLAN is approved by the Deputy Coordinator General of the Emergency Management and Response Group (DCG EMR) in NEMA, and the First Assistant Secretary of Humanitarian Division in DFAT.

3.2. Amendments

Recommendations for amendments or suggestions for improvement may be forwarded to:

Deputy Coordinator General
Emergency Management and Response Group
National Emergency Management Agency
EMRCoordination@nema.gov.au

3.3. Version Details

Version #	Date of Issue	Brief description of change
3.3	March 2025	Administrative review to align with the updated Australian Government Crisis Management Framework
3.2	2017	Administrative review
3.1	2015	Strategic review
2.1	2002	Strategic review
1.1	1998	AUSASSISTPLAN created

4. Introduction

4.1. Purpose

AUSASSISTPLAN outlines the mechanisms and coordination arrangements for the provision of emergency Australian Government-led physical assistance to overseas countries.

The arrangements set out within AUSASSISTPLAN are not dependent on, nor do they hinder, the activation of other plans and standing arrangements.

4.2. Scope

AUSASSISTPLAN applies only for the provision of emergency Australian Government-organised physical assistance to overseas countries.

4.3. Out of Scope

AUSASSISTPLAN does not address the evacuation or repatriation of Australian citizens and approved foreign nationals from an overseas location, nor direct consular services in an overseas location. Separate plans cover these arrangements.

4.4. Principles

Crisis events are typically variable, which requires flexible responses. Therefore, a principles-based approach should be adopted, including:

1. Unity of effort will be encouraged, through a collaborative and coordinated approach, without removing individual agencies' legislative, ministerial and constitutional responsibilities.
2. Flexibility, improvisation and scalability in the system will be promoted, given the potential complexity and severity of overseas incidents.
3. Decentralisation of decision-making, supported by centralised strategic coordination and decentralised execution.
4. Support forward-looking decision-making and risk management with anticipatory analysis.
5. Foster interoperability and integrate civilian capabilities.
6. Agencies will be responsive and support elected officials' decision-making and crisis leadership.
7. Assistance is not provided by the Australian Government unless assistance has been requested and/or accepted by the government of the crisis-affected country.
8. The provision of emergency Australian Government-led physical assistance to overseas countries will be dependent on domestic requirements and capacity at the time. NEMA will work with agencies, jurisdictions and capability owners to determine the ability and capacity to deploy a technical team offshore.
9. DFAT leads and coordinates the whole-of-Australian Government response to an international crisis that has affected, or threatens to affect, Australians or Australian interests overseas; and leads and coordinates the whole-of-Australian Government response to an international humanitarian crisis.
10. In some circumstances, DFAT may delegate its roles and responsibilities under this plan to another agency.
11. In the case of multiple components to a response, the requesting government's priorities will be respected as far as possible or practical. Where priorities are not stated, the preservation and safety of life will be the primary priority.
12. All assistance will be regularly assessed to ensure that the approved objectives are being met and/or whether the objectives require modification to meet changing circumstances in the emergency response environment.

13. DFAT and NEMA will undertake collaborative training and exercise opportunities where possible to maintain a thorough understanding of agency roles and responsibilities under AUSASSISTPLAN.
14. AUSASSISTPLAN should be read in conjunction with the *International Emergency Deployment Guidelines* and the *Australian Government Guide for Financial Reimbursement*, which provide additional detail on specific arrangements.

Consideration of diverse groups

Under AUSASSISTPLAN, decisions and crisis communication made through the preparedness, response, and early recovery phases need to consider the particular needs of people who may be disproportionately at risk of harm and ensure their inclusion in planning. "[Australia's Humanitarian Policy: Making a difference for people in crisis](#)" states:

- The Australian Government is committed to not leaving anyone behind, including women, children, people with disability and LGBTQIA+ people. A disaster affects communities disproportionately at risk to a much greater degree, so protection of those communities will inform the response to crises.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Under AUSASSISTPLAN, ministers, senior officials and their agencies have clear responsibilities to ensure Australian Government coordination and response activities are well-aligned and responsive as the impacts and consequences of the crisis evolve.

The roles of the Lead Minister, the Australian Government Coordinating Agency, the Lead Coordinating Senior Official, Sector Lead Agencies and Enabling Agencies under AUSASSISTPLAN are outlined below.

