Evacuation Planning

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Handbook Collection

Evacuation Planning

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Enquiries regarding the content, licence and any use of this document are welcome at:

The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience
Level 1, 340 Albert St, East Melbourne Vic 3002
Telephone: +61 (0) 3 9419 2388

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Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection

The Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection provides guidance on national principles and practices for disaster resilience.

The Handbook Collection:

- provides an authoritative, trusted and freely available source of knowledge about disaster resilience principles in Australia
- aligns national disaster resilience strategy and policy with practice, by guiding and supporting jurisdictions, agencies and other organisations and individuals in their implementation and adoption
- highlights and promotes the adoption of good practice in building disaster resilience in Australia
- builds interoperability between jurisdictions, agencies, the private sector, local businesses and community groups by promoting use of a common language and coordinated, nationally agreed principles.

The Handbook Collection is developed and reviewed by national consultative committees representing a range of state and territory agencies, governments, organisations and individuals involved in disaster resilience. The collection is sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs.

Access to the Handbook Collection and further details are available on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub (the Knowledge Hub): **www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/ handbooks**

Australian Emergency Management Arrangements

Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience

Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers

Community Recovery

Disaster Resilience Education for Young People

Emergency Planning

Evacuation Planning

Flood Emergency Planning for Disaster Resilience

Health and Disaster Management

Incident Management

Land Use Planning for Disaster Resilient Communities

Lessons Management

Managing Exercises

Managing the Floodplain: A Guide to Best Practice in Flood Risk Management in Australia

National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines

Public Information and Warnings

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Systemic Disaster Risk

Tsunami Emergency Planning in Australia

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Introduction

Purpose

The *Evacuation Planning* handbook provides a nationally consistent approach to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of a five-stage evacuation process. It presents authoritative, principles-based guidance on how to manage evacuations before, during, and after an emergency or disaster. The handbook is intended to support government, non-government organisations and communities in inclusive evacuation planning. Central to the handbook's intent is the safety of community members and emergency personnel during the evacuation process, and the timely return of evacuees to minimise negative health, social and economic impacts for affected individuals and communities.

The *Evacuation Planning* handbook aims to enable communities and the emergency management sector to work together to be better prepared to manage these events. The handbook provides the opportunity to plan for locally led response and recovery activities which occur when all groups from individuals to households, businesses, non-government organisations and local governments take collective action so that communities become safer, stronger and more connected.

Context

The *Evacuation Planning* handbook is part of the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection. It fulfils a critical role in the ongoing improvement of disaster preparation, response and recovery under the policy framework established by the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (COAG, 2011). The handbook supports the *Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework*, 2018[1] and the *United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* (Sendai Framework)[2] (UNDRR 2015).

The *National Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* (Australian Government 2018) recognises that disaster resilience is not only the responsibility of emergency service and management organisations. Disaster resilience is a shared responsibility for individuals, households, businesses, communities and all levels of government. However, while individuals and communities have their roles to play, they do not control many of the levers needed to reduce some disaster risks. Government and businesses must take coordinated action to reduce disaster risks within their control to limit adverse impacts on communities.

> The 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements commented that national arrangements are not confined to arrangements involving the Australian Government, they encompass all levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, communities, families and individuals.

Limiting the impact of disasters now and in the future requires a coordinated effort across and within many areas including land use planning, infrastructure, emergency management, social policy, agriculture, education, health, community development, energy and the environment.

The relevance and importance of the *Evacuation Planning* handbook has been placed into perspective by the Coordinator-General of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), who identified there were critical challenges for communities and emergency management organisations throughout Australia.[3] The challenges identified include an ageing population, growing populations along coastlines and more extreme weather patterns which are influencing Australia's risk environment.

Climate change

Scientific evidence from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) indicates that a variable and changing climate is expected to further increase the severity and frequency of many natural hazards in Australia (CSIRO and BOM 2022). The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that 'frequency and severity of dangerous fire weather conditions is increasing' and 'extreme rainfall is projected to become more intense' (IPCC 2022).

www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FinalDraft_Chapter11.pdf

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1   This handbook contributes to the following components: Evacuation Planning and Support National Capability Requirement of the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework.

2   This handbook contributes to priority 4 of the Sendai Framework for DRR.

3   Moon, B (2023) 'Foreword'. Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol 38, Issue 1, January 2023, p.4.

Background

The *Evacuation Planning* handbook was first published in 1998. Periodic reviews have continued to incorporate and promote learnings in evacuation planning and practice that benefit communities.

The handbook was revised in 2012 to align with key messages in the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (NSDR) (COAG 2011):

· disasters will happen

· disaster resilience is your business

· connected communities are resilient communities

· know your risk

· get ready, then act

· learn from experience.

These key messages underpin each of the five stages of evacuation planning, from the decision to evacuate, through to the warning, withdrawal, shelter and return stages.

In 2017 the handbook incorporated concepts and guidance on the primacy of life and focus on public safety, the complexity of evacuations and human behaviour, the influence of technology and social media, and the nuance of evacuation planning for all hazards.

This 2023 edition of the handbook incorporates and reflects recommendations, observations and learnings from the:

· 2020 *Royal Commission into National Natural Disasters Arrangements* (the Royal Commission)

· 2020 *New South Wales Bushfire Inquiry* (NSW Inquiry)

· Victorian Inspector General Emergency Management Inquiry undertaken into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season (Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports)

· 2022 Queensland Inspector General Emergency Management Southeast Queensland Rainfall and Flooding Event Report

· 2022 New South Wales Independent Flood Inquiry.

These inquiries recognise that Australia is experiencing more frequent and intense natural hazards. The handbook also recognises that recent disasters have exhibited complexity never seen or experienced before, with concurrent events such as fire, pandemic and flood causing compounding impacts on communities and the Australian landscape. These events highlight the need for an adaptive, flexible and inclusive approach to evacuation planning.

Additionally, the handbook focusses on the specific needs of people and groups in communities who may require additional support in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a disaster. Updated content and material are based on evidence, organisational learnings and expert insight regarding sheltering and evacuation.

This handbook is available on the AIDR Knowledge Hub: **knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-evacuation-planning**

Scope

This handbook outlines the nationally agreed principles for evacuation planning, using the nationally recognised five-stage evacuation process as a framework. It presents guidance for developing evacuation plans that can be applied in emergencies and disasters impacting communities, applicable across a range of hazards. The guidance focusses on the movement and management of people away from a hazard impact area, with arrangements for people who shelter in place outside the scope of this handbook.

The handbook works with the following definition of community: 'a social group with a commonality of association and generally defined by location, shared experience, or function and with a number of things in common, such as culture, heritage, language, ethnicity, pastimes, occupation, or workplace' (AIDR Glossary 2019). This handbook recognises communities of place, communities of interest and notes that there can be multiple communities within a community of place.

Evacuation plans described in the handbook may be specific to a hazard and a location, or more generic in nature, understanding that any generic plan will need to be adaptable and flexible to accommodate differences in the time, place and circumstance of a particular disaster.

The handbook recognises variations in legislative powers, arrangements and terminology across jurisdictions. It should therefore be used in conjunction with applicable state and territory legislation, plans, guidelines and local arrangements, as well as other handbooks in the Handbook Collection.

The handbook is not intended for use in planning site-specific evacuations, for example, for high-rise buildings. This type of evacuation planning is addressed in *AS3745 Planning for Emergencies in Facilities*, and in relevant state and territory legislation and other publications available from state and territory emergency management organisations.

While the handbook refers to 'evacuation centres', Appendix 2 highlights a key finding from the *2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements* of the inconsistency in sheltering terminology used to describe the purpose of the shelter by states and territories. For example, Victoria uses the term 'relief centre' to describe a facility that provides accommodation and other amenities whereas in NSW this same facility is typically called an evacuation centre. The process of working towards national consistency commenced in 2022.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Evacuation

What is evacuation?

Evacuation is a strategy used to reduce loss of life or lessen the effects of a hazard on a community, before or during a disaster. It involves the movement of people threatened by a hazard to a safer location and their safe and timely return. Removal of people from the threat is often the most effective way to manage public safety. For an evacuation to be as effective as possible it must be appropriately planned and implemented.

Depending on the hazard and its impacts on communities, the evacuation process may take days, weeks or months to complete. Some evacuations may be carried out quickly and over short distances. For example, people may be warned to:

- move to higher ground pending a potential tsunami impact, or flash flooding
- move two streets away from a rural-urban interface to avoid a bushfire.

In other circumstances, people evacuated from an area may be relocated many kilometres from their home and be unable to return for a considerable period of time due to access or contamination issues.

Types of evacuation

There are two types of evacuation described in this handbook, pre-warned and immediate. Both evacuation types have distinctive characteristics, challenges and different planning dynamics and responses.

1. **Pre-warned evacuation:** where a community has been provided with a warning of the impending hazard impact and a timely and coordinated preparedness and response actions have been facilitated in accordance with an evacuation plan. E.g. flood, cyclone or bushfire.
2. **Immediate evacuation:** where a rapid onset hazard causes a threat with no or limited opportunity to warn the affected individuals or communities. These events require immediate and rapid protective movements of those affected. E.g. earthquake, structural collapse, gas explosion, active shooter or transport accident.

With increasingly complex, concurrent and compounding events there may be a need for a two-step evacuation process in both an immediate and a pre-warned evacuation scenario. In this scenario:

- Step 1: move communities move out of harm's way from the hazard.
- Step 2: when the risk dissipates relocate communities to an evacuation centre(s).

Total, partial, and phased evacuations

- **Total evacuation:** when everyone in the affected communities is recommended or directed to evacuate.
- **Partial evacuation:** when only some of the affected communities are evacuated. For example, only residents living in low-lying areas directly impacted by flood waters will need to evacuate.
- **Phased evacuation:** when in either a total or partial evacuation, affected communities are recommended or directed to evacuate at different times. E.g. due to the slow onset of a hazard or to avoid congestion on transport routes.

Evacuation approaches

The type of evacuation selected by the organisation managing the emergency will be influenced by whether the emergency is rapid onset, requiring immediate evacuation, or whether it is slow onset or pre-warned, allowing more time for the implementation of evacuation approaches.

Directed evacuation

An evacuation in circumstances where a relevant government organisation has exercised a legislated power that requires people to evacuate.

Recommended evacuation

An evacuation where an evacuation warning has been issued but people have the option to remain.

Self-initiated evacuation

This is the self-initiated movement of people to safer places prior to, or in the absence of, official warnings to evacuate. Some people may choose to leave early, even in the absence of a hazard but due to a forecast of high bushfire danger or a flood watch. Self-initiated evacuees manage their own withdrawal, including transportation arrangements. They may well have their own shelter arrangements, or they may still rely upon formal shelter arrangements and the support provided.

Self-initiated evacuation needs to be recognised in the planning process, particularly in the shelter and return stages as there may be the expectation of access to support services.

Shelter in place

Shelter in place means finding a safe location and staying there until the threat has passed or you are told to evacuate.

Remaining and sheltering in place can also be recommended by the organisation managing the emergency for some or all the people in the expected hazard impact area when it is considered safer to remain than to evacuate.

People may decide themselves to shelter in place (often where they live), even when an evacuation is directed or recommended. This may be:

· to protect homes, pets, livestock, crops, machinery, and/or buildings

· because they believe it is too late or unsafe to evacuate

· because warnings have not been received, understood and acted on in a timely manner.

In some cases, steps may be taken by the organisation managing the emergency to protect residents in place, particularly those at increased risk such as the residents of aged care and medical facilities. The organisation managing the emergency should consult with and inform managers of such facilities of the decision to evacuate or shelter in place. The facilities' evacuation plans should be available to incident managers and appended to the local emergency management plan and/or evacuation plan.

Information will need to be provided to those who shelter in place, particularly during the warning and return stages. Communication to those who shelter in place should be coordinated with those managing the evacuation to ensure consistent messaging; e.g. about recovery arrangements and risk mitigation strategies for returnees (see: message content).

Planning for evacuation

Effective evacuation management relies on detailed planning and exercising. Planning and working with communities before a disaster situation arises, can help to alleviate some of the factors that may otherwise jeopardise the success of an evacuation operation.

Planning for evacuations is a key responsibility of governments at all levels, emergency management organisations, and other relevant non-government and community organisations. Engaging all relevant stakeholders, including the community, to develop, exercise and continually improve evacuation plans is likely to enhance evacuation planning and evacuation management outcomes. Individuals and households also have a responsibility, through their own household emergency planning, to consider when they will evacuate, what they will take, where they will go, and how they will reunite if they are separated.

