



Australian Government  
National Emergency Management Agency

# Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC)

## National Register and Reunite Guidelines





## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians across Australia.

We pay respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, and their deep knowledge of and connection to Country. We celebrate the diversity of First Nations peoples and their wisdom of disaster, recovery and renewal.





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## Preface

On 20 June 2025 the Australian and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) tasked the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to develop *ANZEMC National Register and Reunite Guidelines* (the *Guidelines*) by 30 June 2026.

Based on 10 *National Register and Reunite Principles*, the purpose of these *ANZEMC National Register and Reunite Guidelines* is to enhance our collective ability, including through fostering national consistency and inter-jurisdictional collaboration, to register and reunite people and families during crisis, while reconnecting communities that are experiencing impacts and consequences from severe situations and complex environments.

These *Guidelines* aim, without duplicating existing jurisdictional processes, to foster inter-jurisdictional partnerships and collaboration to reconnect people and their families in difficult circumstances and thereby build community resilience and empowerment through reducing community trauma, supporting psychosocial recovery, and strengthening community cohesion.

These *Guidelines* articulate ANZEMC's commitment to equity and inclusion through reinforcing the importance of access to reunification services for most at risk groups, including people with injuries, disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, First Nations, and those in remote and regional areas. Our ANZEMC commitment aligns with an operational focus on accessibility and inclusion for all Australians.

Adaption of these *Guidelines* are not mandatory. Each State and Territory may select which elements of these *Guidelines* they choose to implement. These *Guidelines* represent an ANZEMC-agreed voluntary best-practice set of *National Register and Reunite Principles*.

Disasters can separate families and impact an individual's ability to maintain contact with support networks. Research shows that separation from family members during disaster events contributes to increased stress during these periods. It is imperative that emergency management processes, at both the national and jurisdictional level, recognise the importance of reunification of individuals separated by disaster, and therefore provide a means for people to reunite.

These *Guidelines* acknowledge that states and territories are jurisdictional leaders in registering and reuniting their own communities. These *Guidelines* are not prescriptive and are designed to assist states and territories to determine their own appropriate community crisis decision-making needs and choose appropriate mechanisms to respond to those needs while optimising cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

The continuous improvement of register reunite capabilities should include cross-border exercising and lessons management processes to support best practice use and continuous improvement of systems. As part of the continuous improvement cycle of the *ANZEMC National Register and Reunite Guidelines* will undergo a three yearly, 36-month, review process by ANZEMC to update the guidelines based on community input and past disaster learnings.

Reviewing the *Guidelines* emphasises the importance of technology integration, inter-agency collaboration, and community engagement in improving register and reunification outcomes. The three yearly, 36-month, review process will draw on contemporary events to refine the *Guidelines* and ensure the *Guidelines* remain responsive to evolving needs and best practices.

