



Australian Government

**Attorney-General's Department
Emergency Management Australia**

NATCATDISPLAN

NATIONAL CATASTROPHIC NATURAL DISASTER PLAN

Version 1-0 – September 2010

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AUTHORITY

The National Catastrophic Natural Disaster Plan (NATCATDISPLAN) was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 12 July, 2010.

It functions as a contingency plan for the provision of coordinated support by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments to a State(s)¹ where it's Government and/or its capability to manage the response to and recovery from a catastrophic natural disaster has been significantly incapacitated.

The plan is prepared and maintained by Emergency Management Australia (AGD EMA), a division of the Attorney-General's Department (AGD).

¹ For the purposes of this document, the term 'State' includes the Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, Island and Offshore Territories.

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Commonwealth Government Departments & Agencies

Agriculture, Fisheries &
Forestry
Attorney-General's

Australian Customs and
Border Protection Service

Australian Federal Police

Australian Maritime Safety
Authority

Broadband,
Communications and the
Digital Economy

Defence

Families, Housing,
Community Services and
Indigenous Affairs

Finance & Deregulation

Foreign Affairs & Trade

Health & Ageing

Human Services
Centrelink
Medicare Australia
CRS Australia
Child Support Agency

Immigration & Citizenship

Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and
Local Government
Innovation, Industry,
Science & Resources

Prime Minister & Cabinet

NATCATDISPLAN

States and Territories

Australian Capital Territory	Commissioner, Emergency Services Agency Senior Director, Security and Emergency Management Branch State Recovery Coordinator
New South Wales	Chair, State Emergency Management Committee Director General, Department of Premier and Cabinet Emergency Management NSW State Emergency Operations Controller State Emergency Recovery Controller
Northern Territory	Chair, Counter Disaster Council Executive Officer, Counter Disaster Council State Recovery Coordinator
Queensland	Chair, State Disaster Management Group Director, Disaster Management Executive Officer, State Disaster Management Group State Disaster Coordination Centre State Recovery Coordinator
South Australia	Chair, State Emergency Management Committee Executive Officer, State Emergency Management Committee State Coordinator State Recovery Coordinator
Tasmania	State Controller (Chair State Emergency Management Committee) State Recovery Coordinator
Victoria	Chair, Emergency Management Council Executive Officer, Emergency Management Council State Emergency Response Coordinator State Recovery Coordinator
Western Australia	Chair, Recovery Services Sub-Committee Chair, State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) Director, Emergency Management WA Executive Officer, SEMC

CERTIFICATE OF AMENDMENT

Emergency Management Australia, a division of the Attorney-General's Department, will review NATCATDISPLAN on a regular basis on behalf of COAG. Suggestions for amendments to the plan can be forwarded at any time to:

Director General, Emergency Management Australia
Attorney-General's Department
3-5 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600
(Attention: Operations Planning and Management Section, Crisis Support Branch)

Phone: 1300 00 4704
Facsimile: (02) 6273 1478
E-mail: ema.planning@ag.gov.au

Entry of amendments in this copy of NATCATDISPLAN is to be noted in the columns below.

Version/Amendment No.	Issue Date	Amendment Detail
1-0	23 July, 2010	First issue

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGD	Attorney-General's Department
AGD EMA	AGD Emergency Management Australia
NATCATDISPLAN	National Catastrophic Natural Disaster Plan

GLOSSARY

State	For the purposes of this document, the term 'State' includes the Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, Island and Offshore Territories.
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INTRODUCTION

1. While Australia has faced few natural disasters that would be considered catastrophic the need to be prepared for such events is recognised. Existing emergency management arrangements in Australia have generally served the community well. However, as has been learnt from recent international disasters, extant arrangements require enhancement for catastrophic events to ensure the response and recovery efforts provide the maximum good for the maximum number of people.

DEFINITION

2. A catastrophic natural disaster is an extreme hazard event that affects one or more communities, resulting in widespread, devastating, economic, health, social and environmental consequences, and that exceeds the capability of existing State or Commonwealth Government emergency and disaster management arrangements. An event could be of sudden impact or sustained impact over an extended timeframe.

3. Defining features of a catastrophic natural disaster are that it will:

- Not be possible to immediately meet the needs of those requiring assistance within the existing capability of an individual State or nationally, and
- Take a considerable time from which to recover, and
- The affected Executive Government is temporarily incapacitated or requests urgent assistance.

4. For the purposes of the *Model Arrangements for Leadership in Events of National Consequence* a 'catastrophic natural disaster' is an event of 'national consequence'.