Communities and individuals are unique and their behaviours during an emergency will be driven by different factors. It is good practice for evacuation planners to engage with communities at several stages to understand and consider how their values may influence responses to disaster and stress. These engagements provide the opportunity for the emergency management sector to support communities and householders in the development and delivery of readiness programs. These interactions build individual and community resilience and promote shared responsibility. This information also assists in managing the withdrawal and sheltering of evacuees.

Evacuation can be stressful for people. In addition to the risk of harm to their own life, other factors may influence behaviours and decisions made in an emergency. These factors can include but are not limited to:

· concern for the safety and welfare of family, friends, and animals

· concern for the safety of property and livelihoods

· dependency on others to assist with evacuation, in particular for those living with a disability and those reliant on others for the provision of care or the provision of transport

· reliance on equipment, devices, medications, and support to sustain life and maintain health

· exposure to misinformation on social media and informal communication platforms

· influence by thoughts and actions of those around them or are influential in their lives

· socially isolated or disconnected from communities and mainstream supports and services

· cultural or linguistic constraints

· lack of trust in the organisations tasked with the evacuation process.

For guidance on community engagement see *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR 2020).

For guidance on exercising see *Managing Exercises* (AIDR 2023, 2017).

For guidance on animals in disasters, see *Planning for Animals in Disasters* (AIDR, under development).

For guidance on household emergency planning, see Australian Red Cross' *Emergency RediPlan:* **www.redcross.org.au/prepare**

Stages of the evacuation process

Evacuation planning requires consideration of a five-stage evacuation process, namely:

1. Decision to evacuate
2. Warning
3. Withdrawal
4. Shelter
5. Return

Structuring plans utilising these five stages of evacuation ensures that key aspects of the evacuation process are considered and addressed in detail. In parallel to the evacuation process is the fundamental need for individual, community, and organisational resilience which facilitates a more effective response to, and recovery from an evacuation emergency. The five stages are covered in more detail in the following chapters.
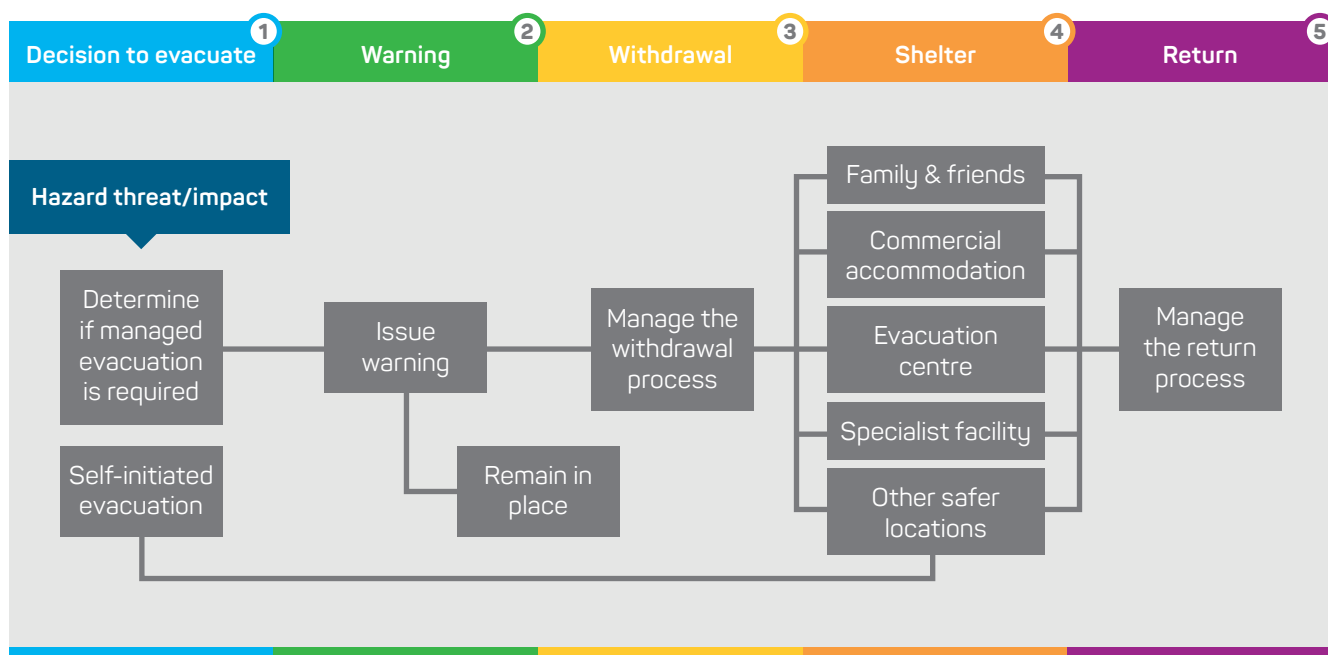
Figure 1: Evacuation planning process

Chapter 2: Principles for developing an evacuation plan

Evacuation planning in an emergency or disaster context

Evacuation planning is an integral part of emergency management planning. An evacuation plan should be consistent with an emergency management plan. Development of an evacuation plan should consider the context and capability of the individuals, organisations and communities at risk, together with an emergency management plan that identifies evacuation as an appropriate risk management strategy.

Emergency planning

Emergency planning plays an important role in the development of Australia's disaster resilience capability. The emergency planning process is the collective and collaborative effort by which agreements are reached and documented between people and organisations to meet their communities' or entities' emergency management needs. Emergency planning involves identifying and documenting strategies for preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies. Effective emergency planning contributes to reducing the likelihood and consequence of emergencies for individuals, communities, entities and the environment, and can have positive economic benefits.

The process of developing an emergency plan is detailed in *Emergency Planning* (AIDR 2020).

Inclusive community engagement

Evacuation can be a complex process. As such, planning is needed to enhance community engagement and minimise risks associated with evacuations during emergencies. Evacuation planning should consider the cultural, social and geographic characteristics of communities.

Community representatives can provide valuable local knowledge and context especially if they have lived experience in emergencies and evacuations and good knowledge of community networks, capacities, and resources.

Hazard-specific plans are likely to be more detailed and should involve input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including hazard specific organisations, special interest groups, cultural and community leaders, and community members and organisations reflective of the communities' demographic characteristics.

The diversity of Australian communities and specific support requirements need to be reflected in evacuation plans. Consideration should be given to the needs of groups, including but not limited to the following:

· Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
· culturally and linguistically diverse groups (CALD)
· people with disability, chronic illness or mental health issues
· women
· people with diverse gender and sexual orientations
· infants, children and young people, including kinship arrangements and unaccompanied minors
· pregnant and breastfeeding women
· seniors
· new migrants
· asylum seekers and refugees
· those living in socially or physically isolated, or high-risk circumstances or locations
· those experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, unemployment or poverty
· people living with or escaping family violence
· tourists, holiday makers and visitors
· international students and people on temporary work visas
· people living on state or territory borders
· those without access to independent transport.

Consider: Taking the time to understand the diversity of community capacities and needs will assist in improving evacuation outcomes. There have been instances where an evacuation has been communicated by an emergency management organisation however, a high percentage of the community were unable to follow the advice due to a range of pre-existing barriers e.g. communities advised to evacuate the area in personal vehicles when many individuals did not have access to a vehicle or existing vehicles could not be driven for a range of reasons.

Engaging Indigenous communities in evacuation planning

Across Australia, discrete Indigenous communities are governed differently to other lands and townships, due to factors such as land tenure, cultural and heritage rights, and support requirements for community members who have unique cultural needs and responsibilities. Indigenous controlled community organisations can provide crucial guidance to increase the effectiveness of local evacuation plans and should be involved in the planning process.

Gendered needs in evacuation planning

Gender and Disaster Australia (GAD) have developed the Gender and Emergency Management (GEM) Guidelines that provide a shared and improved understanding of the specific issues (social, structural, psychological, financial, interpersonal, and physical) relating to gender and disaster – and a capacity to respond to these issues. It supports changed practices by key emergency management organisations and communities to help identify, prevent and respond to gender-based disaster impacts.

GAD's *Acting on Gendered Needs in Evacuation and Relief Centres Checklist* provides guidance on considerations in the planning phase of evacuation planning.

knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-gender-and-emergency-management-guidelines

Further guidance on community engagement can be found in *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR 2020).

The planning process

Evacuation planning occurs as part of the broader emergency planning process (Figure 2) typically, as part of the step 'Develop strategies and arrangements'. The emergency planning process is covered in further detail in *Emergency Planning* (AIDR 2020). Plans act as guides to what should happen, and it should be recognised that with fast moving, high uncertainty evacuations, the implementation of the plan can be different.

The following are matters specific to evacuation planning:

· legislation
· responsibility for planning an evacuation
· the risk management study
· responsibilities for evacuation management
· resources and services needed
· management arrangements and systems
· documenting and promoting the evacuation plan
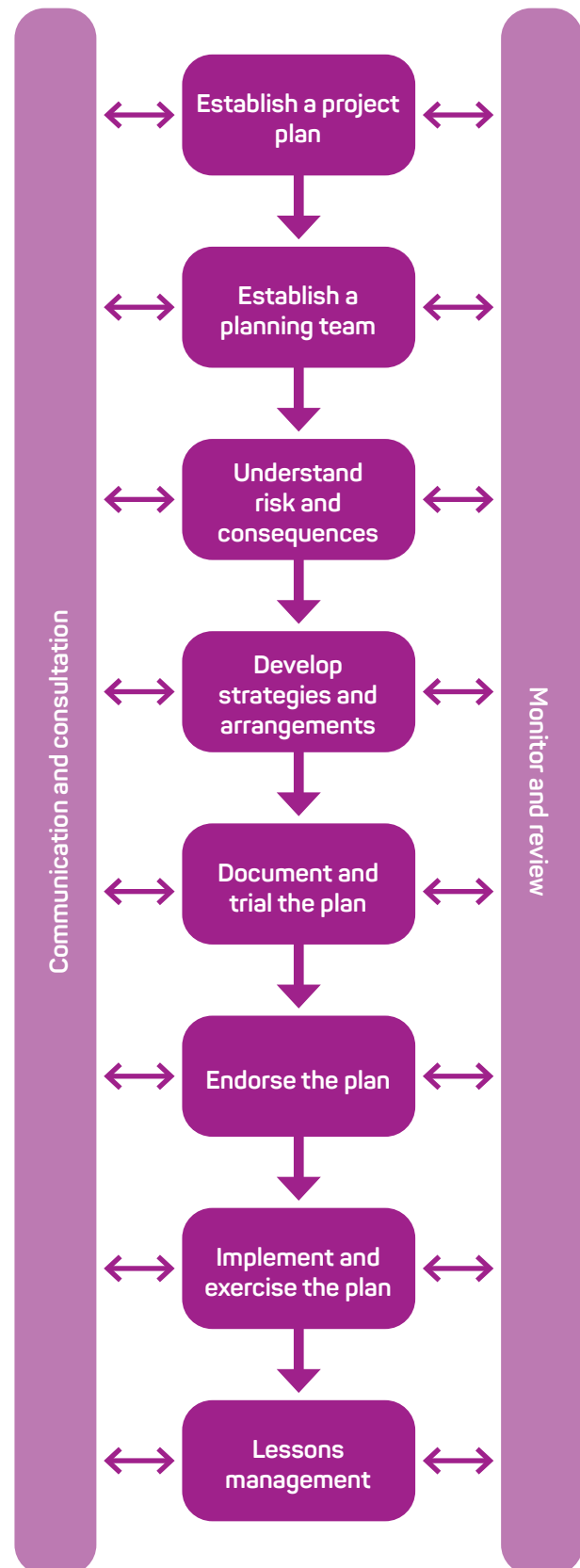· exercising the plan
· monitoring and review.

Figure 2: The emergency planning process

Legislation

The authority to recommend or direct communities to evacuate will be found in relevant emergency management organisations and emergency management legislation. An evacuation plan must consider, and be consistent with, the applicable legislative provisions to ensure recommendations and directions are made with appropriate authority. Where directed evacuations are considered, organisations will need to be aware of the circumstances that must exist to trigger the authority to issue directed evacuation orders, and whether any people are exempt from any obligation to comply.

When there is a legal obligation for evacuations, any mismanagement of the evacuation process could result in legal scrutiny and possibly liability. This includes the decision to evacuate, issuing warnings, managing the evacuation, providing shelter, and deciding when to allow people to return. State and territory legislation may specify factors to consider and provide liability limitations, particularly for state and territory emergency management organisations.