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# References

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Ref	Document and Links
A	<a href="#">AIDR Evacuation Planning Resources</a>
B	<a href="#">Australian Crime Commission Regulations 2018 (Cwlth) (Schedule 2)</a>
C	<a href="#">Australian Emergency Management Arrangements Handbook (AIDR, 2023)</a>
D	<a href="#">Australian Government Crisis Management Framework September 2024</a>
E	<a href="#">Australian Government Language Services Guidelines</a>
F	<a href="#">Australian Government Plan for the Reception of Australian Citizens and Approved Foreign Nationals Evacuated from Overseas 2017 (AUSRECEPLAN)</a>
G	<a href="#">Australian Government Response Plan for Overseas Mass Casualty Incidents. 2025 (OSMASSCASPLAN)</a>
H	<a href="#">Australian Red Cross Evacuation Centre Field Guide</a>
I	<a href="#">Australian Red Cross, Register.Find.Reunite</a>
J	<a href="#">Cyber Security Act 2024</a>
K	<a href="#">Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022</a>
L	<a href="#">Detention or death of a foreign national in Australia   Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</a>
M	<a href="#">Disaster Management Act 2003 (Qld)</a>
N	<a href="#">Disaster Ready Fund Act 2019 (Cth)</a>
O	<a href="#">Disaster Victim Identification (DVI)</a>
P	<a href="#">Emergencies Act 2004 (ACT)</a>
Q	<a href="#">Emergency Management Act 2013 (NT)</a>
R	<a href="#">Emergency Management Act 2004 (SA)</a>
S	<a href="#">Emergency Management Act 2006 (Tas)</a>
T	<a href="#">Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA)</a>
U	<a href="#">Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)</a>
V	<a href="#">Experiences of individuals with disabilities sheltering during natural disasters: an integrative review</a>
W	<a href="#">Family and domestic violence - Services Australia</a>
X	<a href="#">Homelessness - Housing - Services Australia</a>
Y	<a href="#">Interim Queensland State Disaster Management Plan</a>
Z	<a href="#">National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters</a>
AA	<a href="#">National COVID-19 Privacy Principles</a>
BB	<a href="#">National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework</a>
CC	<a href="#">New South Wales Emergency Management Community Engagement Strategy</a>
DD	<a href="#">New South Wales Evacuation Management Guidelines</a>
EE	<a href="#">New South Wales State Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN)</a>
FF	<a href="#">Principles of Communication in Disaster and Emergency, Emergency Media and Public Affairs</a>
GG	<a href="#">Privacy Act 1988</a>
HH	<a href="#">Privacy (Persons Reported as Missing) Rule 2024</a>
II	<a href="#">Protocol Guidelines   Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</a>



Ref	Document and Links
JJ	<a href="#">State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 (NSW)</a>
KK	<a href="#">Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements</a>
LL	<a href="#">Victorian Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for People Most at Risk</a>
MM	<a href="#">Victoria State Emergency Management Plan</a>
NN	<a href="#">WA Local Government Emergency Management Guidelines</a>
OO	<a href="#">Western Australia State Emergency Management Plan</a>



# Introduction

Registration and reunification of communities in emergencies is a deeply human process, and the end goal is always the same: bringing loved ones back together.

Bringing people back together reduces trauma, restores emotional balance, and rebuilds trust. Reunification is not simply connection. Reunification is about healing, resilience, and stronger communities.

Based on 10 *National Register and Reunite Principles*, the purpose of these *ANZEMC National Register and Reunite Guidelines* is to enhance our collective ability, including through fostering national consistency and inter-jurisdictional collaboration, to register and reunite people and families during crisis, while reconnecting communities that are experiencing impacts and consequences from severe situations and complex environments.

Australia's threat and risk environment is evolving, resulting in new hazards with increased intensity and duration. This includes an increase in consecutive, concurrent and compounding hazard events, a changing climatic environment, increased reliance on technology and connectivity, combined with an evolving national security environment.

While state and territory governments have primary responsibility for register and reunite activities within their jurisdictions, various elements of the Australian Government, including Services Australia, Australian Federal Police and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), provide support to the states and territories, and Australian communities.

As jurisdictions have differing approaches to the movement of people in emergencies, the *ANZEMC Register and Reunite Guidelines* (the *Guidelines*) support and recognise jurisdictional diversity. The *Guidelines* recognise that States and Territories have different legislative frameworks, emergency management structures, and community profiles.

For these *Guidelines*, Jurisdictions may consider applying relevant Commonwealth, state and territory frameworks, policies, and legislation, including References A ~ OO, supporting a harmonised national approach to registration and reunification of people and communities.

As noted in the *Preface*, disasters impact an individual's ability to communicate with support networks, with research showing that separation from family members during disaster events is a contributing factor to increased stress during these periods.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore imperative that emergency management processes, at both the national and jurisdictional level, recognise the importance of reunification of individuals separated by disaster, and therefore provide a means for people to reunite.