5.1. Lead Minister

Under the AGCMF, the **Lead Minister** under AUSASSISTPLAN is the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Minister for Foreign Affairs is responsible for:

- Overseeing a coordinated Australian Government response to the crisis and coordinating with Australian Government and jurisdictional counterparts.
- Exercising executive responsibilities and decision-making in consultation with Australian Government ministers with relevant interests.
- Providing advice to the Prime Minister, National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC), other Committee of Cabinet or other ministerial decision-making bodies.
- Supporting the Prime Minister with relevant information to inform the potential recommendation for a National Emergency Declaration.
- Deciding to approve the provision of emergency Australian Government-organised physical assistance to overseas countries following a recommendation (where possible) by the Inter-Departmental Emergency Task Force (IDETF).
- Representing the Australian Government as the principal public spokesperson.
- Ensuring there are systems and procedures available so that they are readily contactable.
- Ensuring the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs maintains business continuity plans in the event that the office is affected directly by a crisis.
- Ensuring ministerial decisions and actions relevant to the crisis are recorded.

The Minister for International Development and the Pacific also has joint responsibility (with the Minister for Foreign Affairs) for maintaining international relations with foreign governments and/or international agencies on humanitarian crises, and for approving emergency funding packages from the Humanitarian Emergency Fund.

Should a crisis require Tier 4 coordination as defined by the AGCMF, the Prime Minister will become the Lead Minister. The Prime Minister may delegate some, or all responsibilities, to another minister.

5.2. Australian Government Coordinating Agency

The **Australian Government Coordinating Agency** for AUSASSISTPLAN is DFAT. DFAT is responsible for:

- Monitoring overseas crisis events that may impact the interests and responsibilities of agencies across the Australian Government.
- Requesting DCG EMR to activate AUSASSISTPLAN, upon approval from the Minister for Foreign Affairs or approved delegate.
- Leading and coordinating the whole-of-Australian Government international response to an overseas crisis (the Australian in-country response).
 - The Head of Mission (HOM)/Head of Post (HOP) is the senior Australian representative in any foreign country. When the Australian Government is involved in disaster response, the HOM/HOP or an appropriate delegate will lead the response in-country and consult and receive direction as necessary from Canberra.
- Liaising with relevant government authorities in the impacted country, providing advice on affected government requirements and updated information (including from early reconnaissance missions).
- Providing the Australian Government with advice on emerging issues or crises in the impacted country.
- Deploying or receiving Liaison Officers (LOs) to or from the Australian Government National Situation Room (NSR), and the Australian Government Crisis Coordination Team (CCT), or other operations centres as required to support situational awareness.
- Developing the requirements for the technical teams/specialist capability.
- In line with the proposed tasking of a capability, obtaining, clarifying and detailing the authority for an Australian Government response (including any operating restrictions).
- Convening, chairing and providing secretariat functions for the IDETF.
- Arranging Third Person Notes and authorities as required.
- Providing situational reporting as required to the IDETF and relevant Australian Government and state and territory departments and agencies.
- Providing to NEMA tasking documentation, financial limits and the scope of requirements for the deployment/s.
- Appointing a Mission Coordinator to coordinate Australian Government activities in the impacted country.
- Coordinating the response and logistics in the impacted country for deployed personnel as agreed in the tasking.
- Conducting donor coordination (including information on the response of other donors and to inform other donors of Australia's response).
- Coordinating crisis communications including establishing a Crisis Communication Cell.
- Developing a crisis communication strategy and associated products such as whole-of-Australian Government talking points and media.
- Supporting crisis management capabilities by providing decision support briefing products.
- Maintaining business continuity plans to ensure the agency can continue to perform its role if it is affected directly by a crisis.
- Maintaining records of decisions and actions relevant to the crisis.
- Conducting an after-action review and integrating lessons identified into relevant plans and processes in collaboration with relevant Australian Government agencies.

If a crisis is determined to require Tier 4 crisis coordination under the AGCMF, the Lead Coordinating Senior Official will transition Australian Government Coordinating Agency responsibilities to NEMA. DFAT will maintain responsibility for international crisis response as a Sector Lead Agency.