> **Consider:** The legal context of Indigenous communities including cultural and heritage rights must be considered in evacuation planning. Traditional Owners and cultural leaders have powers and responsibility amongst their communities as part of their cultural norms and practices which should be factored in to planning and decision making.

> For further information refer to the National Indigenous Australians Agency – Land and Housing Division. ADD - **niaa.gov.au/areas-of-focus**

Risk management study

An emergency risk management study completed by an emergency management committee is a critical first step in understanding the risks to a community that may require evacuation planning. Using a systemic risk approach will help the committee understand both the potential hazard risk, but also the consequences, and the interconnected nature of risk. The study should address all potential risks including specific known risks (such as the regular flooding of a town) as well as other less predictable, yet foreseeable, events (such as a bushfire threatening a rural-urban interface or transmissible diseases or viruses). The scope of the risk management study should be focused and specific to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the process, deliver value for money and inform a range of local government functions. The key elements of the study should include the hazard environment, demographics and social makeup of the council or regional catchment, population change, and critical infrastructure that supports the management of a disaster.

An outcome from the risk management study may be a need to develop an evacuation plan or plans for a particular hazard or community, and the need to convene an evacuation planning team.

> For further information of conducting a systemic risk management study, see *Systemic Disaster Risk* (AIDR 2021).

Responsibility for planning an evacuation

In some jurisdictions, an emergency management planning committee undertakes evacuation planning. In other jurisdictions, a separate evacuation planning committee may be formed, or responsibility assigned to an individual.

Those responsible for developing evacuation plans should be aware of and familiar with any overarching emergency management plans, procedures and guidelines that the evacuation plan needs to align with. Those responsible for evacuation planning should work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders and consult with all emergency management organisations and other relevant organisations that have a role in an evacuation; including community representatives, who represent the diversity of the community. Active and sustained engagement is essential to leverage local knowledge, expertise and resources, and to gain commitment, ownership and understanding of what is required of all parties during an evacuation. Some, or all, of these key stakeholders may form part of an evacuation planning committee.

The evacuation plan should detail who is responsible for carrying out each stage of the evacuation process, including:

3. Decision to evacuate
4. Warning
5. Withdrawal
6. Shelter
7. Return.

Evacuation can also be integrated as a key function into Incident Management Teams (IMT). The Evacuation Unit within an IMT should have representatives from relevant organisations and potentially access to community leaders.

> Further information on Incident Management Teams can be found in *Incident Management* (AIDR 2023).

Responsibilities for evacuation management

It is essential the community members, emergency management organisations, and other relevant organisations involved in evacuation planning have a clear understanding of relevant authorities, roles and responsibilities for each stage of the evacuation and that these are clearly identified in the evacuation plan. Authorities, roles and responsibilities may vary between stages in the evacuation process.

The evacuation plan should describe how the activities of each organisation or group will be coordinated to ensure an evacuation can be implemented effectively and efficiently. The management structure for each stage of the evacuation should be agreed upon and documented in the evacuation plan.

The evacuation plan should also identify who is responsible for engaging, informing and educating the community and broader public about ongoing evacuation related matters to promote community preparedness. This responsibility may shift across organisations as an evacuation moves across the five stages of the evacuation process. It is important to continue to keep communities updated following the warning stage, such as the reopening of roads and the opening and closing of evacuation centres. A communications sub-plan may be developed to support this function.

Resources and services needed

The evacuation plan should identify all resources and services required to carry out an evacuation, and detail how these resources and services will be obtained.

Resources required of key emergency management organisations and other relevant organisations should be identified, and any shortfalls addressed by the responsible organisation. Those preparing the evacuation plan should adopt a collaborative approach to planning and seek to ensure sufficient resources across different organisations are available during an evacuation.

As some critical resources (i.e. equipment or personnel) may be sourced from local businesses or community groups (e.g. local bus companies may be engaged to assist in the withdrawal stage), local community providers should be engaged in evacuation planning, and agreements documented, including reimbursement of costs, in the evacuation plan. Scarce local resources may need to be prioritised or shared across areas of operation.

Contingency plans should be developed to address potential resource shortfalls or the need to organise or acquire resources from other locations such as regional centres, state or interstate, including arrangements for cross border community resource sharing, and access to Australian Government resources.

Arrangements and systems

Those preparing the evacuation plan should identify and develop specific management arrangements, addressing each of the five stages of evacuation.

Assembly points, egress routes and traffic management points need to be identified, and effective warning arrangements (e.g. the Australian Warning System) developed. Community representatives with relevant experience or local knowledge can help identify assembly points and egress routes and provide critical advice (e.g. telephone blackspots and poor coverage, suitable radio stations and other informal communication channels, and effectiveness and resilience of evacuation routes in previous events). The use of local knowledge should inform hazard reduction and risk mitigation activities including, but not limited to, plans for vegetation management, road maintenance, land development and critical infrastructure for critical evacuation routes in the evacuation planning process. Local knowledge may also assist in identifying people with specific needs in the affected communities.

Documenting and promoting the plan

The evacuation plan should be documented and made available to the relevant community(-ies) and all organisations with an identified role in evacuation. This should include communities and authorities that reside along state or territory borders. The existence of the plan should be promoted to the wider community using a variety of means such as social media, websites, community radio, libraries, community notice boards, organisational and community newsletters. A broad knowledge and understanding of the plan will assist communities to become better prepared and more responsive to evacuation warnings.

The community should understand its role in the evacuation process to improve their capability to evacuate safely. To achieve this goal the planning committee should consider developing a communications plan to promote the evacuation plan across the community.

Detailed knowledge of the evacuation plan will be required by communities who live in high-risk settings as they are likely to encounter emergencies that would require evacuation. This may be achieved through a variety of community engagement activities including community evacuation exercises and workshops, household and community preparedness activities, community training, the development of community volunteer programs and initiatives, engagement, and consultation with community representatives.

Leaders of the evacuation planning committee are accountable for embedding the evacuation plan across the community. Where possible, existing networks, forums and other community champions can play a role in this. The promotion, exercising and improvements of the plan is a continuous cycle.

Exercising the plan

For continuous improvement in readiness and response, the evacuation plan should be reviewed, exercised, and updated regularly. Different approaches to exercising may be used, including discussion or field exercises. Community engagement is a critical component of emergency management. When relevant, community should be involved in exercises to provide local expertise, feedback, promote shared responsibility, and to build trust and social cohesion. Where possible, it is good practice that community members participating in the exercise reflect the diversity of the communities' demographic to identify and respond to their specific needs. Including local arts organisations in exercises can also provide creative inputs into the scenarios and their implementation.

Following any exercise, a report should be prepared with appropriate recommendations to improve the evacuation plan. Those responsible for maintaining the plan should consider the report and adopt relevant recommendations into a revised plan.

The outcomes from the exercise should be shared with the community to promote the plan, keep them informed and mindful of evacuation and what community members can do to prepare.

> Further information about managing exercises can be found in *Managing Exercises* (AIDR 2017).
>
> Further information about community engagement can be found in *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR 2020).

Monitoring and review

Those responsible for maintaining the evacuation plan should ensure that it is regularly monitored, reviewed, and updated in accordance with current evacuation practices and the emergency management plan lessons management process. Consideration should be given to:

· experience of affected communities

· lessons learned after activation of the plan

· agreed recommendations from inquiries or reviews

· evaluation reports from exercises and from the documented experiences and lessons of other like communities

· changes in risk assessments

· changes in contact details

· new research or best practice.

It is suggested that representatives from adjoining local governments who have responsibilities for evacuation planning attend and observe exercises to improve practice, capability and integration across borders. Data to inform improvements to the plan may be gathered during the evacuation process (e.g. by surveying evacuees accommodated at evacuation centres or when evacuees return home).

Appropriate version control protocols for the finalised plan should be developed and implemented.

> Further information can be found in *Lessons Management* (AIDR 2019).
>
> New research can be found in the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, and on the AIDR Knowledge Hub.

Chapter 3: Stage 1: Decision to evacuate

The purpose of this section is to guide planning to make an informed decision about evacuation. The need to document the decision-making process and communicate the decision to stakeholders is also covered.

Summary

1. Identify authority to make decision to evacuate.
2. Identify relevant stakeholders involved and impacted by the decision to evacuate.
3. Undertake a risk assessment process to support the decision to evacuate or not.
4. Decide how to let people know that a decision has been made.
5. Communicate the decision.
6. Document the decision.

Introduction

The decision to evacuate (or not) is the first of the five stages of the evacuation process. Many complex issues need to be considered in making this decision, often with only limited or rapidly changing information and time available. When an emergency occurs and the time comes to make the decision, the people and the organisations involved are in a better position to make informed decisions when they have planned for such an occurrence.

Authority to decide

The decision to evacuate, the authority to evacuate and authority to warn may be the responsibility of several organisations. There needs to be clarity and understanding of how these functions will occur seamlessly during an emergency.

A decision not to evacuate is just as important as a decision to evacuate.

The evacuation plan should identify which organisation and/or position has the authority to decide to evacuate. This organisation or position may vary depending on the nature of the hazard threat and may not be the same organisation or position that is responsible for managing other stages of the evacuation process. Reference should be made to relevant state or territory legislation, documented emergency management arrangements and emergency management plans to identify the organisation or person who has the authority to make the decision.

In some cases, the relevant legislation, arrangements, or plans delegate this authority to whoever is in command and control of the incident. For organisations that have adopted the Incident Command and Control System Plus (ICCS+) or the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS), this will be the Incident Controller. These arrangements ensure that a decision-maker is available when needed. There may be occasions when due to the size, scale, and expected impact of the disaster, the Incident Controller

may need to delegate the evacuation function to a cell within the Incident Management Team. See *Incident Management* (AIDR 2023) for further details.

In the event of a decision to use a directed approach to evacuation, there needs to be a clear understanding regarding which organisation has the legislative powers to direct the evacuation. There may be circumstances across states and territories where the authorised organisation delegates the role and some powers to undertake the evacuation to another organisation.

Stakeholder management and the risk assessment process

Assess the risk

The existence of an evacuation plan does not mean that it will be implemented under all circumstances. Before deciding to undertake an evacuation for a particular hazard threat, an assessment of the risk presented by the expected hazard threat should be undertaken. Due to time constraints, this assessment will often be brief, although if time permits, relevant stakeholders should be consulted before deciding. The plan should identify the relevant stakeholders, typically including police, other relevant emergency management organisations, local government and community representatives from a diverse cross section of the community.

The *National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines* (NERAG) (AIDR 2020) provide guidance on risk assessment. Risk assessment applying NERAG should include the following steps:

· establish the context
· identify the risks
· analyse the risks
· evaluate the risks
· identify risk treatment options.

Details on how to address these steps are outlined below. Where time is insufficient to undertake a detailed risk assessment, or the impact of the hazard potentially falls outside the parameters identified for a defined event (e.g. if a flood level is higher than expected or a cyclone is of a lower category), a dynamic risk assessment using an abbreviated version of NERAG, or an alternative dynamic risk assessment, will be necessary.

Also using a systemic risk approach will help understand the interconnected nature of risk and its consequences.

> Further information about risk management can be found in *ISO 31000: 2018 Risk Management – Guidelines* and *Systemic Disaster Risk* (AIDR 2021).
>
> For further information about approaches to dynamic risk assessment adopted by Australian emergency services, see: ACT Emergency Services Agency and 'Dynamic risk assessment overview'. **esa.act.gov.au/ sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/dynamic-risk-assessment-overview.pdf**

Establish the context

To inform a decision about evacuation, the evacuation plan should document the context with reference to the following:

· nature and severity of the threat being planned for, the boundaries of the area under threat and the capacity of organisations to manage the threat (including its impact on people and their assets)

· any predictive modelling tools, specialist advice or other intelligence available to assist decision makers with their situational awareness to reach a decision

· cultural and heritage land rights of the area under threat and associated cultural leadership responsibilities

· time required to complete the warning and withdrawal stages for the area under threat

· potential risk to life if people remain, and if they evacuate

· time of day (it is advisable to evacuate during daylight hours if possible)

· potential loss of infrastructure or assets

· existence and adequacy of an evacuation plan

· existence and adequacy of resources and networks (e.g. transport options, egress routes)

· community characteristics – demographics, values, mobility, presence of people more at risk (e.g. isolated seniors, residents of nursing homes, seasonal workers, tourists), community experience with similar threats, length of residence, preparedness for the threat in question, familiarity with the evacuation plan, likely responses to the threat (with and without a warning to evacuate), community cohesion and connectedness, and resilience.