Register is defined as the recording of information about a person separated from family and loved ones due to an emergency. Registration enables individuals to notify others that they are safe.<sup>2</sup>

Reunite is defined as the process of reconnecting family and loved ones separated by an emergency, typically through a matching process that enables the sharing of contact details with consent.<sup>3</sup>

Family is defined under the Privacy (Persons Reported as Missing) Rule 2024, Reference HH.

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<sup>1</sup> [Separation and reunification: The importance of understanding the psychosocial consequences, 2016](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Australian Disaster Resilience Glossary  
https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/glossary/?wordOfTheDayId=&keywords=register&alpha=&page=1&results=50&order=AZ](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/glossary/?wordOfTheDayId=&keywords=register&alpha=&page=1&results=50&order=AZ)  
with edits from Queensland included during the November 2025 ANZEMC review of these *Guidelines*.

<sup>3</sup> [Australian Disaster Resilience Glossary  
https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/glossary/?wordOfTheDayId=&keywords=reunite&alpha=&page=1&results=50&order=AZ](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/glossary/?wordOfTheDayId=&keywords=reunite&alpha=&page=1&results=50&order=AZ)  
with edits from Queensland included during the November 2025 ANZEMC review of these *Guidelines*.



## Purpose

Based on 10 *National Register and Reunite Principles*, the purpose of these *ANZEMC National Register and Reunite Guidelines* is to enhance our collective ability, including through fostering national consistency and inter-jurisdictional collaboration, to register and reunite people and families during crisis, while reconnecting communities that are experiencing impacts and consequences from severe situations and complex environments.

The *Guidelines* outline considerations for jurisdictions and associated organisations, when establishing capabilities and/or systems activated during periods of disasters. The *Guidelines* articulate 10 principles for registering and reuniting individuals during disasters within Australia, which balance the considerations of privacy, data sharing, messaging, information technology systems, and a coordinated approach.

Adaption of these *Guidelines* are not mandatory. Each State and Territory may select which elements of these *Guidelines* they choose to implement. These *Guidelines* represent an ANZEMC-agreed voluntary best-practice set of *National Register and Reunite Principles*.

The *Guidelines* are primarily designed to support reporting requirements, acting to enable the oversight mechanisms for state and territory register and reunite activities.

The *Guidelines* apply relevant Commonwealth, state and territory frameworks, policies, and legislation, including References A ~ OO.

Out of scope of these guidelines is deceased persons information notifications. This information is articulated in policing protocols across Australia under schedule 2 of the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002* for systems that hold national policing information, specifically the National Missing Persons and Victim System.

## National Register and Reunite Principles

The *ANZEMC Register and Reunite Guidelines* provide national principles to guide states and territories for registering and reconnecting people during emergencies. These principles also serve as a practical checklist for jurisdictions.

Adaption of these *Guidelines* are not mandatory. Each State and Territory may select which elements of these *Guidelines* they choose to implement. These *Guidelines* represent an ANZEMC-agreed voluntary best-practice set of *National Register and Reunite Principles*.

The principles of the *ANZEMC Register and Reunite Guidelines* are:

1. Human-Centred
2. Prevention of Separation
3. Integrated Emergency Management
4. Cross-Border Coordination
5. Safety, Privacy & Data Protection
6. Interagency Coordination
7. Fast, Flexible Reunification
8. Clear Public Communication
9. Continuous Improvement
10. Legal Alignment



# Application of National Register and Reunite Principles

## 1. Human-Centred

A human-centred approach, supported by police-led data-matching for reunification, to the design and delivery of all register and reunite capabilities. These capabilities should consider:

