

Senate Estimates Statement | February 2026

Coordinator-General Brendan Moon

Thank you, Chair and Committee, for the opportunity to make a statement.

At its core, the National Emergency Management Agency exists to support people when they need it most. Over recent months, Australians across multiple states and territories have faced an exceptionally challenging period of compounding disasters.

Throughout this time, NEMA's priority has remained ensuring that individuals, families, and communities receive timely support and that the Australian Government's response remains coordinated, consistent, and complementary with our state and territory partners.

Ongoing devastating bushfire conditions have sadly claimed a life, destroyed more than 400 homes, hundreds of structures, and caused significant agricultural and livestock losses in the tens of thousands. Support has been activated in 24 local government areas in Victoria and interstate, and international firefighting resources have been deployed.

Across other parts of the country, conditions have been less severe, but demanded continued attention, particularly with bouts of flash flooding and dry lightning across different locations. Nationally, prolonged extreme heatwave has tested our communities. With February traditionally the highest bushfire risk month, being prepared and remaining vigilant will be key.

Last month, Queensland was struck by ex-Tropical Cyclone Koji, bringing destructive winds, intense rainfall, and flooding to already saturated

regions from severe weather at the end of 2025. Livestock losses are reported to be close to 100,000, with extensive damage to fencing and roads, and major disruption for hundreds of thousands of people. Assistance has been activated to support people in more than 46 local government areas, with many of these same communities impacted by record-breaking rainfall in 2019, underscoring the compounding nature of modern disasters.

From my time visiting disaster-impacted areas, from Queensland's Clermont to Cloncurry, to Castlemaine and Harcourt in Victoria, the constant I have observed is the extraordinary dedication of everyday Australians, firefighters, emergency services personnel, volunteers, defence, community organisations, and locally embedded staff from NEMA, who have worked, and continue to work tirelessly, to protect lives and support those affected.

While NEMA remains focussed on supporting Australians during crises, the development of our systems and governance processes have not kept pace with our external activities. Recent Senate Estimates proceedings highlighted shortcomings in our payroll arrangements, and it is appropriate that these matters were brought to light.

Since December, the agency has undertaken a review of key payroll processes and systems, including the mechanisms available to staff to raise queries and seek clarification regarding their pay.

The review confirmed that the current payroll system relies heavily on manual processes. This reliance has contributed to delays in the payment of some entitlements. It also identified that payroll enquiries are managed

across 3 separate repositories, which presents challenges for effective tracking, oversight and timely resolution.

NEMA is working closely with the Department of Home Affairs to address these issues and to improve the accessibility, reliability, and timeliness of payroll services for staff. This work includes:

- the establishment of a dedicated NEMA HR help portal
- immediate process improvements while longer-term system enhancements are developed
- increased automation within the payroll system.

We also recognise that we need an agency that is fit for purpose, which is why we are completing a functional review of our structures, priorities and capabilities. Our communities and governments expect an organisation that can scale, adapt, and deliver when it counts. This review is how we are sharpening our operating model as well as unifying and integrating our structures, so we can continue delivering for Australians, today and into the future.

These actions will strengthen governance, reduce risk, and ensure staff are supported, consistent with public sector expectations. This work is a priority and will continue until it is resolved, we are committed to getting this right. In doing so, we will foster an even more positive agency culture by reinforcing a safer, healthier and more respectful workplace, with a strong focus on wellbeing, preventing bullying and harassment, delivering entitlements in a timely way, and upholding the highest integrity standards.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.