AIM

5. The aim of this plan is to describe the national coordination arrangements for supporting States and the Commonwealth Government in responding to and recovering from catastrophic natural disasters in Australia. The plan is consistent with:

- *Model Arrangements for Leadership during Emergencies of National Consequence*
- *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements*

SCOPE

6. This plan:
- applies where a catastrophic natural disaster (as defined above):
 - overwhelms the emergency management capability of a State(s) or the Commonwealth Government; and
 - removes the ability of the affected government(s) to carry out its emergency management responsibilities in the response to and/or recovery from the disaster;
 - applies to a catastrophic natural disaster for which no national plans exist; and
 - covers strategic national coordination arrangements to support existing plans and arrangements.

PRINCIPLES

7. The following principles apply in relation to the application of this plan:
- States have primary responsibility for the management of emergencies within their jurisdictions and are responsible for determining their own internal coordination mechanisms.
 - States retain overall responsibility for executive decision making and State legislation remains in place at all times.
 - Any support action will be at the request of and in support of the legitimate Commonwealth Government or State authority.
 - As far as possible existing plans and arrangements will continue to apply in a catastrophic natural disaster.
 - When a catastrophic natural disaster overwhelms and/or removes the ability of the Commonwealth Government or a State(s) to manage the response to and/or recovery from the disaster, other Australian governments will organise to provide and/or co-ordinate assistance, upon request from the affected jurisdiction (s).

CONCEPT

8. The great majority of emergencies, including catastrophic disasters, can be managed under existing plans and arrangements. The NATCATDISPLAN specifically provides for those events where the ability of a government to carry out its emergency management responsibilities is significantly affected either through insufficient resources due to the size of the disaster or the incapacity of the Executive.

9. The operation of the Plan is consistent with the *Model Arrangements for Leadership during Emergencies of National Consequence* endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 3 July 2008 (see Annex A).

10. Recognising that the law of the affected government(s) remain in place, the NATCATDISPLAN provides for the collaboration of all other governments to support the affected jurisdiction(s) by:

- Supporting the reconstitution or rebuilding the capacity of the Executive Government(s) where it has been incapacitated;
- Coordinating national support in the response to, and recovery from the emergency including in relation to policy, strategy and public messaging, in support of an affected jurisdiction;
- Coordinate the sourcing and delivery of support as requested by the affected jurisdiction(s);
- Coordinating international, jurisdictional and other offers of assistance;
- Assisting the development of long term recovery mechanisms recognising the role of local governments and the community in managing their own recovery and providing physical and financial assistance to aid the reconstruction and broader recovery efforts; and
- Coordination of public information in line with the *Model Arrangements for Leadership during Emergencies of National Consequence* and existing arrangements to support the National Crisis Committee.

Continuity of Government

11. The Commonwealth and States have plans for continuity of government. To minimise the disruption to the Executive Government, all continuity of government arrangements should provide necessary succession planning.

Inter-Jurisdictional Assistance

12. To give effect to the cooperative intentions of the Plan, all governments will need to develop inter-governmental or cross border arrangements in relation to the mechanisms for providing public officials, government employees and government services to assist the affected jurisdiction(s).

ACTIVATION

13. Activation of NATCATDISPLAN will occur:
- Upon agreement between the Prime Minister and the First Minister(s) of the affected jurisdiction(s), or their representative(s); or
 - At the direction of the Prime Minister, or most senior elected Commonwealth Government representative or public official, in instances where no legitimate representative of the Executive Government can be readily contacted due to the impact of a catastrophic natural disaster and where it appears to be clear that significant assistance to the jurisdiction is required. This will occur in consultation with the non-affected jurisdictions and the most senior public official able to be immediately contacted in the affected jurisdiction.
14. Deactivation of NATCATDISPLAN will occur at the request of the First Minister(s) of the affected jurisdiction(s).
15. Advice of the activation of NATCATDISPLAN will be issued to all States by the Attorney-General's Department, Emergency Management Australia.

COORDINATION

16. Upon activation of the Plan, the Prime Minister and the affected First Minister(s), or most senior elected Government representative or most senior public official (if clause 13 applies), will consult to coordinate support to the response to, and recovery from the catastrophic natural disaster including in relation to policy, strategy and public messaging, in support of the affected State(s).

National Crisis Committee

17. Upon activation of the Plan the National Crisis Committee (NCC), chaired by the National Security Adviser, will be convened and will support the Prime Minister and First Ministers in the coordination of strategic support to the affected jurisdiction(s) to assist in the response to and recovery from a catastrophic natural disaster by:

- providing options and advice to the Prime Minister and First Ministers in relation to policy, strategy and public messaging to coordinate national response and recovery assistance to the affected jurisdiction(s);
- supporting the sharing of information and situational awareness between jurisdictions;
- sourcing and delivery of support requested by the affected State(s);
- providing advice on the prioritisation of potentially limited resources; and

- providing the linkage between State and Commonwealth Government coordination mechanisms.

18. The NCC will comprise representatives from the Prime Minister's and First Ministers' departments with involvement from relevant members of other federal and jurisdictional agencies as appropriate to the event.