5.3. Lead Coordinating Senior Official

The **Lead Coordinating Senior Official** is the Deputy Secretary for consular and crisis management, DFAT (or their delegate) who is responsible for:

- Assessing the level of crisis coordination required, and establishing, reviewing and adapting the appropriate tier of coordination over the course of the crisis.
- Maintaining near real-time situational awareness and monitoring impacts and consequences of the crisis across all sectors.
- Facilitating shared situational awareness across the Australian Government and nationally.
- Facilitating agreement to whole-of-Australian Government coordination priorities and objectives.
- Ensuring coordination of cross-government advice to relevant ministers.
- Engaging and collaborating with counterparts in Sector Lead Agencies and Enabling Agencies to ensure the requirements under AUSASSISTPLAN are being met.
- In line with chairing arrangements, co-chairing the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) and briefing the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC) (or other Committee of Cabinet), as required.
- Coordinating development of a whole-of-Australian Government crisis communications strategy and ensuring the dissemination of crisis communications products and public information (such as whole-of-Australian Government talking points and briefing materials).
- Ensuring DFAT's international crisis management framework, policies, structures, preparedness arrangements and contingency planning are fit for purpose.
- Advising portfolio and other ministers on risks, enterprise implications and decisions pertaining to international crisis response and preparedness (directly or through Secretary DFAT).
- Determining, in consultation with Ministerial Offices, briefing and information requirements of ministers.
- Liaising with inter-agency counterparts as required.
- Determining, in consultation with other group heads, which DFAT division will lead the crisis response, the scope and scale of a response, and nominating an International Crisis Controller for the crisis.
- Convening and chairing IDETF meetings (co-chairing with additional Deputy Secretary or Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) counterpart when required (this role may be delegated)).
- Following approval from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, requesting DCG EMR to activate AUSASSISTPLAN if required.
- Ensuring DFAT crisis response activities are consistent with relevant domestic and international law.
- Exercising due diligence with respect to DFAT's Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and duty of care obligations in crisis response activities.
- Regularly reviewing strategic direction and resource allocation to determine the need to scale up or down the crisis response.
- Determining when an acute crisis response is complete, crisis mechanisms are deactivated, and DFAT transitions to a recovery phase.
- Overseeing an after-action review and the integration of lessons identified into relevant plans and processes in collaboration with relevant Australian Government agencies.

5.4. Sector Lead Agencies

Under AUSASSISTPLAN, NEMA is the **Sector Lead Agency** responsible for the domestic components of the provision of overseas assistance. NEMA's specific responsibilities include:

- Monitoring crisis events that may impact the agency's interests and responsibilities.
- Activating AUSASSISTPLAN upon advice from DFAT and notifying relevant stakeholders, through the NSR.

- Based on a request from DFAT, engaging with domestic capability owners to develop appropriate response options for consideration by DFAT, in line with the mission objectives.
- Activating a CCT to facilitate NEMA's role in the event and undertake planning with other relevant stakeholders.
- Providing ongoing situational reporting to DFAT as the Australian Government Coordinating Agency.
- Providing a central point of contact between jurisdictions and deployed resources.
- Deploying a NEMA Liaison Officer (NEMA LO) to the impacted country when appropriate and as required, as support to the deployed capability as part of the Mission Coordination Team (MCT).
- Deploying an LO to the DFAT Crisis Centre or other operations centres as required to support shared situational awareness.
- Coordinating domestic travel arrangements for the tasked capabilities. NEMA can also coordinate international travel arrangements if requested by DFAT.
- Ensuring personnel and cargo manifest details for entry/access purposes are prepared by the tasked capability and provided in advance of departure from Australia, and, as appropriate, for customs and immigration purposes.
- Exercising duty of care for deployed capability personnel in the impacted country and reporting any WHS issues to the MCT.
- Developing safety and security plans for the impacted country to cover the deploying personnel, for consideration by the MCT.
- Coordinating with the Australian Border Force (ABF) to ensure export and import requirements for the deploying equipment are met.
- Contributing to situation reports on the performance and sustainment of the deployed team, including any issues arising.
- Proactively contributing to a whole-of-Australian Government crisis communications strategy, dissemination of crisis communications products and public information (such as whole-of-Australian Government talking points and briefing materials).
- Managing/facilitating demobilisation, including the return of approved resources to jurisdictions.
- Managing and providing financial claims and reporting to DFAT.
- Managing post-event reporting, including evaluation and collation of debriefs for capabilities.
- Maintaining business continuity plans to ensure the agency can continue to perform its role if it is affected directly by a crisis.
- Maintaining records of decisions and actions relevant to the crisis.