Identify the risks

To inform a decision about evacuation, the relevant risks should be identified, including but not limited to the following:

· time available until the threat impacts

· potential harm (both physical and psychological) to people remaining, including any who may be particularly vulnerable to the hazard, and potential harm to people evacuating

· potential harm to emergency services personnel undertaking different mitigation strategies, including evacuation

· potential psychological harm to those outside the area of impact by loss of contact and separation from family members, as well as those that may converge on disaster affected areas looking for loved ones

· potential cost of social and economic impacts of evacuation (e.g. interruption to social networks, loss of unprotected homes and businesses, loss of income, damage to unsecured property)

· potential loss of telecommunications infrastructure, which may limit capacity to warn

· potential for impact sooner than anticipated, and/or more severely than anticipated

· number of people likely to be unaware of the threat

· number of people unable to or unlikely to respond to warnings

· recent experiences of evacuations and other threats

· number of people who may need extra assistance in responding to the threat or warnings or face significant barriers in responding to the threat or warning or with increased vulnerability (e.g. lone parents with babies and small children, pregnant women, isolated seniors and those with disabilities).

3.3.4. Analyse the risks

Analysis of the risks should consider the risks relevant to the hazard being addressed (e.g. flood, bushfire, cyclone) and how those risks vary with different hazard levels (e.g. flood levels, fire danger ratings or cyclone categories respectively), and the potential for compounding disasters (e.g. the intersection of a dual hazard such as a pandemic risk during floods or dealing with multiple and consecutive evacuations). The degree of confidence will vary according to the quality and relevance of information available, the convergence of views of those consulted, and the time available to make a decision.

Evaluate the risks

Evaluation of the risks should quantify the risks with respect to likelihood and consequence based on different impact severity (e.g. flood level, fire danger rating or cyclone category) so that risks may be ranked and those requiring treatment identified.

Identify risk treatment options

If evacuation is identified as an appropriate risk treatment option, the most appropriate type of evacuation in the circumstances will need to be determined (e.g. whether it is directed or recommended, and total, partial and/or phased). To help inform the most appropriate type of evacuation, a jurisdiction may have access to and use a timeline evacuation model.

In circumstances where evacuation is an appropriate strategy, but insufficient time is available to evacuate all those at risk, consider partial evacuation or increased efforts to protect at-risk people in place.

If evacuation is not the appropriate strategy, or there is no time to evacuate anyone, the Incident Controller should take steps to warn affected residents, and where necessary, act to protect them in place where possible.

Communicate the decision

The evacuation plan needs to incorporate a process for the timely and effective communication of evacuation decisions to key organisations and stakeholders with responsibility for subsequent evacuation stages. Additionally, it is important to make the risk evaluation available to those managing the withdrawal stage. The communication of the decision to evacuate needs to be timely and tailored as there will be many organisations that have a role to play to enable the evacuation to proceed without any delay. The decision also needs to be communicated to people likely to be affected by the decision i.e. potential evacuees (see Stage 2: Warning).

The evacuation plan should also identify who will continue to update those responsible for subsequent stages about the progress of the incident, its implications for warnings and for managing the withdrawal stage.

Mobilise resources

The evacuation plan needs to identify the resources required for subsequent stages, where they will be sourced from, and how they will be activated. Of critical importance at the decision stage is the capacity to mobilise sufficient and appropriate resources for the warning and withdrawal stages.

Documentation

To assist in documenting the decision to evacuate or not, the evacuation plan might include a template to facilitate the risk assessment that will assist the decision-making process. This will document relevant information considered in the decision, such as who was consulted, the decision itself, which stakeholders were informed and the dates and times these actions occurred.

In circumstances where there is little if any time to document decisions and where possible it can be useful in transmitting information over a radio network or taking the time at the end of the evacuation to make relevant notes concerning the decision-making process.

Documentation will help with lessons management and continuous improvement processes. They may also contribute to independent or judicial inquiries or legal processes.

Chapter 4:
Stage 2: Warning

The purpose of this section is to guide the planning and development of arrangements to warn people about the need to evacuate and the steps they should take.

Summary

- Identify authority and responsibility to warn.
- Timely warnings.
- The Australian Warning System.
- Identify relevant stakeholders.
- Content of warning message templates.
- Determine warning dissemination methods.
- Ensure the message tells:
  - the right people
  - when, how and where to go
  - why
- Document it.

Introduction

Warning is the second stages of the evacuation process. A warning is information at a point-in-time about a hazard that is impacting or is expected to impact communities. Warnings describe the impact and expected consequences for communities and includes advice on what people should do. The primary intent of issuing a warning to evacuate is to save lives and minimise harm by facilitating protective action.

Authority and responsibility to warn

The evacuation plan should identify which organisation(s) and/or position(s) have the authority and responsibility to issue evacuation warnings. These organisation(s) and/or position(s) may differ depending on the nature of the hazard threat and local arrangements. As such, reference should be made to relevant state and territory legislation, documented emergency management arrangements or emergency management plans which identify the relevant organisation(s) and/or position(s).

The legislative framework in some jurisdictions may divide the responsibility for issuing evacuation warnings and the authority to evacuate across different organisations, however, given the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of disasters it is important the evacuation warnings and the evacuation function are considered and operate at the same time.

Jurisdictional statutory roles and responsibilities for warnings are identified in Table 3 in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR 2021).

While the authority to issue an evacuation warning rests with the relevant organisation(s) and/or position(s), the Total Warning System (comprising relationships between scientific organisations, government organisations, emergency management organisations and the community) is the system that ensures accurate, timely and relevant information is included within the warnings that are issued.

The Total Warning System is explained in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR 2021).

The evacuation plan should include reference to any collaborative arrangements that exist between key organisations (e.g. the Bureau of Meteorology) and relevant state and territory organisations and identify arrangements to ensure message content relating to evacuations is consistent. In many cases, the relevant legislation, arrangements or plans are likely to delegate the authority to issue evacuation warnings to the person in command or control of the incident. For organisations that have adopted ICCS+ or AIIMS, this will be the Incident Controller. These arrangements ensure that the person with the appropriate authority is available when needed.

For further guidance on the role of an Incident Controller see *Incident Management* (AIDR 2022).

Timely warnings

Experience from recent emergencies suggest lives have been lost when decisions to evacuate are left until the last minute. There is often limited time available to warn people of impending impacts. Evacuation warnings should be communicated as early as possible.

The purpose of a warning in the context of an evacuation is to provide:

1. information about the nature and timing of the hazard impact
2. specific advice about the evacuation, including who it applies to and why, when people should evacuate, where and when they should go and how to get to an appropriate evacuation point
3. information about the potential consequences of not evacuating, and protective measures to take if not evacuating.

Factors that may influence the effectiveness of warnings include:

· the nature and timing of the hazard impact
· the sense of urgency or relevance the warning creates
· technological limitations
· previous experience with emergency situations
· how the message is constructed
· the cognitive state and stress levels of those receiving the message
· the trust in the organisations delivering the message (and whether it has been confirmed by a trusted source)
· commentary in traditional and social media
· visual and auditory cues i.e., the more immediate and more obvious the threat, the greater the likelihood that people will accept and respond to a warning.

The warning arrangements for an anticipated hazard threat should identify:

· the trigger for warnings
· content of warning messages (such as specific actions people should take, location of assembly areas, evacuation centres and egress routes)
· the methods for delivering warnings to the community.

Warnings about evacuations should, where possible, be issued in a timely manner so people who receive them have enough time to confirm the message and respond to the information provided.

Warnings are most effective when underpinned by community education and engagement prior to an emergency, so that people understand their responsibilities before, during and after an emergency, what preparations to undertake, what to expect, and what action they may need to take. Therefore, the evacuation plan should identify opportunities to engage with and educate communities about emergency warnings.

Further guidance on warnings can be found in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR 2021).

Further guidance on community engagement can be found in *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR 2020).

For guidance on household emergency planning, see *Australian Red Cross' Emergency RediPlan:* **www.redcross.org.au/prepare**

Considerations

The Australian Warning System

The Australian Warning System (AWS) was adopted by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) in March 2021 and aims to provide a consistent warnings approach to Australian communities. The system is a three-level scaled warning system and includes a nationally consistent set of hazard icons for each warning level to show warnings on various publishing platforms (e.g. websites and apps) and provides calls to action. There are icons for cyclone, bushfire, flood, extreme heat, storm, and other hazards. There is a consistent shape and colour scheme, with icons increasing in size as the warning level increases.

There may be instances where some hazards such as tsunamis have nationally agreed warning frameworks. The nature of the hazard sets out different levels of alert and message content. In these circumstances, the plan for issuing evacuation warnings should be as consistent as possible with the Australian Warning System.

Guidance on the Australian Warning system is detailed in *Australian Warning System* (AIDR 2021).

Message construction

Ensuring consistency of structure, language and warning levels can assist with recognition or comprehension of a message, particularly in dynamic emergencies where multiple warnings are issued.

A warning message should be relevant to the receiver and their location and, if possible, tailored to their situation.

A warning message should be constructed so that people can easily identify that it applies to them, and that there is clear action(s) to take that will reduce their risk from the hazard.

Warning messages should have the following characteristics:

· authority
· credibility
· accuracy
· clarity
· consistency.

The evacuation plan should include message templates and prepared scripts. Pre-prepared templates and scripts will help ensure warnings include critical message content and can be issued promptly when required.

Further guidance on message construction can be found in *Warning Message Construction: Choosing Your Words* (AIDR 2021).

Message format

For many hazards, there are agreed standard messages or templates that should be used. As part of the evacuation planning process, pre-prepare messages that can be updated to reduce times to implement evacuation warning actions. The evacuation plan should identify and include these standard messages and templates and stipulate those warnings will use a consistent format. In Australia, the Common Alerting Protocol – Australia (CAP-AU) format should be used.

The purpose of CAP-AU is to ensure the message content is appropriate and unambiguous, and the message format is consistent, so that messages can be broadcast across a variety of communication systems.

Further information about the CAP-AU is available online. **www.bom.gov.au/metadata/CAP-AU/About.shtml**

Identifying relevant stakeholders

The evacuation plan should identify diverse community groups, businesses and organisations that may need to be reached. Different message content may need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of these groups. These may include but are not limited to:

· Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
· members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
· people living with a disability (physical and intellectual)
· people with differing levels of language, literacy and numeracy

· people experiencing homelessness
· hospitals, aged care and health facilities
· people receiving home-based treatment or with specific health care needs
· rehabilitation facilities and other supported accommodation
· a parent travelling alone with infants and small children
· pregnant and breastfeeding women
· childcare centres, schools, and other education institutions and tertiary schools and institutions
· owners of pets and companion animals
· owners of assistance animals
· farmers with livestock and others with animal welfare responsibilities (e.g. boarding kennels, animal shelters, horse racing, private zoos, research facilities or agistment facilities)
· people who are experiencing homelessness or are socially isolated
· remote communities
· tourists and temporary visa holders
· residential camps
· correctional facilities
· commercial and industrial precincts
· people aboard boats and ships, in bays/marinas or at sea
· recreational and sporting facilities
· places of worship
· transport hubs including train and bus stations and airports
· essential infrastructure operations (e.g. electricity generating plants, communications, fuel depots)
· people attending mass gatherings and major events
· those without ready access, reliable or suitable means of independent transport.

It may not always be possible to tailor customised messages to every sector of the community. Understanding the community profile of the area will help to prepare targeted messages. Consideration should be given to sending messages to community and social service organisations that are in regular contact with and support these groups of people, particularly those that are hard to reach. Evacuation Planning Committees may choose to road-test these customised messages with the various sectors to identify any opportunities for improvement.

Message content

Warning messages should contain:

- the name of the organisation issuing the warning
- the date and time of issue
- a description of the hazard and its potential impacts
- when and over what area the hazard is likely to impact
- the area to be evacuated, including a reference to specific 'evacuation zones' for phased or partial evacuation if they have been identified and used for public education prior to the event
- recommended evacuation routes and available evacuation centres
- how or where to validate the information and/or gain further information
- the consequence of not responding to the warning
- the time the next warning will be issued, or advice that no further warning will be issued.

