



AUSTRALIAN DISASTER RESILIENCE HANDBOOK COLLECTION

# Management Policy

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# Version control

Version	Author	Detail	Date
0.1	Handbooks Team, AIDR	First draft; reviewed by AFAC Directors	28/12/2016
0.2	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Updated draft following AHAG feedback	31/5/2017
0.3	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Updated draft following stakeholder feedback	8/01/2018
1.0	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Endorsed by EMA	1/02/2018
1.1	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Updated to incorporate feedback from EMA and AHAG review	27/2/2019
1.2	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Updated draft following AHAG feedback	27/02/2019
2.0	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Endorsed by EMA	02/04/2019
2.1	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Updated draft following handbooks team review.	November 2019
2.2	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Updated draft following AIDR Handbook Advisory meeting, and changes to the AIDR governance structures	November 2020
2.3	Handbooks Team, AIDR	Updated draft following AIDR governance structure changes related to establishment of NEMA	October 2022
2.4	Handbooks team, AIDR	Changed Knowledge into action briefs to quick guides	March 2023
2.5	AIDR Governance Committee	Changed name to handbooks collection management policy, updated policy framework section, removed reference to AHAG	April 2023
2.6	Handbooks team, AIDR	Updated to reflect terms of new AIDR contract and revised governance arrangements. Approved by AIDR ED.	July 2025

# Preface

## Purpose

This policy explains the management framework of the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection (the 'Handbook Collection') and outlines principles and processes to support its ongoing management. It is designed to be validated in practice and reviewed and amended as required.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- clarify the purpose of the Handbook Collection
- clarify the fundamentals of the Handbook Collection
- describe the relationship between the Handbook Collection and national, state, territory and local policy, strategy, legislation, standards and procedures
- describe the relationship between the Handbook Collection and other disaster resilience and emergency management doctrinal collections produced by agencies, peak bodies, and other jurisdictions
- clarify governance structures and responsibilities for ownership of the Handbook Collection
- define processes and responsibilities for management of the Handbook Collection and supporting companion publications through their lifecycles.

## Audience

This policy is intended for the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) as custodians of the Handbook Collection, as well as partners, individuals, organisations and groups with responsibilities and authorisation to support development and review of the Handbook Collection. This policy may also be used as a reference in the development of guidelines owned and managed by other organisations.

## Acknowledgements

- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
- Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC)

# Introduction

The Handbook Collection has been developed on an ongoing basis in response to the evolution of Australian emergency management arrangements, including priorities driven by national and international policy environments, statutory inquiries, research and emerging issues. The contemporary Handbook Collection expands the national disaster doctrine collection to address considerations before, during and after disasters, and to include audiences beyond the traditional emergency management sector including non-government organisations, not-for-profits, the private sector, education, academic and research institutions, community groups and individuals.

AIDR is contracted by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)<sup>1</sup> to manage the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection ('Handbook Collection'), known formerly as the national disaster doctrine collection.

The Handbook Collection is owned by the Commonwealth of Australia and copyrighted as such, requiring all Handbooks in the collection to be authorised by an appropriate Commonwealth officer.<sup>2</sup>

Following a detailed audit of the existing collection in 2017-2018, publications have been organised into several categories.

- Publications to be retained in the handbook collection and positioned in relation to the collection framework.
- Publications to be retired and archived.
- Publications to be transferred to another custodian.

Retained publications were entered into the lifecycle management program for review. This process will progressively align existing (retained) and new publications to the publication style described in the framework.

National consultative committees representing a range of state and territory emergency service organisations, all levels of government, non-government-organisations, community groups and individuals involved in disaster resilience are involved in the review of the Handbook Collection.

In 2023-2024, a [strategic review of the handbook collection](#) was conducted. The purpose of the strategic review was to ensure continued alignment with national disaster frameworks and policies, to identify any gaps in the collection, and to ensure the process of developing and reviewing the handbooks continued to be robust. The findings and recommendations of the strategic review can be found on the AIDR Knowledge Hub.

The Handbook Collection and related publications and resources are freely available online through the [Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub](#) (the 'Knowledge Hub').

