

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE
National Volunteer Incentive Scheme (Climate Army) Questions on Notice
Public hearing, 29th September 2025
Sydney

Disaster Relief Australia , Mr David Smith

Question 1

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Senator Jessica Collins asked the following question:

Ms COLLINS: *You mentioned before about the training that you provide your volunteers; they go through the RTO. That \$86 million in funding that you're asking for and that you currently receive—is that where the money goes? Where does the money come from to pay for these RTO training courses?*

Mr Smith : *Under the current Volunteer Uplift Program(VUP), the \$38.3 million grant that we received, a fair percentage of that—I haven't got the exact figures to hand—is actually committed to training. But the main purpose of the Volunteer Uplift Program was to grow our capacity to be able to recruit, train and support the volunteers who then deploy onto the ground—the back-of-house work. That's what this pays for. That allows us to then grow the number of volunteers and then support them when they are deployed on the ground with training, equipment, logistics and the like.*

Ms COLLINS: *Do you have the numbers of how many have gone through the system? Would you be able to provide on notice the number of volunteers that have gone through the RTO and the training courses that they've undertaken—*

Mr Smith : *I'll have to take that one on notice.*

Ms COLLINS: *and whether they're doing multiple training courses?*

Mr Smith: *Sure. We have that information very much to hand, so I'll just take that on notice.*

Ms COLLINS: *Thank you.*

Question

Do you have the numbers of how many have gone through the system? Would you be able to provide on notice the number of volunteers that have gone through the RTO and the training courses that they've undertaken and whether they're doing multiple training courses?

Response

Since receiving the Volunteer Uplift Program (VUP) grant, Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) has trained 839 individual volunteers via a total of 257 training courses across Australia.

Of these, 677 volunteers completed training delivered by DRA's partnered Registered Training Organisation, Emergency Australia (EA).

Where EA does not offer a course, DRA engages other recognised providers (such as specialist RTOs and tertiary/professional bodies) to meet capability needs—e.g., Trauma Informed Care training via *Phoenix Australia* and leadership programs such as *Australian Institute of Management (AIM)* short courses.

Training Summary

Financial Year	Training Courses run	Unique Volunteers Trained	Training Courses Run (EA Only)	Unique Volunteers Trained (EA Only)
FY2024	92	409	62	320
FY2025	129	500	93	395
FY2026	36	159	29	112
Total*	257	839	184	677
<i>“Total Unique Volunteers Trained” does not double count the same person if they attended courses in more than one year. The unique figure is deduplicated across the whole period</i>				

EA courses make up 72% of the 257 training courses provided by DRA since the start of the VUP.

Of the 839 volunteers trained under the VUP, 81% received their qualification via EA.

From the start of FY2024 to the date of this report (839 days), DRA has delivered training at an average rate of one course every three days across Australia.

A full list of the qualifications and training offered to Disaster Relief Australia’s volunteers and staff under the Volunteer Uplift Program is in annex A.

Are Volunteers Doing Multiple Courses?

Yes. DRA offers both internal and external qualification courses, allowing volunteers and staff to complete initial training and upskill to contribute across the preparation, relief, and recovery phases of the Disaster Management Cycle.

Examples include:

- Tree felling (progressive qualifications): trainees advance through *FWPCOT2273* → *FWPCOT2275* → *FWPCOT3350*.
- Remote Pilot (RePL) pathway (CASA): includes *AROC* and *EVLOS* endorsements for disaster operations.

- Operational enablement and data systems: Power BI, Excel, and Fulcrum-based assessment and reporting systems.

As noted in DRA's testimony before the Committee, a significant share of DRA's workforce are veterans and first responders who frequently arrive with pre-existing, nationally recognised qualifications from their previous service.

In such cases, VUP funding is targeted to bridge, refresh, or extend skills rather than replicate existing qualifications. It also trains this experienced cadre in how to apply their skillsets specifically in relief and recovery operations.

Impact of operational tempo on training delivery

During the period FY2024–FY2026, DRA conducted 10 national operations across four states, totalling 351 operational days. This operational tempo has impacted participation rates for training courses.

To mitigate this, DRA is expanding blended learning options and exploring deployment-based training delivery.

Conclusion

Disaster Relief Australia has, under the Volunteer Uplift Program, trained 839 individual volunteers through 257 courses nationwide, with Emergency Australia delivering 184 of those courses to 677 volunteers.

Volunteers can progress from foundation to specialist courses—e.g., tree felling qualifications—so they can contribute across the preparedness, relief, and recovery phases of the Disaster Management Cycle.

Consistent with DRA's testimony, VUP funding is targeted at the training that enables safe, scalable operations. Where EA does not offer a required qualification, DRA engages other recognised providers to meet its training needs.

These outcomes align with DRA's 2030 Strategy to strengthen Australia's preparedness, relief, and recovery capabilities via a skilled, veteran-led volunteer workforce. They also reflect

DRA's commitment to transparent reporting and continuous improvement in volunteer capability development under the VUP.

All figures provided are drawn from DRA's internal Learning Management System and verified against RTO training records as at 29 September 2025.

Annex:

A. Qualifications and training offered to Disaster Relief Australia's volunteers and staff under the Volunteer Uplift Program

Qualifications and training offered to Disaster Relief Australia's volunteers and staff under the Volunteer Uplift Program**Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements**

QDMA - Module 1 - Introduction to Cyclone Shelter Management

QDMA - Module 2 - Working in a Cyclone Shelter

QDMA - Module 3 - Managing a Cyclone Shelter

Aerial Surveillance and Analysis

RePL - Multirotor <25kg

RePL Annual Continuation Training - Multirotor <25kg

RePL DRA Induction - Multirotor <25kg

Aeronautical Radio Operator Certificate (AROC)

Extended Visual Line of Sight (EVLOS)

ADAT Pilot Induction

Emergency Management and recovery

VU23311 - Prepare to work within Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS)

Communicating in Recovery

Foundations in Disaster Recovery

Chainsaw and pole saw*

AHCMOM213 - Operate and maintain chainsaws

FWPCOT2254 - Maintain chainsaws

FWPCOT3301 - Trim trees using a pole saw

FWPCOT2273 Trim and cut felled trees

FWPCOT2275 - Fell Trees Manually (basic)

FWPCOT3350 - Fell trees manually (intermediate)

AHPCPM205 - Fell small trees

*latest version of the unit under the AQSA

Fencing

AHCINF306 - Plan and Construct Electric Fencing

AHCINF307 - Plan and Construct Conventional Fencing

Off-road driving and recovery

FWPCOT3326 - Recover four wheel drive vehicle

FWPCOT3325 - Operate four wheel drive vehicle on unsealed roads

Leadership, project management and business development

Applying Strategic Thinking

Building High Performance Teams

Change Management

Coaching for High Performance

Contract Management

Dealing with Difficult Behaviours

Decision Making Techniques

Decision Making Under Pressure

Gender Markers

Media and Interview Skills Training

New Leader

Power BI Fundamentals for Business

Presenting with Impact

Effective Business Writing

Environmental Social and Governance

Excel for Business - Data Handling and Analytics

A Sticky Masterclass: finding and keeping Regular Givers

Advance Communication

Agile Project Management

Time Management

TAE40122 - Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

Safety (physical and psychosocial)

Psychological First Aid



Trauma-informed-care

HLTAID011 - Provide First Aid

HLTAID009 - Provide CPR

HLTAID014 - Provide Advance First Aid

HLTAID013 - Provide Remote First Aid

Safe Work Method Statement

Volunteer Leadership Program (AIDR)