Other content that should be considered for evacuation specific warnings includes:

- the expected duration of absence
- what essential items to take
- the need to secure one's home/business before leaving, and arrangements made to maintain security of evacuated communities
- need to advise family and friends of their evacuation plans
- how to manage pets
- how to manage assistance animals
- how to protect or where to relocate livestock
- safe egress routes
- what means are available, or should be used, to evacuate
- the locations of assembly areas and evacuation centres, and registration processes
- the availability of assistance to evacuate, and assistance following evacuation
- what is being done to control the hazard
- what arrangements may be made to allow temporary re-entry to property
- advice for people not at home at the time of the warning.

Consideration should be given to providing additional information for those remaining in place about personal safety and self-sufficiency, including:

- the potential consequences of remaining
- the need to be physically and psychologically prepared to remain
- protective measures to take
- how to shelter safely

- the need to source food, water, power and other essential services, now and/or later
- the need to inform friends and/or relatives of plans
- the need to Identify places of last resort in the event your plan fails.

> Further guidance on message construction can be found in *Warning Message Construction: Choosing Your Words (*AIDR 2021).
>
> Further guidance on physical psychological preparedness, see Australian Red Cross Prepare your mind and RediPlan.

Cross-reference between authorities

In situations where relevant information is included from more than one authority, each authority should be identified in the warning. For example, tropical cyclone warnings or tsunami warnings might include hazard information from the Bureau of Meteorology together with evacuation instructions from the relevant state or territory emergency authority.

Dissemination methods and tools

The evacuation plan should identify a range of warning methods to be used to ensure maximum penetration in the target community. Not everyone has access to or uses mobile technology. There may be limitations to some of these warning methods including the absence of, or failure of, technology such as loss of power or telecommunications. The plan should identify contingencies in case preferred media are unavailable. Options include websites, social media, mobile apps, broadcast media (public, commercial and community), telephone, face-to-face, sirens and public address systems, print media, distribution lists, community noticeboards and roadside and variable messaging signs.

> Dissemination methods and options are further described in Table 6: Common channels of communication when disseminating public information and warnings in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR 2021).

Radio as a communication method

The 2020 *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements* Chapter 13 (Warnings and Information) discussed how radio provided an important 'lifeline' to rural and regional communities that had no other means of obtaining information.

The Royal Commission highlighted:

- having a battery-operated AM radio improves redundancy because communities may lose power in an emergency
- ABC AM radio network is accessible to over 99% of the Australian population
- the importance of community radio stations acting as a potential source of emergency information
- there are 89 regions across Australia where Indigenous community radio stations services are the only available services in the region with most of these broadcasting emergency warning advice to fire affected remote Indigenous communities.

As part of household planning, residents should have a battery, solar or wind-up radio and spare batteries, as well as knowing the frequencies of their local radio stations.

For more information see: Australian Red Cross Prepare your mind and RediPlan, and ABC Emergency.

Documentation

To assist in documenting the warnings stage, the evacuation plan should include:

- warnings templates
- pre-prepared scripts
- details of who needs to be warned for different hazards
- networks that may be used to deliver warnings to vulnerable groups
- relevant contact details of organisations involved in warnings
- locations of sites for face-to-face warnings and briefings
- channels to be used to warn people
- tools and templates to record dates and times that warnings were issued, the nature and content of those warnings, and details of who was warned.

Chapter 5:
Stage 3: Withdrawal

The purpose of this section is to guide planning on how to withdraw people safely from an emerging threat following a decision and warning to evacuate being delivered.

Summary

- Identify authority and responsibility to manage withdrawal.
- Considerations for withdrawal planning:
    - identifying relevant stakeholders
    - planning for different types of withdrawal
    - planning for contingencies
    - linking to resources needed and routes to take
    - considering traffic management points and plans
    - considering security measures
    - planning communications for the withdrawal stage
    - preparing maps for withdrawal management
- Document the process.

Introduction

Withdrawal is the third stage of the evacuation process and involves the organised movement of people from a dangerous or potentially dangerous area to one that is safer.

Some people in the hazard impact area will self-evacuate and others will choose to remain. There is a responsibility for the those managing the withdrawal phase to provide guidance and assistance to those who choose to or are directed to withdraw.

Withdrawal is likely to be more effective if it is managed and carried out in accordance with a prepared plan. The arrangements for withdrawal should be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders. These may include:

- local government
- community representatives
- elders
- local police and emergency management organisations
- managers of local facilities
- transport agencies
- hazard management organisations.

Some facilities and groups of people whose withdrawal may need to be managed are listed in Section 4.4.4 Identifying relevant stakeholders.

Withdrawal arrangements should be consistent with any advice provided to people affected by the evacuation warning and with the decision to evacuate.

Withdrawal may involve the use of computational models (or 'agent-based models') to help predict how people and vehicles ('agents') behave under different circumstances. The Community Emergency Response Model (CERM)[4] is an example of a model that seeks to predict the response of communities (based on demographic characteristics) to warnings of different hazards and different intensities.

Identifying authority and responsibility to manage withdrawal

The evacuation plan should identify which organisation(s) and/or position(s) have the authority and responsibility to manage the withdrawal stage. These organisation(s) and/or position(s) may vary depending on the nature of the hazard threat. Reference should be made to relevant state and territory legislation, emergency management plans or documented emergency management arrangements to identify the organisation(s) and/or position(s).

The evacuation plan should identify arrangements necessary to ensure those managing the withdrawal remain well-informed about the nature of the incident, particularly any aspects that impact on the capacity to safely complete the withdrawal stage. For example, the plan should identify how updates on the progress of the incident will continue to be received, and any impacts on egress routes.

Considerations for withdrawal planning

The following factors should be considered in withdrawal planning:

Time available for withdrawal

The evacuation plan should include realistic estimations of how long the withdrawal stage will take to complete for different scenarios. This information should inform the person making the decision to evacuate. In some circumstances, evacuation may be the only safe option but the time available may be less than the time required to complete the withdrawal stage. The evacuation plan should include contingencies for such circumstances that may focus on partial evacuation for people most at risk, or increased efforts to protect them in place where possible. There is a direct relationship between the time available to conduct the withdrawal, the time required to move people at higher risk and the time of impact of the emergency.

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4   www.afac.com.au/docs/default-source/ru/community-emergency-response-model-validation-project.pdf

People at higher risk

The evacuation plan should identify people at higher risk, where more detailed withdrawal or shelter in place arrangements may need to be prepared. For some people, specific transport arrangements and destinations may need to be identified.

For places such as aged care facilities, schools, and medical facilities, where the risk to occupants is high during an emergency, the facility's evacuation plan should be added to or referenced within the emergency management plan. These plans should guide how people at these facilities will be managed during all stages of the evacuation process.

Those who remain

The person responsible for the withdrawal stage should focus on managing, guiding and assisting the withdrawal of those who have chosen or been directed to withdraw. Some people will self-initiate evacuation before, during or after the withdrawal stage, and while they may present at evacuation centres, they will often self-manage their withdrawal.

Others may choose to remain in place. This may be to protect their property, care for their animals or simply to shelter in place. Others will remain to wait and assess the situation before deciding whether to evacuate. Seeking to encourage any of these people to withdraw can be time-consuming and may endanger personnel managing the withdrawal. Only in circumstances where it is clearly unsafe for people to remain should efforts be made to remove them to safety. The evacuation plan should identify the relevant legislation and formal plans or arrangements that exist to inform how people who choose to remain should be managed.

Family groups and those groups familiar with one another

The evacuation plan should seek, whenever possible, to move groups of people familiar with each other (such as families, residents and staff of care facilities, neighbours) as a complete unit, to minimise the sense of dislocation likely to be experienced during an evacuation and maintain a continuity of care.

Exceptions must also be planned for. For example, some cultural practices may not allow certain family members to travel unaccompanied or travel and be accommodated together. These cultural practices may be set aside in life saving situations. Understanding the demographic of a community will assist evacuation planners in cultural considerations that may arise so plans can be developed to manage the situation. It is preferable these situations are identified and managed prior to any evacuation.

Consider that intervention orders issued by the judiciary or police may restrict the capacity of some individuals to travel unaccompanied or be accommodated with specified others. Consider the personal safety of those who might be experiencing family violence. Evacuation routes may see people encounter someone who they have intervention orders against.

Withdrawal planning and family violence

Gender and Disaster Australia worked with 1800RESPECT on an announcement highlighting a safety plan for those experiencing family violence. The announcement was aired across 57 ABC Radio stations nationally and a 45 second video was promoted online: **www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-CGTRmsC2c**

Infants and young children and their caregivers, pregnant and post-partum women

Those caring for infants and young children may have more difficulty evacuating and require more time to evacuate. Infants who are formula fed are particularly vulnerable during evacuations as they require uninterrupted access to infant formula and safe water for reconstitution and hot water for washing. Caregivers of formula fed infants should be encouraged to store feeding supplies in their emergency kit. However, it should be kept in mind that some families will not have the time or financial means to do this prior to evacuation.

Those managing the withdrawal need to be aware that parents and caregivers will not evacuate to environments that they feel are unsafe or unsuitable for their children. Heavily pregnant or postpartum women may find walking and driving difficult or impossible which may be a barrier to evacuation. Women who evacuate on their own with children may require proactive assistance in evacuation settings. Where possible, a separate space for families with very young children should be provided in evacuation centres.

Animal management

Individuals have a responsibility to make decisions about the safety and welfare of their pets and animals which may be affected by:

· evacuation withdrawal timings
· capacity to move their pets or animals
· availability of an appropriate location to move their pets or animals to.

Research suggests pet owners may be reluctant to evacuate if there is no provision made for their pets and animals which may result in negative outcomes to personal safety. Some people may choose to remain in place to care for these animals rather than evacuating without them. Evacuation planners should consider this evidence when developing evacuation plans.

People with assistance animals need special consideration in the evacuation plan. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), people cannot be separated from their assistance animal. While this may not present a significant challenge for those managing the withdrawal stage, those managing the shelter stage need to plan for the management of any evacuated animals.

Evacuees accompanied by animals should be advised of the location of any evacuation centres able to accommodate animals.

For further information about the management of pets, companion animals, assistance animals and livestock, see the National Planning Principles for Animals in Emergencies (Australian Veterinary Association 2014).[5]

Visitors and tourists

When an evacuation is declared, visitors, tourists and seasonal workers may be among the community and may require additional assistance. Local emergency management planning committees need to consider the diverse needs of these groups in the evacuation planning stage. Prior to a hazard consider:

· establishing relationships and encouraging active involvement of tourism and accommodation providers and major employers of seasonal workers in the evacuation planning process

· signposting evacuation/egress routes, centres, assembly areas, and/or places of last resort

· maintaining additional services, essential supplies and capacity of evacuation centres in popular tourist destinations.

Partial and phased evacuations

A partial or phased evacuation may be identified as part of the risk assessment during Stage 1: Decision to Evacuate. If a partial evacuation is possible, the evacuation plan should identify who is likely to be withdrawn, who is not and the arrangements in place to manage both groups. For example, to avoid traffic congestion, some at-risk groups may be withdrawn before the general population is encouraged to withdraw, and some may be protected in place.

If phased evacuation is appropriate, the evacuation plan should identify how this will unfold, including estimated timelines and assembly areas likely to apply for hazard impacts of varying intensities. For example, for a flood, upstream communities may be encouraged to evacuate before downstream communities. Similar arrangements may be made for communities in the path of an advancing bushfire.

Assembly areas

It may be necessary to escort people from the hazard impact area to ensure they are safe. For this purpose, the evacuation plan should identify assembly areas (or in some jurisdictions, transit areas) where people in cars, buses and other transport can assemble in safety safely before being escorted from the hazard impact area.

The evacuation plan should identify who will attend assembly areas to marshal, brief and escort those who have gathered there.

At assembly areas, plans should be made to:

· register evacuees, e.g. Register.Find.Reunite (identifying name, address, contact details, destination, mode of transport and vehicle registration number)

· provide toilet facilities, refreshments, fuel resupply (liquid and electricity)

· provide relevant information about the hazard threat, the evacuation process, shelter options and locations, likely duration until the return stage, and how/where to access further information and support.

Evacuees may have to remain at assembly areas for a significant period of time pending safe passage to their onward destination.

Register.Find.Reunite.

Register.Find.Reunite is activated when people are displaced in an emergency and may occur when a decision to evacuate is made, simultaneous with a warning being issued or when the withdrawal stage commences enabling people to access the Register.Find.Reunite. system.