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly National Resilience and Recovery Agency (NRRA) and Emergency Management Australia (EMA)

<sup>2</sup> This process excludes companion documents as these do not use the Commonwealth logo.

# Section 1: National Disaster Management Frameworks

There are several nationally agreed frameworks that guide disaster and emergency management policy. These include:

- National Strategy for Disaster Resilience
- National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework
- Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework
- Australian Disaster Recovery Framework.

While the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* has an international focus, Australia has agreed to implement Sendai, and these frameworks help guide Australia's commitments and progress towards reducing disaster risk globally.

The Handbook Collection supports implementation of national policy frameworks by:

- providing the authoritative and trusted source of knowledge about disaster resilience principles in Australia
- aligning national disaster resilience strategy and policy with practice, by guiding and supporting jurisdictions, agencies and other organisations and individuals in their implementation and adoption
- highlighting and promoting the adoption of good practice in building disaster resilience in Australia
- building interoperability between jurisdictions, agencies, businesses, and communities by promoting use of a common language and coordinated, nationally agreed principles.

The Handbook Collection provides a common frame of reference as a starting point for development of plans and operational and procedural documents to support implementation.

## 1.1 National Strategy for Disaster Resilience

The 2011 National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) emerged out of a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreement to adopt a whole-of-nation resilience-based approach to disaster management. The NSDR recognised the need for a national, coordinated and cooperative effort to enhance Australia's capacity to withstand and recover from emergencies and disasters.

The NSDR exists to provide high-level direction and guidance to Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments, business and community leaders and the not-for-profit sector, on building disaster resilient communities across Australia.

## 1.2 National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (2018) is informed by the Sendai Framework and sets out the foundational work to proactively reduce risk now and into the future. It guides national, whole-of-society efforts to proactively reduce disaster risk to minimise the loss and suffering caused by disasters.

The NDRRF sets out 4 priorities to reduce risk, and under these priorities sit 24 strategies. The NDRRF is the primary policy framework aimed at taking harm out of the system and reducing disaster risk.

The NDRRF was co-designed by all levels of government, private, community and research sectors. It was endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management (MCPPEM) on 28 June 2019. The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework is supported by the National Action Plan and the Second National Action Plan.

The contents of the Handbooks should align to strategies outlined in the Framework.

### **1.3 Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework**

The Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework (the Framework) will support Australia to develop the required capability to effectively prepare for and manage severe to catastrophic disasters. The Framework has seven components. The framework also outlines the principles that underpin national preparedness and defines what constitutes preparedness capabilities. There are 20 national capabilities.

The framework has four goals:

- Provide Australia with a mechanism to effectively articulate its preparedness and capability requirements to prevent, plan for, respond to and recover from severe to catastrophic disasters.
- Use the current work undertaken in Australia and incorporate international best practice approaches to build an appropriate level of capability across Australia to manage severe to catastrophic disasters.
- Provide a method by which all jurisdictions across Australia can understand, assess, and begin to develop the capabilities required to deal with a severe to catastrophic disaster.
- Provide a mechanism to determine what capabilities meet national priorities and thresholds, and how they may be enhanced, developed, accessed, and sustained to deal with severe to catastrophic disasters.

The contents of the Handbooks should align to core capabilities outlined in the Framework.

### **1.4 Australian Disaster Recovery Framework**

The Australian Disaster Recovery Framework provides a common understanding of Australia's approach to Disaster Recovery. This Australian Disaster Recovery Framework (the framework) describes the principles and arrangements that support effective, coordinated recovery for disaster-impacted communities. The framework:

- provides general guidance on recovery for planners and practitioners.
- describes mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between recovery stakeholders, including in events of nationally significant harm, and
- provides links to legislation, arrangements, and practice for recovery in the Australian context.

The contents of the Handbooks should align to National Recovery Principles outlined in the Framework.

## 1.5 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030 was adopted by Australia and other members of the United Nations at the third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. Through the Sendai Framework, Australia recognises the importance of not only managing disasters but also managing disaster risk.

The Sendai Framework states that to strengthen resilience, countries must prevent new disasters and reduce existing disaster risk.