- a. Safety checks, and equity and inclusion, to identify and mitigate risks such as domestic violence, child protection concerns, or acute mental health crises. Collaborate with police, child protection, and mental health services to ensure safe reunification pathways.
- b. Empower, train and support Local Government, volunteers, community leaders, and grassroots organisations to assist in identifying and reconnecting separated families. For example, during the [Black Summer bushfires](#), local community centres and surf lifesaving clubs in NSW and Victoria acted as informal hubs for reunification, with Local Government and volunteers helping people locate loved ones and share information.
- c. Recognise that hospitals and law enforcement facilities can also become critical contact points and key reunification hubs. Jurisdictions can plan to enable registration and tracing at these locations while ensuring interagency protocols allow safe data sharing and privacy protection.
- d. Ensure systems are multilingual, mobile-friendly, and usable by people of all ages and abilities, including those with low digital or technology literacy, injuries or disabilities.
- e. Design interfaces and processes that are intuitive, low-friction, and easily understood, especially during high-stress situations. For example, after [the Kangaroo Island Bushfires](#), it was identified that re-telling a story can be distressing.
- f. Use pre-filled forms, voice-assisted options, and offline registration methods, as backup redundancy methods, where possible.
- g. Deploy trained staff to assist with both physical reunions (e.g., transport to evacuation and relief centres) and remote connections (e.g., calls, video chats, messaging). For example, after [Cyclone Debbie 2017](#), Queensland communities used local libraries and schools as safe spaces for digital reunification, supported by Local Government staff and volunteers.
- h. Provide mental health professionals, including those with cultural and linguistic expertise, to provide early intervention and inclusive, accessible culturally appropriate care. For example, in Victoria, [Cohealth](#) and other community health organisations partnered with emergency services to provide inclusive, accessible and culturally safe mental health [support during COVID-19 lockdowns and bushfire recovery](#).
- i. Offer medical and psychological first aid, translation services, and social work support at registration and reunification points. Ensure these services are confidential, accessible, and free of stigma.

Provide inclusive multilingual, inclusive, accessible, and culturally responsive online digital interfaces, interpreters and offline-paper-based options for registration. Options include paper-based Personal Information Forms (PIFs) for use when digital systems and technology are unavailable.



## 2. Prevention of Separation

Preventing separation of family members and loved ones, in the first instance, reduces trauma, resource strain and logistical complexity during emergencies. To prevent separation, employ a mix of planning, technology, and public communication to help prevent families from becoming separated during natural disasters. While it's not always possible to avoid separation entirely—especially in fast-moving or large-scale emergencies—the following may be considered:

- a. **Emergency Plans & Drills:** Families are encouraged to create emergency plans, including designating meeting points, rehearsing contact systems and practicing backup communication methods. Governments often run public awareness campaigns to promote available plans. For example, the Get Ready Queensland campaign provides templates and resources for families to create tailored emergency plans. Local councils often support these efforts with community workshops and school-based programs.
- b. **Community Education & Empowerment:** Schools, workplaces, and local councils may hold drills, distribute multilingual materials and host community forums on how to stay together and communicate during a crisis. For example, Tasmania's State Emergency Service (SES) partners with schools to run interactive disaster simulations, helping children understand how to stay safe and connected.
- c. **Mobile Alerts & Communication Networks:** Employing alert systems and communication networks to provide information to communities, including Emergency Alert, human relationships, traditional media, social media, volunteer organisations, and local government messaging. For example, during the 2020 East Gippsland fires, coordinated alerts across ABC Radio, VicEmergency app, and community Facebook groups helped residents stay informed and avoid separation.

## 3. Integrated Emergency Management

Registration and Reunification processes and systems should form part of the broader emergency management system. This process should include a collaborative approach to enhance capabilities, bring together all stakeholders and systems, including emergency services (police, fire, SES), local councils, state and territory governments, community volunteer organisations, technology providers and data specialists, to effectively and safely manage the registration and reunification of communities during times of crisis.

For example, the [Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub](#) promotes cross-sector collaboration by sharing best practices, training resources, and case studies to define capabilities across jurisdictions. When [87 homes were destroyed in the Kangaroo Island Bushfires](#), in 2019-2020, a disaster relief centre was established to act as a central hub for information and support services. Local Government, community, volunteers and non-government organisations provided food, shelter and support for displaced and impacted residents and visitors.