Transportation options

The evacuation warnings issued during the warnings stage should include advice about transport options for withdrawal. To minimise the number of people who will require transport arrangements, evacuees can be encouraged to make their own arrangements to withdraw before the hazard impacts. Typical options include:

· walking/cycling/scooters

· own or friend's car

· taxi

· watercraft

· commercial transport providers

· public transport.

Evacuation on foot or bicycle should only be encouraged where distances to be travelled are short, either to immediate safety or to a nearby assembly area.

Transportation arrangements may need to be made for some at-risk groups. The evacuation plan should identify the resources that are needed, and the arrangements that have been or need to be made to transport these people to an appropriate destination. There may be a need to arrange specialist transport such as:

· buses

· wheelchair-accessible vehicles

· cars with child seats

· ambulances

· boats or aircraft to help people most at-risk, those who may be isolated or otherwise in need of assistance

· accommodation of pets/service animals.

The likely extent of self-initiated evacuation should be considered as this will affect the number of transport resources required, or the prioritisation and use of limited resources.

Implications for air traffic control should be considered where multiple aircraft may need to converge near evacuation centres. Consider seeking Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) assistance in planning for and managing the withdrawal and return stages, and the additional risks posed by the hazard for air and water transport.

Consideration should be given to protocols for managing 'avoidance relationships' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where it will not be possible for shared transport of some community members. Advice should be sought from community Elders.

Egress routes

The evacuation plan should identify safe egress routes and alternative routes to be announced in evacuation warnings. The evacuation plan should also identify:

· arrangements to signpost egress routes that may not be obvious to evacuees

· egress routes that can accommodate expected traffic volumes

· egress routes for pedestrian/cycle traffic

· traffic management models, in the case that there are many evacuees.

Traffic management

The evacuation plan should link to traffic management plans and identify the location of appropriate places for vehicle control points to help control the flow of traffic leaving the hazard impact area, avoid bottlenecks and to restrict the entry of traffic into the impact area until it is safe.

Traffic is often managed by police or contracted traffic personnel to first facilitate entry for emergency response vehicles while the hazard is being managed, and later for people and vehicles supporting the restoration of facilities and services during the return phase.

The evacuation plan should identify who will staff these vehicle control points, including relevant contact details. To reduce the risk of high-speed collisions, consider making egress routes one-way, supported at each end by appropriate signage and/or vehicle control points, and/or introducing lower speed limits. Platooning or escorting convoys of evacuee's transport is another way of managing traffic and providing reassurance to the community.

> **Consider:** The identification of egress routes, assembly areas and vehicle control points should be done in consultation with community representatives, as they will be able to readily identify the routes and places that locals are likely to use and provide safe passage.

Contingencies

The evacuation plan should identify available contingencies to respond to vehicle breakdowns, road blockages and where vehicle fuel (liquid and electricity) can be accessed, if necessary, shortages of signage or personnel and anticipate other challenges to people withdrawing from an area. Again, relevant contact details should be included in the plan.

Security

Whenever circumstances permit, the security of vacated communities should be arranged to discourage theft. These arrangements, such as routine police patrols, should be made in consultation with local police and detailed in the evacuation plan so that details can be announced during emergency warnings. A process for identifying or recording which premises have been vacated during the evacuation emergency can be helpful in maintaining security.

Communications

The evacuation plan should include a communications sub-plan that identifies how information about withdrawal will be communicated between those managing the withdrawal and how this will be communicated to evacuees. For example, getting information out that planned egress routes have become unusable due to bridges being damaged, or large trees downed by strong winds.

In some circumstances, the time evacuees spend enroute may be considerable. These people can be communicated with via broadcast radio, about where to access fuel for petrol/diesel and electric vehicles, food, water, cash, and other services. In more remote locations, communication may be via two-way radio. Local radio frequencies could be promoted on signs on highways for travellers and people not familiar with the area.

Documentation

To assist in documenting the withdrawal stage, the evacuation plan should include:

· details of the specific plans to manage at-risk groups (including plans to evacuate and/or shelter people in place, prepared by facilities managers), location of facilities housing at-risk groups, and relevant contact details

· location of egress routes including alternate routes

· location of vehicle control points and assembly areas

· use of Register.Find.Reunite. as a registration tool

· transportation arrangements including contact details

· security arrangements

· communications sub-plan.

The evacuation plan should facilitate the recording of details of the evacuation plan as it unfolds. These details should include who was evacuated, at what time and to where.

Maps (preferably digitised to readily enable sharing) should clearly identify the location of at-risk groups (including those where shelter in place arrangements have been made), preferred egress routes, and the locations of assembly areas, evacuation centres and traffic management points.

Chapter 6:
Stage 4: Shelter

The purpose of this section is to guide the development of a plan to provide adequate shelter, places, and spaces for any evacuees who require it. This may include self-initiated evacuees, as well as any animals accompanying evacuees.

Summary

- Identify authority and responsibility.
- Identify shelter options.
- Evacuation centres purpose and features.
- Evacuee support, health safety and security considerations.
- Management of evacuation centres.
- Animal management and welfare.
- Contingency arrangements when a shelter is compromised, or capacity exceeded.
- Plan for the registration and intake of evacuees.
- Keeping evacuees and others informed.
- Transition to recovery.
- Planning for closure.
- Documentation.
- Plan communications for the shelter stage.
- Document it.

Introduction

Shelter is the fourth stage of the evacuation process. Shelter involves the provision of places and spaces to meet the basic needs of people affected by the emergency, away from the immediate or potential effects of the hazard. Shelter is critical for evacuees who cannot remain at home due to a hazard impact or potential impact and who cannot access their own sheltering solution. The shelter stage provides short term accommodation for evacuees who do not have alternative options. The shelter needs of individuals, the types of shelter and spaces they seek, or that can be provided can vary throughout the evacuation process.

There are two types of shelter spaces:

1. Planned and designated spaces that are the subject of guidelines.
2. Informal, community initiated sheltering solutions that may emerge in support of evacuated communities.

Those planning for and managing shelter options will need to be aware of these potential emergent sites.

Authority and responsibility to manage shelter

The evacuation plan should identify the lead organisation with authority and responsibility to manage the shelter stage. This organisation and the associated roles and responsibilities may vary depending on the nature of the hazard threat. Reference should be made to relevant state or territory legislation, emergency management plans, and documented emergency management arrangements to identify local arrangements. In many cases, legislation, arrangements, or plans delegate this authority and responsibility to local government or a state government organisation. In some states and territories, Australian Red Cross may also play a significant role.

Shelter options

The evacuation plan should describe the range of shelter options available, their different purposes and features, and how they may be used.

Self-shelter options

The evacuation plan should include arrangements to promote self-organised shelter options, encouraging evacuees to make their own accommodation arrangements away from the hazard impact area. This should be part of household emergency preparedness campaigns and activities (see Australian Red Cross' Emergency RediPlan). This promotes self-efficacy and reduces the burden on the responsible organisation, particularly where assisted accommodation options may be in short supply.

Self-organised options may include evacuees:

- staying with family or friends
- using commercial or other forms of accommodation (e.g. hotels, motels, guest houses, mobile or holiday homes).

There will be some people unable to organise their own shelter options, where they do not have financial resources for commercial options or transport, or they do not have strong social networks within the community. Some households that experience overcrowding may not be able to act as host options.

Plans should be made to communicate with those who have elected to make their own accommodation arrangements to help manage the return stage and future recovery activity.

Assisted accommodation options

For those who are unable to access their own shelter arrangements, plans should be made to provide the following options:

1. **Evacuation centres** – the evacuation plan should document the arrangements that have been made with the owners of facilities to be used as evacuation centres. Details should include how and by whom they will be activated, what responsibilities remain with the facility owner, and what responsibilities the organisation responsible for the shelter stage shall have.

2. **Commercial accommodation** – evacuees may be redirected to commercial accommodation. The plan therefore should list commercial accommodation providers who have been identified for this purpose, including relevant contact details and any agreed arrangements.

3. **Specialist facilities** – it is recognised that not all evacuee needs can be appropriately met in the context of an evacuation centre. This may include higher level health and disability care needs as well as the unique needs of some cultural groups. Evacuation centre planning should include engagement with specialist organisations to provide guidance on alternative sheltering and support solutions for people requiring more tailored assistance. Plans should also consider good practice arrangements already underway in the local community and should seek to leverage off those arrangements.

> The unique needs of Indigenous Peoples should be considered when determining sheltering solutions. This may include:
>
> · Observing protocols for accommodation, engagement and support of community Elders and Traditional Owners.
>
> · Making provision for maintaining family connection and structure which includes the placement of large and extended families together in one location.
>
> · Facilitating arrangements that consider cultural safety and the management of avoidance relationships which can include the need for Elders to travel together, separation of male and females with determined avoidance relationships or feuding families. Where possible, more than one transport option should be organised so that communities are not expected to travel together as one large group.

Evacuation centres

The purpose of an evacuation centre is to temporarily house evacuees who have limited capacity to find alternate accommodation following withdrawal from an area of risk. Evacuees may be feeling vulnerable, stressed, and traumatised by the uncertainty of the emergency experience. This may manifest in a range of reactions and behaviours within the centre. The evacuation centre should be a safe and secure place of shelter that provides for their basic needs and where they can start their recovery.

Unlike other shelter options, an evacuation centre is often not purpose-built for accommodation, but is adapted for this purpose infrequently, or as required.

Examples of facilities that may be suitable as evacuation centres include sporting complexes, community and neighbourhood centres, entertainment venues, RSL clubs, schools and showgrounds. The evacuation plan should have estimates of the capacity that each designated shelter can safely support. There may be situations where due to the number of evacuees that more than one evacuation centre is required. Consideration should be given to the complexity of issues that could arise when selecting venues such as access to alcohol and gambling, and separation of evacuees and school children if a school is still operating.

> For further information of common reactions and behaviours in emergencies, see Australian Red Cross' *Coping with a Major Personal Crisis*.

To ensure evacuation centres are fit for purpose, they should:

· be located outside the expected hazard impact area and be appropriately identified, maintained, and sufficiently prepared for an emergency

· where possible be separate from locations being as control centres, staging areas or base camps by responding organisations

· be available for the duration of the shelter stage (and potentially ongoing), confirmed in formal agreements with owners

· have sufficient space and appropriate bedding (which may be brought in) to enable evacuees to sleep comfortably

· have power, communications, water supply, and emergency redundancies including the ability to connect to emergency supplies

· have adequate heating, cooling and airflow

· have adequate toilet and washing facilities (consider family and non-gender specific facilities)

· have access to laundry facilities (or arrangements if occupied for an extended period)

· have adequate provisions for dining and recreation

· be accessible to people living with disabilities or mobility needs

· have areas that can be allocated as safe spaces for families with young children and people with specific support needs

· have arrangements in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults from harm (e.g. power point covers, fenced water areas and stair rails)

· be safe for those experiencing or survivors of family violence

· be safe for people of diverse gender and sexual identities

· have services for pets (or access to services)

· accommodate a range of support services

· be secure

· have sufficient parking

· have access to transport to local population centres

· have insurance appropriate for the intended use

· have appropriate waste management facilities.

Evacuee support

Some people might require additional support. This includes those who identify as LGBTIQIA+, are from a CALD background, or are Indigenous, infants, children and young people, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, parents of babies and infants, pregnant women, women and children experiencing family violence, people living with a disability and/or with health needs (including mental health and addiction issues), and tourists. They can be particularly vulnerable as their regular safeguards, routines and support structures have been interrupted or altered. The evacuation plan should consider how diverse needs could be met while sheltering, including but not limited to:

· access to health, wellbeing, cultural, and personal support, including for people living with a disability

· access to psychosocial supports, including psychological first aid, service referrals, pastoral care and specialist mental health support (for those with acute or chronic mental illness)

· additional measures to ensure the safety and protection of children, including the establishment of 'child friendly spaces', age-appropriate activities and recovery support programs

· designation of areas for those caring for infants and young children to have a comfortable, and supportive space for caring for their children, including breastfeeding, or expressing milk

· arrangements to support safe infant feeding including the provision of age-appropriate infant formula and food, bottles, sterilising equipment, and mechanisms for heating and storing baby food, breast milk, and bottles and washing feeding implements, signage saying 'do not wash baby bottles here' should be displayed in toilets and women experiencing breastfeeding difficulties should be referred for assistance, including via the National Breastfeeding Helpline (1800 686 268)

· provision of supplementary signage on code of conduct and behavioural expectations, including zero tolerance for drugs, alcohol, antisocial behaviours, racism, homophobia, and domestic or family violence

· provision of services in other languages and the use of symbols

· displaying LGBTQIA+ and pride symbols.