It outlines four global priorities for reducing disaster risk:

- understanding disaster risk
- strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
- investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response
- building back better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction

## 1.6 Australian Government emergency management responsibilities

The Handbook Collection is produced and managed as part of the Australian Government's Commonwealth responsibilities for emergency management.

These responsibilities include the following areas:

### **Response and recovery**

Under the Australian governance arrangements, responding to disasters is primarily a matter for the state and territory governments. When the total resources (government, community and commercial) of an affected state or territory cannot reasonably cope with the needs of the situation, the state or territory government can seek assistance from the Australian Government. The Australian Government also provides a range of recovery assistance to help the hardest hit communities recover from disasters.

### **Prevention and preparation**

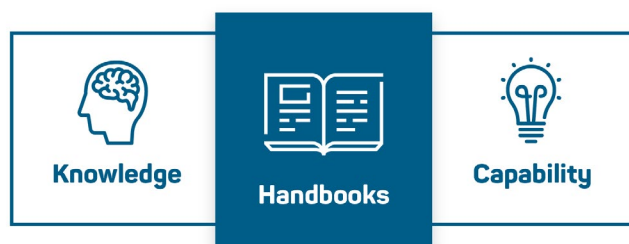
The responsibilities of the Australian Government in prevention and preparation include helping coordinate national efforts in disaster research, information management, and mitigation policy and practice to reduce the risks and costs of emergencies to the nation.

## 1.7 Relationship to state and territory guidelines

Policies are directions from government. National emergency management policies are authoritative and bind governments and their relevant agencies to the degree laid out in the relevant legislative documents, and arrangements. The Handbook Collection is an authoritative source, endorsed by the Government, and is a translation of these policies into principles (see Australian Emergency Management Arrangements (AIDR 2023)).

# Section 2: What is the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection?

## 2.1 Fundamentals



The Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection provides guidance on national principles and practices for disaster risk reduction and emergency management.

The Handbook Collection:

- is the authoritative and trusted source of knowledge about disaster management principles in Australia
- aligns national disaster risk reduction, preparedness and recovery policy and resilience strategy with good practice
- guides and supports jurisdictions, agencies and other organisations and individuals in their implementation and adoption of best practiced principles
- highlights and promotes the adoption of good practice in building disaster resilience, reducing risk, and managing effectively in Australia
- builds interoperability between jurisdictions, agencies, businesses, and communities by promoting the use of a common language and coordinated, nationally agreed principles

The principles presented in the Handbook Collection are developed from a combination of:

- expertise
- experience
- lived experience
- learning
- theoretical analysis
- data analysis
- research utilisation
- best practice evidence reviews
- collaboration amongst organisations, governments, and communities that provide and/or receive services and support before, during and after disasters.

The Handbook Collection connects related content within the collection itself and from other national and international collections. This facilitates knowledge sharing, adoption, implementation, and distribution by users across a multitude of organisations, individuals, jurisdictions, disasters and contexts.

The Handbook Collection is managed through a program of collaboration, consultation and constant review to ensure it continues to be:

- an authoritative representation of national principles and guidance in disaster resilience as agreed by leading organisations and experts, informed by the best available evidence and practice
- encompassing of the broader national disaster risk reduction, disaster resilience and recovery sectors, including content specific to the before, during and after disaster contexts
- a guide on the philosophy of why the principles exist to be applied to a situation, rather than a guide on how to apply the principles in a situation
- an outline of nationally agreed principles rather than mandated or required operational practice and procedures
- informed by a broad national – and ideally international – audience beyond one defined group
- current, accessible, and functional
- evidence-based
- adaptable to a broad range of circumstances and contexts
- organised through rigorous development and internal consistency
- structured and published to meet the needs of the intended audience.

## 2.2 Scope of the Handbook Collection

### Purpose

The Handbook Collection is guided by national policy and strategy to support its audiences in developing capabilities to enhance disaster resilience across different disasters, jurisdictions, contexts and stakeholders.