Integrated emergency management should also include integration and interoperability with existing ICT systems – including emergency services databases, health and welfare systems, local government platforms, and national identity and communication networks – wherever possible, to maximise efficiency.

Engaging stakeholders requires systems that are inclusive, fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate and accessible to most at risk populations, for example in Northern Territory remote communities, emergency management planning includes consultation with Aboriginal elders to ensure culturally safe reunification practices and communication strategies.



## 4. Cross-Border Coordination

Register and reunite capabilities should enhance cooperation and coordination, and redundancy, between different jurisdictions to support a unified approach to community empowerment, safety and wellbeing. Where possible, systems should be able to support sharing cross-border information, data, governance best practice, and communications to enhance cross-border coordination. A unified approach enhances responsiveness, reduces duplication, and ensures that displaced individuals receive timely support regardless of location.

For example, during the [2019–2020 Black Summer bushfires](#), communities across New South Wales and Victoria were impacted simultaneously. Cross-border coordination between emergency services enabled shared evacuation and relief centres, mutual aid, and unified messaging.

Cross-border coordination, based on clear governance frameworks and privacy protections with consent protocols, between local, state, and federal agencies is essential to:

- a. Share real-time information and data on displaced individuals (for example: full name; date of birth; place of birth; unique identifier (driver's licence, passport number, registration number, etc.); last known address; contact details; and, any caveats, flags or warnings related to release of the information to third parties).
- b. Align emergency protocols and reunification procedures.
- c. Ensure continuity of care and services across borders.
- d. Enable inclusive, accessible, culturally and linguistically appropriate messaging.

## 5. Safety, Privacy & Data Protection

To maintain trust and the voluntary nature of reunifications, all capabilities must assure individual safety, privacy and data protection, through the:

- a. Collecting only specific and essential data (e.g., name, contact info, last known location).
- b. Enabling *opting in* and informed consent by providing the ability for individuals to update, remove or withhold information as they see fit.
- c. Protecting identities and locations of most at risk people (e.g., family and domestic violence victim-survivors, children, first nations peoples, elderly, and people living with injury or disability).
- d. Assessing if de-identified statistical data is released to the wider community including community recovery hubs, relief centres, evacuation centres and community sites for administrative purposes.

The *National COVID-19 Privacy Principles* (Reference AA), highlight the importance of public trust and confidence in seeking assurance that their personal information is protected.

Register reunite capabilities must comply with the *Privacy Act 1998* and *Privacy (Persons Reported as Missing) Rule 2024* under the (References GG & HH) and all relevant jurisdictional privacy legislation and cybersecurity protocols while ensuring options for cross-board data and information sharing.



## 6. Interagency Coordination

Ensure a unified and effective response during emergencies to enable state and territory interagency coordination, particularly in supporting family tracing and reunification efforts. This includes:

- a. Development of shared protocols between emergency services, non-government and not-for-profit organisations, state/territory governments, Local Governments, and the empowerment of community groups
- b. Use of unified identifiers (e.g., barcode wristbands or QR codes), linked to a central database, across agencies. For example, following the Black Saturday bushfires, on 07 February 2009, [Australian Federal Police led Disaster Victim Identification \(DVI\) teams](#) assisted by searching for victims and providing details and whereabouts of people affected by the fires.
- c. Identification of leadership hierarchies, clear governance structures, systems employed, identified roles and clear responsibilities to avoid duplication and confusion.
- d. Create interagency coordination cells with representatives from each stakeholder group.