Where possible, infant formula and feeding supplies should be immediately available in locations to which families are evacuated and after assessment of need by a health worker wherever possible.

Breastfeeding provides infants with a safe and continuous supply of food and water as well as protection from infections. For breastfeeding women or those who are expressing milk, providing a private location is strongly recommended.

Further information on infant feeding in emergencies can be found with the Australian Breastfeeding Association. **www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/feed-baby-emergency**

For further resources to assist in establishing child-friendly spaces, visit: **knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-evacuation-planning**

Practical guidance on supporting gendered needs can be found in *Acting on Gendered Needs in Evacuation and Relief Centres Checklist*. **knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-gender-and-emergency-management-guidelines**

Further resources for establishing and managing evacuation centres, including details of essential, recommended, and desirable features, are available on the Australian Red Cross website. **www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/resources**

Health, safety, and security

The evacuation plan should identify measures to ensure the health, safety and security of shelter staff and evacuees, addressing:

- appropriate induction of staff, volunteers, and evacuees into the premises
- environmental health issues including food safety, waste management, and the prevention and control of communicable diseases
- local health network for the purpose of accessing specific critical pharmaceuticals, mental health support, primary health support, and mental health medications
- applying protective distancing and hygiene measures during a public health emergency or outbreak
- fire safety
- site safety and safe work practices
- site security, which may include support from police, private security services or other authorised persons.
- management of evacuees that have to meet parole and bail requirements.
- management of evacuees who may have intervention orders taken out against them and evacuees who may be registered sex offenders

- restricting access to the centre to evacuees and approved personnel who have a role at the evacuation centre, which assists in maintaining safety, security and privacy of evacuees. Police and security contractors can assist with this function. Police services need to be engaged in the planning process to ensure they are aware of and can resource this role.

Experiences of lack of security in evacuation centres: family violence

The diversity of Australian communities and specific support requirements need to be reflected in evacuation plans and shelters including people living with or escaping family violence. Read Kim's experience below.

Kim struggled into the Evacuation Centre with a baby in her arms and a toddler clinging to her skirt. She had a full backpack on her back and a pillow under her arm. She was exhausted after preparing her home for the fire that was predicted to affect her neighbourhood. She'd moved there three years ago as it was the only place she could afford to rent. She always worried about bushfires. She'd attended bushfire information sessions and knew where the designated Evacuation Centre was. However, just getting there was dangerous and frightening. The carpark was full, and lugging the kids and the bag was hard going too.

The woman at the intake table was kind, she asked for Kim's address and wrote it down clearly. Kim worried others could see it. The woman didn't ask Kim about her safety, so at the end of the intake, Kim had to tell her there was an Intervention Order to prevent her ex-partner coming near her or her children. The woman didn't seem to understand the danger Kim was in if her partner came to the same Evacuation Centre – which he was likely to do. There was no safe room for Kim, and there was no way to speak with someone from the family violence service. No-one seemed to know what to do.

Information to support evacuation centre planning during a public health emergency can be found in the Red Cross Evacuation Centre Planning and Operational considerations COVID-19 guide: **www.disaster.qld.gov.au/dmg/st/Documents/RG1283-Evacuation-Centre-Planning-and-Operational-Considerations-COVID-19.pdf**

Management of evacuation centres

Effective management and operation of evacuation centres requires support from multiple organisations and services. The evacuation centre plan should include details of the management and reporting structure to be utilised and determine accountability and governance arrangements. Roles and responsibilities of all supporting organisations should be clearly documented, together with arrangements for ensuring the seamless delivery of services over an extended period. The services required at an evacuation centre are likely to change over time, and accommodation for some or all evacuees may be shifted off-site as more suitable accommodation options become available.

To ensure effective communication and to minimise disruption to service delivery as evacuation centre services evolve, reporting lines should be detailed in the evacuation plan, as well as arrangements for communicating between service providers and for managing disputes.

The evacuation plan should identify sources for all goods and services that will be required during evacuation centre operations, including food, water, bedding, hygiene products, animal supplies, infant supplies and other necessary supplies, as well as health and welfare services.

In some circumstances such as widespread damage, road closures, or a population surge (tourists/holidaymakers) in the impacted area, food supplies may be compromised. The plan should identify supply contingencies which may include arrangements between state and territory governments and supply chain managers to address these circumstances. Further support may be required from the Australian Government in addressing large scale supply issues.

Evacuation centres often bring large numbers of people unknown to each other into proximity, sometimes for extended periods. Managing appropriate behaviour in these circumstances can be a dynamic and challenging process. The evacuation plan should include communication of expected behaviour to shelter staff and evacuees, and contingencies to manage anti-social behaviour.

There may be multiple evacuation centres activated. It is important there are adequate numbers of trained and culturally competent staff available to operate these centres. Effective planning should include the identification of a surge workforce which may be drawn from a range of organisations including community volunteers. Consideration may be given to arranging mutual aid agreements to share resources when demand exceeds supply.

> For further information on managing spontaneous volunteers refer to *Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers* (AIDR 2017).

Animal management and welfare

Evidence suggests some people may be reluctant or refuse to evacuate if they are unable to bring their pets and companion animals to an evacuation centre or commercial accommodation. The evacuation plan should consider at least one site that will cater for pets. Owners of pets and companion animals should be advised that they retain responsibility for the welfare of their animals including feeding, cleaning up and control. The location of evacuation centres that cater for pets should be included in the content of warning messages.

Assistance animals

Assistance animals are not classified as pets, but rather are highly trained disability support assets that enable a person with a disability to safely participate in private and public life activities. There are a range of disabilities that might require the use of an assistance animal. An assistance animal with an evacuee should not be denied access to any form of emergency shelter including evacuation centres. All plans should consider how evacuees with assistance animals are supported and assisted during an evacuation. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) sets out the legal definition of an assistance animal and provides other relevant supporting information.

Additional services for evacuees

Registration of evacuees

The separation of family members during an emergency is highly stressful and can have long term mental health impacts. Facilitating reunification reduces this stress as well as long-term impacts and reduces the potential for convergence on the emergency site of people seeking their missing family members. Australia has a nationally agreed registration and enquiry system; Register.Find.Reunite which provides for the registration and reunification of people displaced or impacted by an emergency event. The system is operated primarily by the Australian Red Cross and police, with the support of other responding organisations. There are jurisdictions that use local case management systems in addition to Register.Find. Reunite.

The evacuation plan should identify the necessary arrangements for use of the registration system during the shelter stage and for its promotion across a range of media. This will enable all those affected by the hazard impact, including self-initiated evacuees, those who remained, and those who are seeking to establish contact with them, to register their contact details.

Arrangements should be made to enable people to register using several options, including telephone and internet. People at assembly areas and evacuation centres should be able to readily access the register. Consideration should be given to evacuees using Wi-Fi and being able to charge devices in the evacuation centre to register via their own devices to avoid queues forming.

Established shelters will require the use of a registration and intake process to facilitate the management and support of evacuee needs whilst in the shelter.

Keeping evacuees and others informed

The evacuation plan should include a communications sub-plan that identifies how evacuees will be kept informed about shelter and recovery matters. Community Elders and leaders can play a valuable role in informing and sharing community messaging.

Plans should be made to keep evacuees informed about:

· the evolving emergency

· known impacts on the community

· road closures and access restrictions

· any risks associated with early return, and how to mitigate them

· services, resources, and financial assistance available to evacuees

· recovery plans and progress

· expected closure date of any evacuation shelters, and plans and dates for return

· opening of a recovery centre and access to recovery support services.

Evacuees in an evacuation centre may be communicated with using a noticeboard and regular face-to-face briefings. The communications sub-plan should identify how more widely dispersed evacuees, and those who chose to remain in place, will be kept informed with consistent messages, such as through social media and community meetings.

All communications should be open, honest, relevant, and up to date. Any information about damage to specific homes and properties should be dealt with sensitively, and only directly with affected property owners and occupants.

In addition to evacuees, messages should be tailored to meet the needs of the owners of any facilities being used, and their staff, as well as those managing the evacuation centre. Plans should also be made so that relevant information from organisations responsible for evacuation stages can be shared with the surrounding community and emergency management personnel.

Key message: People under stress may struggle to receive and process information. Further guidance on effective communication is available in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR 2021) and *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR 2020). Additional resources are also available on the Australian Red Cross website: **www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/emergency-services/communicating-in-recovery-resource.pdf**

Contingency arrangements when a shelter is compromised, or capacity is exceeded

A shelter may become compromised or exceed capacity requiring the activation of contingency arrangements. Alternative shelter sites with the appropriate capacity, infrastructure and support services should be identified in the evacuation plan. If appropriate shelter cannot be safely provided locally, the plan should identify arrangements for the movement and shelter of evacuees to neighbouring communities or larger population centres. Plans should also account for the situation escalating to a point where the provision of additional resource requirements are beyond the capacity of the existing services and organisations, and the early identification of those escalation points.

Transition to recovery

The services available to evacuees in a shelter should transition to those available under local recovery plans and arrangements, with many of the same organisations. This will assist with a seamless transition to recovery, noting that recovery centres may be established in the same or separate facilities during the shelter stage to provide recovery assistance.

Planning for closure

The evacuation plan should include a clear exit strategy for the provision of shelter. Consultation with evacuees, supporting organisations, and those responsible for managing the evacuation process, will assist in determining and applying appropriate closure strategies. Safe access to community, and housing, and local social support services, are often a key inhibitor to evacuees returning home, which impacts on timings for the evacuation centre closure. The evacuation centre maybe the first time someone has had contact with support services and may need referral to additional support. Targeted solutions may be required to support access to alternative accommodation solutions and ongoing recovery supports and services (see Chapter 7: Stage 5: Return).

The closure of evacuation centres involves significant logistical effort by all stakeholders and requires that the facility utilised is restored back to its original function. Detailed briefing and tasking of centre personnel is required to ensure that all resources are demobilised, and appropriate document management protocols are observed.

Documentation

To assist in documenting the shelter stage, the evacuation plan should include details (including floor plans) of the facilities available for sheltering evacuees. It should also include agreed arrangements with the owners and managers of those facilities to set up, activate and operate those facilities as shelters and relevant contact details. A template document or software application for registering evacuees should also be included.

A communications sub-plan should be prepared to ensure appropriate information continues to be communicated to evacuees via suitable media. Communications should be available in multiple languages in accordance with the demographic profiles of the area.

Additional supporting documentation may include:

· a register of supplies required to support shelter operations (with recommended quantities of, e.g. bedding, furnishings, food, hygiene products, infant supplies, cleaning supplies, waste management, communications tools)

· shelter management templates including:

  − sign in/out sheets

  − registration and intake forms

  − incident report forms

  − resupply request forms

  − situation reporting templates

  − signage in multiple languages and symbols based on local demographic profiles of the local area.

Chapter 7:
Stage 5: Return

The purpose of this section is to guide the making of an informed decision about the safe and timely return of evacuees to their homes and businesses, and the development of a plan to manage the return effectively and efficiently.

Summary

- Identify authority and responsibility to manage return.
- Do it early – when safe to do so.
- Identify and engage relevant stakeholders.
- Develop risk management processes for return.
- Identify return options.
- Plan communications for the return stage.
- Link with recovery plans.
- Document it.

Introduction

Return is the final stage of the evacuation process. It is the period during which those who have left the hazard impact area can return or relocate on a temporary or permanent basis.

The return stage should be a planned and managed process to ensure that it is carried out as soon as possible and as safely as practicable. Returning is not without risk, but to delay return in the hope that all risks will be eliminated is not realistic. To delay return itself carries risks, as delay can have negative impacts on the wellbeing and recovery of returnees.

Return can be stressful, particularly for people who have lost loved ones, pets, employment and/or property. Damaged landscapes change people's mental maps and can be disorienting and distressing. There may also be misinformation or tension due to differing experiences of the emergency and associated psychological trauma. People respond to stress differently, which may result in increased conflict, particularly during the return stage.

Community support for the commencement or delaying of return will be enhanced if appropriate community representatives are involved in developing the evacuation plan and informing the decision to, and timing of, the return.

The evacuation plan should therefore include strategies to promote reconnection and to minimise and manage the potential for conflict, including the provision of timely and accurate information to promote shared understanding, ensuring support services are available, providing professionals to support distressed or traumatised community members and the meaningful engagement of community in the return process.