5.5. Enabling Agencies

For the purposes of AUSASSISTPLAN, the Enabling Agencies involved in supporting preparedness, response and early recovery processes in the event of an overseas assistance effort are the relevant capability owners (though other Australian Government agencies may assist the mission as required). These capability owners will vary depending on the nature of the overseas assistance being provided. Enabling Agencies are responsible for:

- Considering whether to accept tasking to achieve the outcomes and activities authorised under AUSASSISTPLAN.
- Ensuring personnel deployed are medically fit, immunised and prepared for the deployment in line with the *International Emergency Deployment Guidelines*.
- Working with NEMA to ensure the suitability and qualification of resources provided towards tasked activities.
- Developing internal arrangements and administering relevant programs in support of AUSASSISTPLAN.
- Providing specialist technical, scientific, intelligence or information capabilities.
- Supporting or conducting any other enabling activities to support consequence management activities.

- Deploying LOs to the CCT, DFAT Crisis Centre or other operations centres as required to support shared situational awareness.
- Proactively contributing to a whole-of-Australian Government crisis communications strategy, dissemination of crisis communications products and public information (such as whole-of-Australian Government talking points and briefing materials).

6. Operational Activities

6.1. Overview

AUSASSISTPLAN has three (3) phases: STANDBY, ALERT and ACTIVE. Upon request and tasking from DFAT, DCG EMR has the authority to initiate phase changes under AUSASSISTPLAN.

Following a request from DFAT, DCG EMR or delegate will authorise a phase change from STANDBY to ALERT or ACTIVE based on the appropriate level of preparedness for the event emerging or underway.

The NSR will advise relevant Australian Government agencies and jurisdictions of phase changes to AUSASSISTPLAN.

DFAT, when requesting action under AUSASSISTPLAN, is responsible for the direct costs incurred.

NEMA and DFAT will consult with capability owners to identify the most appropriate and cost-effective assistance, in line with DFAT requirements. Following a tasking being issued, NEMA will work with the identified capability to coordinate movement and ensure delivery of the capability within Australia as outlined in the tasking.

While the tasked capability is in the affected country, the capability is under the control of the HOM/HOP or appointed delegate.

Whilst deployed, all members of the capability are considered as bona-fide Australian Government officers and are subject to the rules and conditions of employment of Australian Government officers. Advice on the rights and responsibilities of deployed personnel is contained in the *International Emergency Deployment Guidelines*.

The safety and security of all personnel deployed under AUSASSISTPLAN is paramount. Personnel deployed under this plan are considered employees of the Australian Government as per the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Definition of Employee) Notice 2009 (1) for the purposes of subsection 5(6) of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*.

6.2. Phases and Activities

STANDBY

AUSASSISTPLAN is maintained in STANDBY phase as the default condition. Under STANDBY the following activities are undertaken by DFAT and NEMA:

- Monitor global situations and emerging events.
- Contingency planning for potential responses, including business continuity plans.
- Undertake training and exercises in the use of AUSASSISTPLAN.

Capability owners will:

- Maintain a readiness level for deployment.
- Advise NEMA of any change in conditions that may affect their ability to deploy.
- Undertake training exercises.

ALERT

ALERT phase is declared when a response is likely and it allows for capabilities to be brought to an enhanced level of preparedness.

Following a request from DFAT, DCG EMR or delegate will authorise a phase change between STANDBY and ALERT.

A Task Request may be issued to a capability prior to a formal phase change to ALERT, in order to expedite the deployment of a capability. The CCT will subsequently issue a Task Request to the agency of the capability proposed to deploy.

Under ALERT the following activities are undertaken:

DFAT will:

- Work with whole-of-Australian Government partners including the Department of Defence (Defence), the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) and NEMA to develop implementation plans, determine timings and consider constraints.
- Provide NEMA with advice on the extent of the activities authorised and the financial delegation under this phase.
- Stand up a Humanitarian Response Team and assign a Humanitarian Response Director.
- If required, activate the DFAT Crisis Centre and continue monitoring of the situation.
- Consider holding an IDETF to provide situational awareness and increase preparedness.
- Consider conducting crisis planning utilising Crisis Appreciation and Strategic Planning (CASP), or similar methodology.
- Consider establishing a crisis communications cell, in line with advice provided in the *Interim Australian Government Crisis Communication Guidelines*.
- Provide all stakeholders with regular updated incident information.