The Handbook Collection does not aim to describe how to carry out operations in response to an emergency, nor does it provide prescriptive operational guidance for different contexts. The collection is designed to support planning and decision-making before, during and after disaster nationally.

Based on identified needs, companion documents will be developed for handbooks within the collection. These will provide additional guidance in the application and implementation of principles outlined in the corresponding handbook.

### Audience

The intended audiences for the Handbook Collection are those responsible for developing policies, capabilities and guidelines within their own jurisdictions, organisations and communities. This includes Commonwealth, state, territory and local government departments, emergency management organisations, peak bodies, businesses and non-government organisations.

The audience also includes community groups, educators, planners, researchers, media and the private sector who may find content in the handbooks of valuable.

It is expected that international organisations involved in disaster resilience will also use or refer to the handbooks.

### **Inclusion in the collection**

Existing and future publications must meet one of the following criteria to be retained in or added to the Handbook Collection:

- the content provides a national perspective, focuses on principles, philosophies and guidance, and is relevant to more than one specific organisation or community of practice OR
- the publication is of national significance, is developed by a specific community of practice and is included into the collection for national visibility.

## **2.3 Handbook governance**

As custodian of the Handbook Collection on behalf of NEMA, AIDR is required to:

- define the principles for management and development of the national Handbook Collection
- ensure the Handbook Collection is up to date and reflects current nationally agreed principles
- define the scope for the Handbook Collection, including purpose and audience
- ensure the Handbook Collection is connected to other related collections and doctrine where relevant
- ensure the collection complies with the current policy framework and with Commonwealth doctrine to the extent directed by policy
- ensure that the collection is readily available and accessible through the Knowledge Hub.

The Handbook Collection governance arrangements are outlined below.

### **AIDR Strategic Committee**

NEMA is the sponsor and guideline authority for the Handbook Collection. The First Assistant Coordinator-General (FACG) NEMA is responsible for authorising the AIDR handbook program of work and approving the publication of each handbook.

Governance of the Handbook Collection is through the AIDR Strategic Committee chaired by the FACG NEMA. The group includes representatives from AIDR, AFAC and NEMA.

The AIDR Strategic Committee provides strategic guidance on the collection as a whole – its coverage, relevance, and utility. As part of this role the committee:

- sets the strategic direction for the review, publication, and adoption of the Handbook Collection
- agrees on the need for new publications
- assigns priorities for their development
- accepts the published handbooks into the national collection
- approves the Handbook Collection management process
- endorses non-Commonwealth of Australia copyrighted handbooks and companion documents into the national collection

The Executive Director (ED) AIDR accepts the final draft handbook by signing off on the Statement of Completion and then submits it for approval by NEMA through the First Assistant Coordinator-General NEMA.<sup>3</sup>

The ED AIDR ensures that handbooks are consistent with national disaster resilience and emergency management policy through endorsement of the process of review adopted for each handbook.

#### **AIDR Knowledge Development Team<sup>4</sup>**

The Knowledge Development team within AIDR is responsible for overseeing management of the Handbook Collection and provides oversight for each publication through its lifecycle. This role includes advising the ED AIDR, and the AIDR Strategic Committee on additions and revisions to, and deletions from, the national collection.

The responsibilities of the Knowledge Development Team include:

- Advise the AIDR Strategic Committee on the development and management of the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection, through the ED of AIDR.
- Set the strategic direction for the review, publication, and adoption of the Handbook Collection.
- Identify or agree the need for new and reviewed publications and make recommendations to the AIDR Strategic Committee.
- Work with and support AIDR in management of the handbook collection as requested.
- Foster and promote an integrated and collaborative approach to the development and management of the collection.
- Ensure handbooks complement and are consistent (without overlapping) with other existing or proposed handbooks or other doctrine collections.
- Resolve and determine (in consultation with AIDR Strategic Committee) a position on any disparities of view within the handbook working groups in a timely manner in place of a Steering Committee, as needed.

