

2022 SENATE ESTIMATES PRESENTATION
NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (NEMA) –
COORDINATOR GENERAL – MR BRENDAN MOON

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks Minister Watt and thanks to the Committee for the opportunity to provide an opening statement.

I am coming to the end of my first month in my new role as Coordinator-General for the National Emergency Management Agency.

In that time, I have been on the ground in Dubbo, Tamworth and Gunnedah in NSW, and Bendigo in Victoria to hear from communities impacted by the current floods.

Whilst we have a long way to go what is immediately evident is the coordinated, approach the community, private sector, local, state government Commonwealth agencies have taken to supporting the immediate response, relief and recovery phases of this event.

PAINT THE SCENE OF OUR FUTURE

Since the start of 2022, the nation has experienced 41 disaster events that have impacted 282 Local Government Areas, which include over 16 million people.¹

This means that over half of Australia's population has been affected by a disaster event this year.

Our system is under pressure from consecutive, concurrent natural disasters, since the Black summer bushfires many of our communities have been in a constant state of response and recovery.

The increasing frequency and intensity of events has been a feature of the past 3 years.

Our communities are not only dealing with floods, for some up to 5 times this year, but also the effects of COVID, drought bushfire, mice and locust plagues.

¹ Provided by the Data and Technology Branch – data is as at 24 October 2022.

We are now moving into High-Risk Weather Season, while being further impacted by the third multi-year La Niña event in the past 50 years.²

While Australia's emergency management arrangements see the states and territories as being responsible for leading response and recovery, the increased pressure on our emergency management arrangements highlights the importance of the strategic role the Commonwealth can play in coordinating and enabling additional support for the states and territories and their communities.

FUNCTIONS

The National Emergency Management Agency, or NEMA, was established on 1 September 2022, to deliver a whole-of-nation, end-to-end approach and capability to all phases of emergency management.

NEMA's remit is to develop, lead and coordinate the Commonwealth's approach to emergency management; while supporting preparedness, response, recovery and risk reduction for all hazards, and working in collaboration with all levels of government, communities and industry.

While we have only been operational for 2 months, we have activated all of the tools available to us to respond to the current flood event, which is impacting over half of the country, while still supporting communities that are recovering from previous events.

TOOLS

Since September we have supported the states and territories **prepare for the worst-case disaster scenarios**, through our national exercising program and the High-Risk Weather Season Preparedness Program.

The Bureau of Meteorology has officially declared Australia's third consecutive La Niña event, bringing with it an increased chance of flooding this High-Risk Weather Season.

To date, we have developed and delivered briefings to all states and territories, the Australian Government, the private sector and media outlets ahead of the upcoming High-Risk Weather Season, which have included tailored catastrophic weather exercises.

² In the past 50 years – multi-year La Niña have occurred in 1973 – 1974 and 2010 – 2011.

Also to note, BoM suggests Australia will experience a triple La Niña. *La Niña, 3 years in a row: a climate scientist on what flood-weary Australians can expect this summer* – by Andrew King - Uni Melbourne – Climate Scientist– [The Conversation](#)

Our Emergency Management and Response Group has delivered 4 national exercises this year, with more than 250 participants across the Commonwealth and the states and territories.

We **coordinate Commonwealth capability and enhance the capacity** of the states and territories to prepare and respond during an emergency through the National Coordination Mechanism and our Crisis Coordination Teams.

Our Crisis Coordination Team has responded to multiple requests for non-financial assistance, including the provision of Australian Defence Force personnel, and collaborate with the states and territories to share resources and emergency services personnel through the National Resource Sharing Centre.

We have access to near real-time data, intelligence and insights through the National Situation Room, the 24/7 crisis management information and whole-of-government coordination facility in Canberra, which is vital in the protection of Australia and Australian interests domestically and abroad.

Since the establishment of NEMA, the National Coordination Mechanism has held 8 meetings to bring together representatives from across sectors to coordinate efforts for Disaster Recovery and Relief and Temporary Housing and Accommodation.

Our Regional Planning Officers and Recovery Support Officers are embedded in states and territories and communities across Australia, connecting people to support, and ensuring the community is heard as they commence the recovery journey.

As we sit here, we have officers embedded in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania who are supporting the state and local government, and communities to respond to and recover from the current flood event.

Finally, we facilitated **financial support** to the local governments and states and territories through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, and also to individuals and families through the short-term income-support payment, the Disaster Recovery Allowance and the lump sum Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment.

MOVING FORWARD

Looking ahead, I see three pillars guiding NEMA's strategic direction.

One, we need scalable, co-ordinated Emergency Management Capability to ensure timely emergency support arrangements can be deployed in any geographical location, for any disaster, at any time, equitably, nationwide.³

Two, support and facilitate community-led recovery, ensuring impacted communities understand that they will be heard, that their priorities will be taken into consideration and that NEMA understands that Australia is made up of many diverse communities: our nation includes metropolitan, rural, remote, coastal and island communities:

A “one size fits all approach” does not work. We all know that the best outcomes for communities are achieved when response, recovery and risk reduction is community-led, state-coordinated, and federally-facilitated.

Finally, invest in disaster risk reduction and build more resilient communities.

We short-change communities when we don't use every opportunity before an event, in response and in recovery, to reduce their risk, and build their resilience.

Without resilience, our communities, our economies, and our systems are not going to be fit to face what is in front of us: a future filled with more intense and frequent natural disasters.

This is my focus as the first Coordinator-General of NEMA: to support and strengthen our communities to be ready for whatever may come, by ensuring Australia's disaster preparedness, response, recovery and risk reduction arrangements are fit-for-purpose, scalable and sustainable.

Thank you.