NEMA will:

- Support crisis planning, using CASP or similar methodology.
- Work with whole-of-Australian Government partners (Defence, DHAC and DFAT) to develop implementation options, determine timings and consider constraints.
- Provide relevant information to Australian and state and territory government departments and agencies.
- Provide a Task Request to jurisdictions/agencies, including agreed authorisation to expend Australian Government funds.
- With jurisdictions/agencies, undertake tasking and provide regular situation updates on the agreed basis.
- If required, establish a CCT and continue monitoring of the situation.
- Consider holding and co-chairing an NCM to provide situational awareness and increase preparedness.
- Provide all stakeholders with regular updated incident information.

Capability owners will:

- Advise NEMA of their acceptance of any Task Request, including acceptance of the financial arrangements as outlined in the *Guide for Financial Reimbursement*.
- Provide advice on capability and understanding of the Task Request.

ALERT phase automatically reverts to STANDBY phase after 72 hours unless advised otherwise.

ACTIVE

Following a request from DFAT and acceptance by NEMA, DCG EMR or delegate will authorise a phase change from ALERT to ACTIVE.

The ACTIVE phase is declared where AUSASSISTPLAN action has been authorised. This phase may be declared prior to all arrangements for the transportation or acceptance of Australian Government assistance being finalised, in the interests of expediting a response.

The ACTIVE phase is initiated when DFAT provides written tasking to NEMA to mobilise the tasked capability to the Australian point of international departure ready for the mission. This tasking will set out the extent of the activities authorised and the financial delegation under this phase.

Additional mobilisation of stores or personnel from a tasked capability will require a new tasking order.

Under ACTIVE the following activities are undertaken:

DFAT will:

- Review needs and adequately resource a Humanitarian Response Team, led by a Humanitarian Response Director.
- If required, activate the DFAT Crisis Centre.
- Establish a crisis communications cell, in line with advice provided in the *Interim* Australian Government Crisis Communications Guidelines.
- Provide stakeholders with regular situational awareness and ongoing monitoring and reporting, including through feeding relevant information into the CCT.
- Regularly brief the Australian Government agencies and capability owners on the status of Task Requests.
- Conduct a full crisis planning process utilising CASP, or similar methodology.
- Establish Mission Objectives and Terms of Reference for the deployment of capabilities.
- Deploy an MCT (including a Mission Coordination Team Leader).
- Provide approval, if required, for tasked capabilities' travel to 'Reconsider your need to travel' or 'Do not travel' destinations.
- Brief the tasked capability on the mission objectives, DFAT's safety and security procedures, media strategy and procedures, cultural context and other issues as required.
- Obtain all necessary clearances and authorities to practice from the affected government.
- Assume responsibility for the tasked capability upon arrival at the international point of departure.
- Maintain control of tasked capability during the deployment in-country.
- In conjunction with NEMA, develop and approve the demobilisation plan and advise the tasked capability.
- Manage the withdrawal of field operations in accordance with operational requirements and government priorities.
- Manage the gifting of equipment and supplies as appropriate.
- Identify and confirm when the ACTIVE phase for a capability is complete.

NEMA will:

- Stand up a CCT and if required, deploy a NEMA LO to form part of the MCT.
- Where appropriate, support the crisis planning process using the CASP methodology, or similar, developing subsequent planning products, informed by crisis intelligence.
- Provide a Task Request to jurisdictions/agencies, including agreed authorisation to expend Australian Government funds.
- Organise and confirm domestic travel arrangements for personnel and cache to the agreed point of departure from Australia, and point of arrival upon return to Australia.
- Ensure that all Australian customs and immigration processes have been finalised and approved prior to deployment.

- Assist DFAT with the development of rotation and demobilisation plans.
- Contribute to situation reports.
- Ensure arrangements, including customs, quarantine and immigration are in place for the return of the tasked capability and cache to Australia and an agreed location.
- Develop a safety and security plan in conjunction with DFAT for the impacted country and for utilisation by the deploying teams.
- Undertake hot debrief in field prior to return to Australia.
- Undertake reporting and financial resolution in the agreed format and timeframe based on the *Guide for Financial Reimbursement*.

