

Introduction | The future in front of us

Thank you chair and the committee for allowing me to make an opening statement.

Since first appearing before the committee in October of last year, the National Emergency Management Agency has continued to coordinate the Commonwealth response to the consequences of Australia third consecutive La Niña event.

Australia has been enveloped by 27 flood events, resulting in 483 disaster declarations across 311 Local Government Areas (LGAs) between January and December 2022.

Combined with the events since 2019-20, 4:5 LGAs in the nation have been activated for a relief measure under the joint Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

The flood crisis has followed destructive disaster events like the 2019 North Queensland Monsoon Trough, the 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires, and the global COVID-19 pandemic.

It has occurred against the backdrop of macro-economic challenges, overseas geopolitical conflict, disrupted supply chains, and an ever-changing climate.

Since our establishment in September 2022, NEMA's focus has been supporting impacted communities, local and state governments to respond, recover and reduce risk.

What we've done | Supporting communities, states and territories and decision makers

Our role includes the provision of financial support and non-financial support to deal with the consequences of the impact of natural hazards.

Financial support

We have supported our communities by facilitating the flow of financial support.

Over \$97 million in financial assistance has been claimed by individuals and households in eligible LGAs between October 2022 and February 2023, off the back of ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie and the Eastern Australia floods.

The DRFA has been activated for 305 LGAs this financial year, some more than once, with the Australian Government committing to cost share with the states up to \$1.8 billion financial support packages.

Under these arrangements, support to impacted communities has included personal hardship assistance, financial support to replace flood damaged home contents, and temporary accommodation measures.

Direct funding has been provided to local government and state and territory agencies to commence the massive task of rebuilding and reconnecting essential public infrastructure damaged by floods.

Additionally, impacted assistance has been activated for small business and farming communities vulnerable to impacts of this most recent La Niña event.

These have also been a range of extraordinary assistance packages related to going to reducing risk, getting people back in their homes and supporting the recovery of our natural ecosystems.

Crisis coordination and non-financial support

We have supported the states and territories through crisis coordination and non-financial support.

33 requests for non-financial support have been completed off the back of the Eastern Australia floods and ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie, resulting in the deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel, aircraft and equipment.

Our Crisis Coordination Team coordinated field teams and specialist equipment to support the search for the lost radioactive capsule in Western Australia.

In the last week, NEMA has worked alongside the DFAT to coordinate the deployment of specialist personnel to assist in the international search and research efforts in earthquake-affected Türkiye, as well as preparing and coordinating Commonwealth assistance to Norfolk Island as it prepares for Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle.

Advice, data and insights

We have supported decision makers at all levels by providing expert advice, data and insights to inform actions and decisions.

The National Situation Room has been an expert source of real-time situational awareness through the National Joint-Common Operating Picture.

We have convened meetings of the National Emergency Management Ministers Meeting, and the Royal Commission Implementation Workings Groups, to keep decision makers at all levels communicating, collaborating and conversing.

What's next | Strengthening our systems

But NEMA is not just focused on the here and now. We're looking ahead.

Over the next few months, NEMA is focused on four key objectives to reduce risk and build resilience.

We're increasing investment in disaster risk reduction through the \$1-billion Disaster Ready Fund.

We're identifying and understanding our vulnerabilities by forging partnerships with industries like the insurance sector, which has seen upwards of \$15 billion insurance claims since the Black Summer Bushfires, as reported by the Insurance Council of Australia.

We're expanding our emergency management workforce by exploring and investing in alternative workforce models.

We're fine-tuning our funding streams so that our payments, grants and programs are equitable, responsive and deliver value for money for the taxpayer.

Conclusion | Our ongoing focus

Our focus remains on coordinating Commonwealth assistance, preparing for the impacts of natural hazards, supporting response and recovery for communities, whilst at the same time reducing disaster risk and building community resilience.

I now welcome your questions.