Not all evacuees will return permanently to their home or business. Some will choose to relocate, and others may be resettled elsewhere at the directive of government (e.g. as followed the Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand).

The return stage is not complete until all evacuees have either returned to their primary place of residence or have relocated or resettled in another location. In circumstances where people have lost their primary accommodation, or it is uninhabitable, it is important that transitional arrangements are in place for temporary or alternative accommodation.

For further information on returning home, see Australian Red Cross' Returning home and coping after a crisis: **www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/returning-home-and-coping-after-a-crisis**

Authority to decide and responsibility to manage return

The evacuation plan should identify which organisation(s) and/or position(s) have the authority and responsibility to decide when the return stage can commence and to manage the return. The organisation(s) and/or position(s) may vary depending on the nature of the hazard threat. Reference should be made to relevant state or territory legislation, emergency management plans or documented emergency management arrangements to identify the organisation(s) and/or position(s).

Considerations

Context

The managed return of people suggests that evacuees have remained outside the hazard impact area pending a formal decision that will enable them to return. Experience has shown that many will have returned earlier despite recommendations and arrangements against this. These actions suggest that people undertake their own risk assessment based on their needs, access to local information, and risk appetite. For example, farmers and people with animal welfare responsibilities may need to return quickly to attend to their livestock, and business owners will be keen to restore their means of making a living as quickly as possible. Households that have lost most of their possessions will often want to return to see what remains, to salvage items, and to secure it.

Risk assessment

When to start the formal return stage should be based on a risk assessment process like that described in Stage 1: Decision to Evacuate. The evacuation plan should include a template that facilitates the conduct and documentation of the risk assessment. Once the risk assessment has been completed and the risks treated to the extent required, the return stage should commence.

The evacuation plan should detail arrangements to have properly trained and equipped teams in the field gathering data, to enable the risk assessment to take place as soon as the organisation(s) managing the incident authorise it. Teams should include representatives of government organisations, infrastructure owners and affected communities whose local knowledge and diverse representation will add value to assessments and credibility to analysis and evaluation. The evacuation plan should document how data will be captured and include either data capture forms or an electronic application to enable data capture and analysis.

Risks to be assessed may include:

· the residual hazard, or the possibility of the hazard returning

· availability of emergency services and health services in line with pre-disaster levels

· new hazards (e.g. ground, air or water contaminated by asbestos, sewage, deceased animals, dangerous and distressed wildlife)

· risk mitigation measures

· safety of access and egress routes

· safety of structures

· safety of electrical and gas facilities and infrastructure, fuel storage and other hazardous facilities

· the capacity to reconnect services to damaged buildings and treat contaminated water supplies

· the availability of facilities, utilities, services, food and water necessary to sustain returnees

· evidence of crime.

Temporary re-entry

The evacuation plan should provide for the temporary re-entry of people (such as householders, business owners, and farmers) to the hazard impact area prior to opening the area to the broader community. Temporary re-entry may be enabled to assess damage, collect belongings, or attend to livestock, and should only follow an appropriate assessment of the risk. Consider issuing permits to those temporarily re-entering (see Section 7.3.5. Permit system).

Phased return

Phased return should be considered in the evacuation plan. Enabling those with homes, employment, and businesses (e.g. agricultural and commercial) to return as soon as it is reasonably safe to do so should be facilitated, while continuing to restrict access to those who merely want to visit the hazard impact area. In instances where entry is restricted, vehicle control points may be used to assess people seeking to return to the hazard impact area.

To inform staged return and speed up the return process, the evacuation plan should identify the range of services and infrastructure that may be interrupted by the hazard impact. The plan should also include details of key contacts to enable service providers to enter impacted areas to restore services and infrastructure as soon as practicable following risk assessment and the implementation of necessary risk treatments applicable to their operations.

Permit system

A permit system may be appropriate to facilitate the re-entry or return of some people prior to complete resolution of the hazard. For example, farmers and people with animal welfare responsibilities such as boarding kennels, stables, agistment facilities and feedlots may require urgent access to attend to injured animals, locate, and contain wandering stock and to provide water and feed. Traditional Owners may also require access to assess damage to cultural sites of significance and undertake cultural business. Permits should only be issued following an appropriate assessment of the risk in the area being accessed. In addition to a risk assessment the following should be considered:

· the identification of high risk 'no-go' areas

· times of entry and exit

· mode of transport and speed and load restrictions

· confinement of activities to specific properties and access/egress routes

· any limitations due to infrastructure restoration activities

· legal indemnity and responsibility for safety.

Any existing emergency management arrangements that guide the process of permitted access to hazard impacted areas should be appended to the evacuation plan.

Restricted access to high-risk areas

Risk treatment may include identifying areas that cannot be accessed by the public until the risk has been eliminated (such as hazardous trees, road wash outs or areas contaminated by asbestos or sewage) but enabling access to other parts of the hazard-impacted area as soon as possible.

The evacuation plan should identify how to restrict access to those areas that still pose a threat to health and safety. Signage, roadblocks and/or vehicle control points may be appropriate.

Communication

To help evacuees make well-informed decisions before returning and remaining in hazard impact areas, the evacuation plan should include a communications sub-plan for sharing relevant information with returnees prior to and after their return.

Information should be provided about:

· what to expect when they return (e.g. what they will see, smell, feel, impacts to essential services such as sewerage and power)
· the residual risks returnees face
· mitigation strategies that organisations have put in place, and additional strategies returnees may put in place to augment them
· travel and accommodation arrangements for those requiring assistance to return
· location of and reason for restricted areas
· support services available in the vicinity (e.g. health, welfare, banking, insurance, education, childcare)
· food and water supplies, access to fuel, hardware stores.

Evacuees should be encouraged to weigh up this information and consider if and when they will return given their own needs, capacities and circumstances.

How this information is delivered should be described in the communications sub-plan. Returnees should continue to be consulted about their information needs, which will vary over time. This consultation should identify when communication is no longer required.

For further information on returning home, see Australian Red Cross' Returning home and coping after a crisis: **www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/returning-home-and-coping-after-a-crisis**

Documentation

To assist in documenting the return stage, the evacuation plan should include a template to enable risk assessment to be undertaken quickly, as well as a template or software application to facilitate data collection and analysis of risks. It should identify essential infrastructure likely to be impacted, and key contact details for infrastructure owners/managers. Vehicle control points should also be identified in the plan, including location information.

A communications sub-plan should be included, to ensure appropriate information continues to be communicated to returnees via suitable media. Given the importance of this stage, provision should be made to include a feedback loop from the community to inform actions of those controlling the return.

Transition to recovery

Some elements of the return stage will overlap with components of the recovery plan. During this stage there will be a transition of control and coordination. The return should be coordinated between the person(s) responsible for managing the return stage and the person(s) responsible for recovery. The integration of return and recovery should be described consistently in both the evacuation plan and the recovery plan. The point at which the return stage is completed should be agreed between those managing return and recovery.

Not all who left the hazard impact area will be able to return permanently until their home or business is restored or rebuilt, there will be some who do not wish to return at all. The needs of these two groups will remain a strong focus for those managing the recovery process.

Further information about the recovery process can be found in *Community Recovery* (AIDR 2018).

Appendix 1

Sheltering terminology

The terms for emergency shelters vary across jurisdictions. The following table outlines the names used in each jurisdiction. The source of the information is from the evidence provided to the 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

Table 1: Sheltering terminology use across jurisdictions.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Evacuation centre	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Relief centre					✓		✓	
Neighbourhood safer place		✓		✓			✓	
Nearby safer place						✓		
Safer place								✓
Place of refuge				✓				
Community fire refuge							✓	
Emergency or cyclone shelter			✓	✓ **Limited to public cyclone shelters**				
Bushfire safer place					✓			
Bushfire last resort refuge					✓			

The following are details of shelters, their service provision, and their physical attributes across the jurisdictions.

Table 2: Sheltering terminology and attributes

Shelter/space	Purpose	Attributes	Jurisdiction
Shelters with service provision			
Evacuation centre	Evacuation centres are facilities at which people can seek temporary shelter and basic supports, in a location not anticipated to be adversely affected by the unfolding disaster. These centres are intended to temporarily accommodate and support people who are unable to seek safe shelter elsewhere. Evacuation centres are not normally purpose- built facilities.	· Building or temporary structure · Overnight accommodation · Basic amenities: shelter, food, water, toilets · Animals allowed on some sites · Support services · Location may differ depending on type of hazard.	ACT, NSW, NT, QLD, TAS and WA **Note:** VIC and SA do recognise evacuation centres.
Relief centre	In essence the same function as an evacuation centre. In some instances, may not accommodate people on site but may direct people to other pre-organised commercial accommodation such as hotels and motels.	· Building or temporary structure · Overnight accommodation · Basic amenities: shelter, food, water, toilets · Animals may allowed on some sites · Location may differ depending on type of hazard.	SA and VIC
Community fire refuge	Are purpose-built or modified buildings that can provide protection from radiant heat and embers. These facilities, like Neighbourhood Safer Places, are a last resort option when other plans have failed. They do not guarantee safety from a bushfire and cannot be relied upon as primary plan of action in a bushfire.	· Building · No amenities provided · Bushfire specific.	VIC
Bushfire safer place	Are used as a place for people to stay in or as a place of first resort for those who have decided that they will leave high risk locations early on a bad fire weather day.	· Building · Overnight accommodation · Basic amenities: shelter, food, water, toilets · Animals may be allowed · Bushfire specific.	SA

Emergency or cyclone shelter	Is a public purpose-built building, usually constructed to meet a specific building standard, designed to be used during an emergency to shelter from its effects. It is not intended to be long term accommodation. These buildings are commonly used in relation to cyclones.	· Building · Basic amenities: shelter, toilets, water · Cyclone specific.	NT and QLD (limited to public cyclone shelters)
Place of refuge	Is usually a building that will provide a level of protection from the effects of a cyclone as it passes but has not been built or designed in accordance with the disaster-related standards or guidelines.	· Building · No amenities provided · Cyclone specific.	QLD
Places / spaces no amenities provided			
Nearby safer places	A place of last resort for people during a bushfire emergency, if you have no bushfire survival plan, or your plan has failed, a nearby safer place may be your last resort when there is an imminent threat of bushfire.	· Open-air, outside space away from hazard · No amenities provided · Bushfire specific.	TAS
Safer place	In essence the same function as a neighbourhood safer place.	· Open-air, outside space away from hazard · No amenities provided · Location may differ depending on type of hazard.	WA

Appendix 2

Towards a national approach to sheltering terminology

A key finding from the 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements highlighted the inconsistency in sheltering terminology used to describe the purpose of the shelter by states and territories. It recommended more consistent terminology nationally could reduce the confusion for community members seeking shelter in a disaster. Appendix 1, Table 1 outlines the terminology and definitions used across the jurisdictions as highlighted in the Royal Commission final report.

Each jurisdiction in Australia provides sheltering facilities for people evacuating from natural hazard events and other human-made events including structural fires, explosions, major transport incidents and building collapse. These facilities provide different levels of protection, services and personnel. The terminology and features of sheltering facilities can differ across states and territories.

In some cases, different terminology is used for the same type of facility. For example, Victoria uses the term 'relief centre' to describe a facility that provides accommodation and other amenities whereas in NSW this same facility is typically called an evacuation centre.

Table 1 captures the various labels that states, and territories adopt to identify these different evacuation facilities.

The Royal Commission stated clearly that understanding the different functions of these facilities can be challenging and confusing, especially when the terminology is similar, but their functions are entirely different. They called on examples where evacuees thought that a neighbourhood safer place could be used as an evacuation centre or that it would 'turn into' an evacuation centre if attended by enough people.

They also recorded strong support from the states and territories for nationally consistent terminology in relation to sheltering facilities. The process of working towards national consistency commenced in 2022. Disaster risk reduction and resilience subject matter experts have begun the process of identifying key attributes of this sheltering terminology (see Appendix 1, Table 2).

Royal Commission Recommendation 12.4 Sheltering terminology should be made nationally consistent:

State and territory governments should, as a priority, adopt nationally consistent terminology and functions for the different sheltering facilities, including evacuation centres, Neighbourhood Safer Places, places of last resort and natural disaster shelters.

The Royal Commissions call to action is that:

More consistent terminology nationally could reduce confusion. The main barriers to this process appear to be the costs and time required to change to consistent terms, and the difficulty of jurisdictions agreeing on the national terminology.

This process is necessary and must not take years.

naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/royal-commission-national-natural-disaster-arrangements-report

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