Capability owners will:

- Advise NEMA of acceptance of the Task Request, including acceptance of the financial arrangements as outlined in the *Guide for Financial Reimbursement* and provide advice on capability when requested.
- As required, provide an LO to the most appropriate operations or coordination centre.
- Work in conjunction with DFAT to achieve the outcomes agreed in the tasking request.
- Undertake the mission under the control of the MCT Leader, consistent with the tasking and the operations plan or response options. While a full operations plan may not be available prior to deployment, it will be developed in conjunction with the tasked capability on a situational basis.
- Provide reporting on operational activities as required.
- Withdraw from field operations in line with DFAT direction.
- Contribute to hot debriefs and any lessons management processes undertaken after the deployment.
- Meet financial and reporting requirements and deadlines.

Based on a request from DFAT and upon completion of all tasks, DCG EMR will authorise AUSASSISTPLAN to revert to STANDBY. All stakeholders will be advised through the NSR.

Command, control and coordination arrangements

The MCT is made up of the Mission Coordinator, NEMA LO, and other relevant officers as required. DFAT, through HOM/HOP, will provide mission direction to the MCT to ensure that mission outcomes are met.

The MCT ensures the response meets the Australian Government intent and expectations and that the deployed resource has appropriate tasking and support from the Australian Government in-country.

Coordination and control of a deployed capability is managed by the MCT. The MCT may be based in Canberra or in the affected country.

Command remains with the team leaders of the deployed capabilities.

Personnel deployed under AUSASSISTPLAN

Personnel deployed under AUSASSISTPLAN are considered employees of the Commonwealth for the purposes of subsection 5(6) of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*. This requires deployed persons to act within the guidelines referenced by this Plan.

Personnel will follow the appropriate behavioural standards under the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct and any additional agency standards. This will include adhering to the *DFAT Code of Conduct for Overseas Service*, the *DFAT Child Protection Policy* and the *DFAT Preventing Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment Policy*.

Personnel are to be physically and psychologically fit for deployment. If a member is aware of an issue that may impact their ability to fulfil their role they must make the capability owner aware of the issue.

Refer to the *International Emergency Deployment Guidelines* for details of additional requirements for deployed personnel.

Categorisation of coordination response

As the nature of a crisis changes over time, the Australian Government may shift and adapt coordination arrangements in accordance with the severity and complexity of the crisis. DFAT will consistently monitor and discuss the tiered arrangements and determine what level of coordination is required for a given crisis.

Tier 4 coordination may be triggered by an overseas crisis event where the complexity and severity of impacts and consequences requires the highest level of coordination across the full span of Australian Government interests.

If a crisis requires Tier 4 crisis coordination under the AGCMF, as agreed by relevant agencies, including DFAT, NEMA and PM&C, DFAT will transition Australian Government Coordinating Agency responsibilities to NEMA to facilitate coordination of whole-of-Australian Government preparedness, response and early recovery.

The Lead Minister role will also transition to the Prime Minister who may wish to delegate some, or all, responsibilities to another minister (such as the Minister for Foreign Affairs).

The transition does not displace portfolio-specific responsibilities for responsible agencies and ministers as detailed in the AGCMF. Should a transition occur, DFAT will become a Sector Lead Agency, and will retain, and continue to perform, its existing executive responsibilities as detailed in AUSASSISTPLAN. DFAT will continue to coordinate and support NEMA as the Australian Government Coordinating Agency following the transition.

Deactivation and Post-Incident

Upon completion of all active Task Requests and confirmation of no further requirement of Australian Government overseas assistance, DFAT will request that DCG EMR or delegate approve the deactivation of AUSASSISTPLAN, which will then revert to STANDBY.

NEMA advises appropriate stakeholders via the NSR that AUSASSISTPLAN has been deactivated.

DFAT will collate and record internal and external feedback for all responses undertaken during the activation of AUSASSISTPLAN.

Lessons management processes are a critical element of AUSASSISTPLAN, and ensure that opportunities for continuous improvement of AUSASSISTPLAN and its associated arrangements are identified. Following deactivation, DFAT will conduct an after-action review and a lessons identified activity, and will participate in those after-action activities conducted by other parties. For Tier 3 or Tier 4 crisis coordination, a whole-of-Australian Government evaluation process is required under the AGCMF. The outcomes of the after-action reviews will be distributed across the Australian Government and will inform updates to AUSASSISTPLAN.

6.3. Coordination Arrangements

Key mechanisms under the AGCMF that could be leveraged to respond to overseas incidents include the below.

Crisis Communication and Public Information

To ensure consistent messaging across government during AUSASSISTPLAN activations, DFAT is responsible for coordinating whole-of-Australian Government key messages and public communication.