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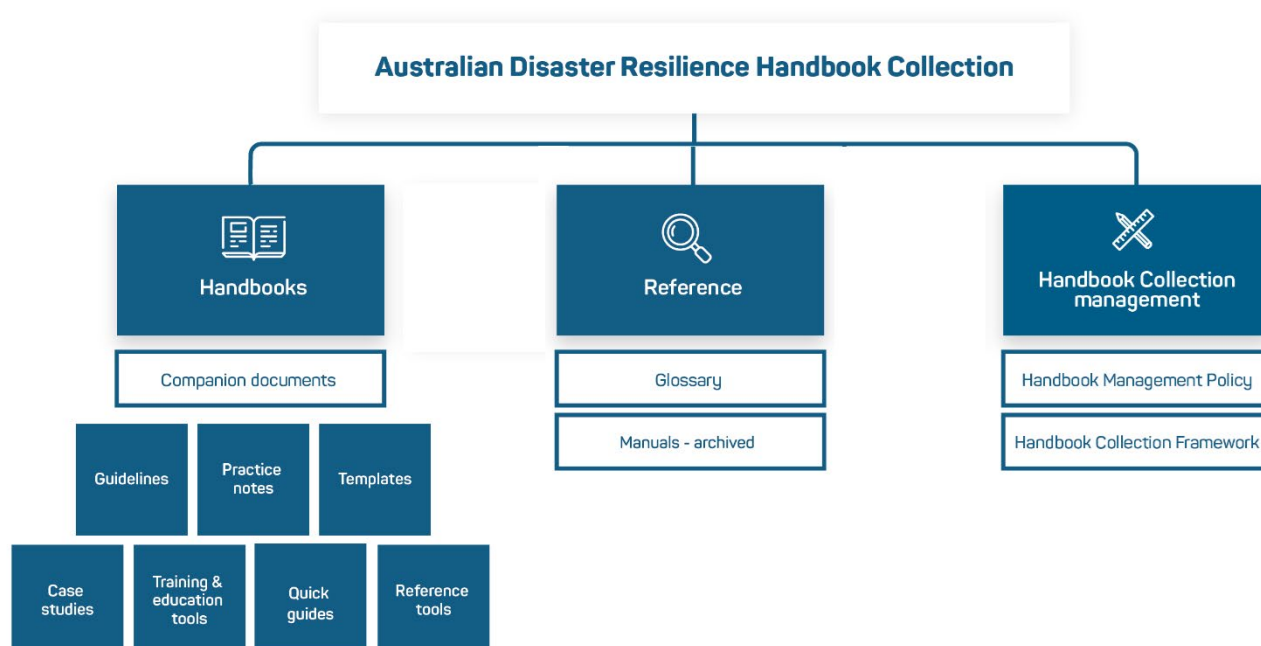
<sup>3</sup> Under the previous AIDR contract ending 31 December 2024, this function was performed by the AIDR Governance Committee. Under the new AIDR contract the governance committee is superseded by the AIDR Strategic Committee. The responsibility for process sign-off and final submission to NEMA now sits with the Executive Director AIDR.

<sup>4</sup> Until 2023, this function was performed by the Australian Handbooks Advisory Group. AHAG was abolished by the AIDR Governance Committee in April 2023

## Section 3: Handbook Collection Framework

The handbooks are the core of the Handbook Collection.

Handbooks are supported by companion documents that assist with the adoption, implementation and teaching of the information in the handbook. Handbooks provide guidance and general understanding of national principles, while companion documents contain more detail to support application of the principles outlined in the handbooks. The Handbook Collection is also supported by reference tools (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3:** The Handbook Collection Framework

*Note:* Manuals will be archived, or moved into either the Handbook Collection or other collections

The Handbook Collection Framework should not be perceived as a checklist that must be completed, or as a constraint on what can be contained in a handbook or companion document. Rather, the framework is an aid to ensure that specific purposes and intended uses of handbooks and companion tools are readily identified and understood, so audiences can easily determine which document will best serve their needs in a given situation.

As they reflect national principles, the handbooks are unlikely to change as often as companion documents whose content is more organic and fluid in responding to changing needs, practices, learning and knowledge development. As such the companion documents do not have the Commonwealth Logo, and do not require endorsement from the Commonwealth. Handbook companion documents will develop and exist to meet the needs of intended audiences and to support the understanding, application and implementation of the principles outlined in the handbooks.