## 7. Fast, Flexible Reunification

To ensure rapid, adaptable and scalable reunification during emergencies, communities should nurture multi-channel communication, location-aware technologies, and community-based, and community-empowered contact points. These systems must be resilient, inclusive, and interoperable across jurisdictions:

- a. Provide multiple ways for individuals to self-notify loved ones and authorities that they are safe, including via friends, Local Government, community services, SMS, satellite devices, or public kiosks.
- b. Facilitate connections with separated loved ones via call centres, messaging platforms or designated "reunion zones" such as community evacuation and relief centres.
- c. Contact Triple Zero, police, emergency services and not-for-profit call centres during major disasters to assist with tracing and reunification.

## 8. Clear Public Communication

Effective public communication, ensuring register and reunite information is included in public information warnings and alerts, is essential to support reunification efforts during emergencies. Communication must be timely, inclusive, and from a trusted source (e.g., local government, emergency services, jurisdiction, ABC radio, and official signage), guiding people to register, locate loved ones, and access support services. Methods of register and reunite communication include:

- a. Use pre-scripted, and templated for rapid deployment, multilingual, priority language, based on community demographics, media alerts to guide people to register and assist reunification. For example, the [Multilingual Inclusive Emergency Alerts \(MIEA\)](#) project in Albury-Wodonga is developing multilingual templates for emergency alerts, targeting communities such as Indian, Nepali, and Congolese groups.
- b. Employ radio, TV, social media (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp), town signage and digital billboards in evacuation zones for visibility. For example, in New South Wales, [Byron Shire Council's](#) emergency signage and radio guides help grassroots groups communicate effectively during disasters.
- c. Create public trust and transparency through consistent and easily understood messaging by employing credible spokespersons and empowered community leaders to provide regular updates, even when information is limited. Avoid conflicting messages across agencies. For example, Emergency Media and Public [Affairs' Principles of Communication in Disaster and Emergency](#) emphasise community-focused messaging and strategic media partnerships to foster trust.

## 9. Continuous Improvement

The continuous improvement of register reunite capabilities should include cross-border exercising, rehearsals and lessons management processes to support best practice use and continuous improvement of systems.



As part of the continuous improvement cycle of the *ANZEMC National Register Reunite Guidelines* will undergo a three yearly, 36-month, review process by ANZEMC to update the guidelines. This review will incorporate community input, feedback from emergency management agencies, and learnings from contemporary disaster events.

Reviewing the *ANZEMC National Register Reunite Guidelines* will emphasise the importance of technology integration, inter-agency collaboration, and community engagement in improving register and reunification outcomes. The three yearly, 36-month, review process will draw on case studies to refine the *Guidelines* and ensure the *Guidelines* remain responsive to evolving needs and best practices.

## 10. Legal Alignment

Jurisdictions consider applying relevant Commonwealth, state and territory frameworks, policies, and legislation, including References A ~ OO to support an effective harmonised national approach.

# Conclusion

Based on 10 *National Register and Reunite Principles*, the purpose of these *ANZEMC National Register and Reunite Guidelines* is to enhance our collective ability, including through fostering national consistency and inter-jurisdictional collaboration, to register and reunite people and families during crisis, while reconnecting communities that are experiencing impacts and consequences from severe situations and complex environments.

By aligning with relevant legislative frameworks and integrating with broader emergency management arrangements, these *Guidelines* ensure that registration and reunification processes are both operationally effective and sensitive to the diverse needs of affected communities. The principles outlined herein—ranging from technology digital infrastructure and privacy protection to interagency coordination and continuous improvement—provide a robust foundation for jurisdictions to enhance preparedness, response, and recovery outcomes.

Adaption of these *Guidelines* are not mandatory. Each State and Territory may select which elements of these *Guidelines* they choose to implement. These *Guidelines* represent an ANZEMC-agreed voluntary best-practice set of *National Register and Reunite Principles*.

These *Guidelines* reflects a shared commitment across all levels of government to uphold the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of individuals impacted by disaster. Through consistent application and regular review, these *Guidelines* will continue to evolve in response to emerging challenges, ensuring that Australia remains equipped to reconnect families and communities when it matters most.



Australian Government

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