A crisis communication cell will be established to support consistent public messaging. This cell will prioritise and coordinate messages, including public safety messages and whole-of-Australian Government talking points. Agencies involved in the response will be requested to provide lead communications staff to form part

of the cell. Agencies are responsible for providing timely and accurate information related to their responsibilities to support prompt updates and dissemination of crisis communication products.

The crisis communication cell will engage across governments, and with industry and stakeholders such as media outlets, to ensure information is provided to the public in a timely manner, thereby supporting safety messages and maintenance of public trust in crisis management systems. The crisis communication cell will also identify key government spokespeople and will establish a daily tempo of public information updates.

The crisis communication cell will be responsible for:

- Developing a whole-of-Australian Government crisis communications strategy.
- Authorising appropriate spokespeople.
- Coordinating crisis communications key messages and products with relevant states and territories.
- Determining products, channels and cadence of updates.
- Confirming key spokespeople and tempo of engagement.
- Liaising with media and public information officers across government, and other stakeholders including media outlets as required.
- Anticipating and resolving communication risks, including misinformation and disinformation.
- Incorporating and prioritising coordinated and consistent key messages across government, including public safety messages.
- Adjusting communications as the event, the media cycle and community needs evolve.
- Disseminating crisis communication products across the Australian Government, state and territory governments, industry and other stakeholders as required or deemed relevant.
- Supporting other areas of government that are organising media conferences.
- Supporting PM&C, the Prime Minister's Office and any other ministers on any crisis communication requirements.

Where appropriate, and by agreement with DFAT, the NSR will provide DFAT products to states and territories and implement additional Australian domestic public communications to support jurisdictional-based requirements.

Inter-Departmental Emergency Task Force (IDETF)

The IDETF is the peak crisis coordination forum managing the whole-of-Australian Government response to overseas incidents or crises between Tiers 1 to 3 that impact or threaten to impact Australians or Australia's interests overseas. In a Tier 4 crisis the IDETF continues to coordinate international elements and reports to the NCM.

A Deputy Secretary DFAT (or delegate) chairs the IDETF and a Deputy Secretary PM&C (or delegate) may co-chair the IDETF.

The role of the IDETF can include:

- Maintaining near real-time shared situational awareness, including discussion of current impacts and clarifying priorities.
- Facilitating whole-of-Australian Government international coordination and decision-making.
- Facilitating discussion of a whole-of-Australian Government strategic intent and agreed tasks for the international response.
- Informing a crisis communication strategy, including products and cadence.
- Ensuring national leadership and the maintenance of public trust in government systems.
- Recording, distributing, and tracking agreed actions.

National Coordination Mechanism (NCM)

The NCM can be used for shared situational awareness, national coordination and synchronisation of effort under AUSASSISTPLAN. It may bring together relevant Australian, state, territory and local government

officials, industry, peak bodies, non-government organisations (NGOs) and eminent individuals for coordination, communication and collaboration. NCM participation can be restricted when required, as with the Australian Government NCM (NCM-AUSGOV).

NEMA is the co-chair and secretariat for the NCM. PM&C and DFAT may elect to co-chair the NCM. The NCM may be informed by subsidiary sector-specific coordination forums or crisis coordination nodes.

The role of the NCM can include:

- Facilitating whole-of-Australian Government domestic coordination and decision-making.
- Facilitating discussion of a whole-of-Australian Government domestic strategic intent and agreed-upon tasks.
- Maintaining near real-time shared situational awareness, including discussion of current impacts.
- Clarifying priorities to ensure community safety and stabilise systems.
- Informing crisis communication strategy, including products and cadence.
- Ensuring national leadership and the maintenance of public trust in government systems.
- Directly engaging with industry, NGOs and the private sector in alignment with the strategic intent and agreed tasks.
- Recording, distributing, and tracking agreed actions.

Global Watch Office (GWO)

The Australian Government GWO in DFAT operates 24/7 to support the Australian Government's capacity to monitor and respond to emerging international events and crises that may have consequences for Australians or Australian interests overseas. GWO reporting and analysis provides situational awareness and informs whole-of-Australian Government messaging on evolving events, while also supporting diplomatic posts in the event of a crisis.

Crisis Centre

DFAT may activate the DFAT Crisis Centre in order to support its international crisis Australian Government Coordinating Agency responsibilities. If activated, the Crisis Centre is the operational centre that implements and coordinates whole-of-Australian Government international crisis response.