Appointment of Coordinator

19. Where the Executive Government of a State has been incapacitated or severely affected as a result of a catastrophic natural disaster, by agreement between the Prime Minister and First Minister(s) of the affected governments(s), or their legitimate representative(s), a coordinator may be appointed to support the jurisdiction's administration to ensure that response and recovery needs are met.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Commonwealth Government

20. Responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government are as follows:

- If required, facilitate and coordinate restoration of the Executive Government of the affected State(s) in accordance with the State's continuity of government arrangements.
- In consultation with the affected State(s) coordinate Commonwealth Government assistance.
- If requested, in consultation with the affected State(s) coordinate international, interstate and other offers of assistance;
- Convene the National Crisis Committee to support the Prime Minister and First Ministers in the strategic coordination of the national response to a catastrophic natural disaster.
- If required and by agreement with First Ministers or other legitimate representatives from the affected State(s) appoint a coordinator to support the jurisdiction's administration to ensure that the response and recovery needs of the affected State(s) are met.
- Ensure that continuity of government arrangements consider necessary succession planning to ensure as far as possible the continuity of the Executive Government of the Commonwealth.
- Develop inter-governmental or cross-border arrangements in relation to the mechanisms for providing public officials, government employees and government services to assist the affected jurisdiction(s) in accordance with the concept of this plan;

State Governments

21. State Governments will:

- In consultation with the affected jurisdiction(s), including the Commonwealth Government, provide support to the affected government(s) to:
 - Support the response to and recovery from the catastrophic natural disaster including in relation to policy, strategy and public messaging;
 - If necessary assist in the reconstitution of the Executive Government and authority of the affected State(s); and
 - Assist in the development of long term recovery mechanisms;
- Ensure that continuity of government arrangements consider necessary succession planning to ensure as far as possible the continuation of Executive Government in the State.; and
- Develop inter-governmental or cross-border arrangements in relation to the mechanisms for providing public officials, government employees and government services to assist the affected jurisdiction(s) in accordance with the concept of this plan.

Attachments:

1. Model Arrangements for Leadership during Emergencies of National Consequence

ATTACHMENT 1

**MODEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR LEADERSHIP
DURING EMERGENCIES OF NATIONAL CONSEQUENCE**

1 Introduction

On 3 July 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the *Model Arrangements for Leadership during Emergencies of National Consequence* ('the Arrangements').

These Arrangements represent how Australian governments would work together to coordinate the response to, and recovery from, emergencies of national consequence. These are defined, for the purposes of these Arrangements, as emergencies that require consideration of national level policy, strategy and public messaging or inter-jurisdictional assistance, where such assistance is not covered by existing arrangements.

In endorsing these Arrangements, leaders agreed that they should replace the National Emergency Protocol of February 2006.

2 Purpose

The Arrangements are designed to guide national efforts in coordinating the response to, and recovery from, emergencies of national consequence. They provide clarity about how Australian governments would work together to coordinate national response and recovery assistance to an affected State or Territory.

In endorsing these Arrangements, leaders agreed that they are to be used:

- to inform the response to, or recovery from, emergencies of national consequence for which no national plans currently exist;
- to inform the development of any new national plans for responding to, or recovering from, emergencies of national consequence; and
- as guidance in any revision of existing plans for responding to, or recovering from, emergencies of national consequence.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

In adopting the Arrangements, leaders acknowledged the following roles and responsibilities:

- States and Territories have primary responsibility for the management of emergencies within their jurisdictions;
- when emergencies occur, the Commonwealth Government provides certain forms of physical and financial assistance to States and Territories, when requested to do so and may also provide financial and other assistance to individuals directly affected by an emergency;
- the Commonwealth Government also has specific responsibilities in relation to national security and defence, border control, aviation and maritime transport, quarantine, astronomical and meteorological observations, enforcement of Commonwealth legislation, and international relations; and
- each jurisdiction is responsible for determining its own internal coordination mechanisms to give effect to these Arrangements.

4. Coordination Arrangements

As depicted in the attached diagram, these Arrangements provide that, in the event of an emergency of national consequence:

- the Prime Minister and the affected First Minister(s) will consult as necessary to coordinate the response to, and recovery, from the emergency including in relation to policy, strategy and public messaging, in support of an affected State or Territory;
- the Prime Minister and the affected First Minister(s) will consult on, and deliver the key leadership messages to be conveyed to the public;
- there will be communication, as appropriate, with all other States and Territories to enable the sharing of key information and public messages across jurisdictions; and
- all jurisdictions will coordinate the development of public messages through established public information coordination arrangements.

Updated contact arrangements will be maintained to ensure the efficient and effective communications between leaders in the event of an emergency of national consequence.

5. Review

These Arrangements will be reviewed by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, in consultation with the Australian Local Government Association, after three years, or earlier as agreed.

The Arrangements may be amended by agreement in writing between the parties at any time.

Model Arrangements for Leadership During Emergencies of National Consequence