The Crisis Centre provides situational awareness to all relevant government ministers and agencies and leads coordination of public communications during crisis. It is also the secretariat for the IDETF.

The Crisis Centre can operate 24/7. Australian Government agencies may deploy an LO into the Crisis Centre to facilitate coordination, collaboration and communication.

Australian Government National Situation Room (NSR)

The NSR provides 24/7 all-hazards situational awareness, impact analysis and decision support through its crisis operations, intelligence and planning capabilities. Australian Government agencies, states and territories may be invited to deploy an LO into the NSR to facilitate coordination, collaboration and communication during overseas assistance missions.

Situation reports from the NSR could include predictive analysis, impact assessments, actions being undertaken and activities to be prioritised.

Agencies have a responsibility to keep the NSR informed of relevant information relating to overseas incidents, particularly if it has a domestic remit, so that the NSR can sustain situational awareness across the Australian Government.

6.4. Domestic Liaison Officers

Prior to or during an event, DFAT and the CCT may request a domestic LO from another Australian Government agency and/or jurisdiction to be deployed to the NSR or DFAT Crisis Centre, to assist in the coordination of Australian Government non-financial assistance delivered overseas.

6.5. Inter-Agency Communications

Alternative or overnight communication arrangements will be coordinated by DFAT as the situation demands. All telephone requests are to be confirmed by email as soon as possible.

Ongoing communications between DFAT or the CCT and relevant agencies should be supported by the provision of regular situation reports or by the LO where deployed to the respective jurisdiction.

It is the responsibility of agencies to provide DFAT and the CCT with appropriate contact details and to arrange internal distribution messages. All correspondence related to requests for non-financial assistance is documented by DFAT.

7. Financial Arrangements

DFAT, when requesting action under AUSASSISTPLAN, is responsible for the direct costs incurred.

NEMA will consult with capability owners to identify the most appropriate and cost effective assistance, in line with DFAT requirements.

Agencies are not authorised to incur expenditure on behalf of the Australian Government until the receipt and acceptance of a Task Request from NEMA. Expenditure incurred without a Task Request will not be eligible for reimbursement from the Australian Government. All reimbursable expenditure must be claimed in the appropriate timeframe and in accordance with the current *Australian Government Guide for Financial Reimbursement*.

Response options developed by NEMA will include cost estimates for the deployable capability, including extraordinary Australian Government costs associated with the deployment.

The *Guide for Financial Reimbursement* details the arrangements for making a claim on the Australian Government, following the completion of a tasking under an Australian Government plan. A copy of the *Guide for Financial Reimbursement* will be sent with the formal Task Request. It is the responsibility of the tasked agency to ensure that claims are in line with the Guide.

Financial arrangements for state or territory agencies will be detailed in the formal Task Request sent to them from the NSR. Generally, the purchase of assets and equipment where the life of the item extends beyond the current operation will be ineligible for reimbursement. Any ambiguity relating to costs should be clarified prior to acceptance of a task.

Gifting and Discarding Arrangements

DFAT will authorise items to be gifted or discarded.

The *Guide for Financial Reimbursement* details the process and the arrangements for financial reimbursement of gifted and discarded items.

8. Associated Documents

Agencies should read AUSASSISTPLAN in conjunction with the following documents:

- Australian Government Crisis Management Framework ([Australian Government Crisis Management Framework \(pmc.gov.au\)](https://pmc.gov.au/)).

- Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN) ([Australian Government Disaster Response Plan 2025 \(COMDISPLAN\)](#)).
- *International Emergency Deployment Guidelines*.
- Australian Public Service Code of Conduct ([APS Code of Conduct | Australian Public Service Commission](#)).
- *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* ([Federal Register of Legislation - Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988](#)).
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) ([Federal Register of Legislation - Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#))
- DFAT Code of Conduct for Overseas Service.
- DFAT's Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy ([Preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#)).
- Australia's Humanitarian Policy ([Australia's Humanitarian Policy: Making a difference for people in crisis | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#)).
- DFAT Child Protection Policy ([Child Protection Policy 2017 | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#)).
- *Australian Government Guide for Financial Reimbursement* – (available from NEMA).
- Crisis Appreciation and Strategic Planning (CASP) Guidebook ([CASP Guidebook v.1.4 \(homeaffairs.gov.au\)](#)).
- Exercise in a Box (toolkit available from NEMA).
- Lessons in a Box (toolkit available from NEMA).