The [Strategic Review of the Handbook Collection](#) conducted in 2024 identified the need for a clear structure to the Collection. It also identified gaps to be filled. A draft structure can be found in [appendix 2](#).

### 3.1 Components of the Handbook Collection

#### Handbooks

Handbooks are typically focussed on a specific theme and capture and explain the principles relating to that theme. They should be clearly linked to the policy frameworks of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework, and the National Recovery Framework. They contain guidance on agreed and proven approaches to national disaster resilience principles and incorporate current, evidence informed good<sup>5</sup> and best<sup>6</sup> practice, knowledge and learnings from disasters. They may include the theoretical foundations on which these principles are based to explain the rationale for the approaches described, but typically this is only to the extent required for that explanation.

Handbooks are high level, providing the context in which PPRR activities are undertaken and are not intended to be prescriptive. They provide a foundational reference for building knowledge in disaster resilience.

#### Companion documents

Companion documents are tools that support the adoption and implementation of the principles provided in the handbooks and the application of knowledge. They are intended to inform but not prescribe the development of procedures and plans. Table 2 outlines the types of companion documents that may support a handbook.

#### Handbook Collection resources

These documents provide a reference point for the Handbook Collection, and for the disaster resilience sector broadly and include:

Australian Disaster Resilience Glossary (the 'Glossary')

They can be used for guidance in the handbook review and writing process. For example, the Glossary should be used to inform terminology and definitions throughout the Handbook Collection. Likewise, updates to terminology through a handbook review should be reflected in the Glossary. The Glossary includes key acronyms and abbreviations.

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<sup>5</sup> Good practice refers to effective practices that are considered successful in achieving outcomes and able to be adapted to suit specific contexts or needs.

<sup>6</sup> Best practice refers to a standard of excellence or superior approach that is the most effective or efficient.

## Managing the Handbook Collection Policy

This policy provides the framework for the management and development of the Handbook Collection and forms part of the suite of tools that describe the framework and processes within which the Handbook Collection is managed and supported.

Table 2 Companion document types

<b>Quick guides</b>	Each Handbook is accompanied by a set of 'Quick Guides' (formerly known as Knowledge into Action Briefs). These guides are typically two-to-three pages each and highlight key principles, guidance and expertise available in the <a href="#">Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection</a> .
<b>Guidelines</b>	Guidelines provide more specific knowledge and guidance material, detail and/or considerations on a specific subject area or topic. They should be used as a guide to action and may provide more detailed information about practices and procedures. They can be supported by templates, briefing notes or toolkits.
<b>Templates</b>	Templates are usually presented as generic tools to be used in conjunction with associated guidelines. When used together, the template and the guide provide a consistent basis for the development of more technical specifications in consideration of best practice.
<b>Practice notes</b>	Practice notes provide a framework for understanding and gathering better information and how it can be developed to inform planning activities.
<b>Training tools</b>	Training tools provide a conduit between the principles in the handbooks and dissemination and sharing of knowledge. May include training manuals, training guidance notes, online training tools.
<b>References</b>	References may include resource kits, related reports or other documents.
<b>Case studies</b>	Case studies are particularly useful in taking knowledge and principles endorsed in handbooks and showing how they can and have been adopted and implemented in practice. Case studies should demonstrate both successful and unsuccessful studies so lessons and learning, both positive and negative, can be shared.
<b>Checklists</b>	A checklist is a list of items to be noted, checked or remembered, or a detailed process sequence to perform an activity.
<b>Factsheets</b>	Fact sheets are presentations of simple, concise information on a topic of interest in a format suitable for all audiences, including the public.
<b>Handbook advice notes</b>	Occasionally, an urgent need might arise for a handbook to be produced or amended in response to significant event or experience, significantly changed circumstances or a transient need. If a new handbook is needed urgently, the standard handbook lifecycle management process described below may take too long. Handbook advice notes may be developed to advise of changes to critical aspects of an existing handbook or comprise an entirely new publication (see Section 5: Managing the Handbook Collection).

## 3.2 Other resources related to the Handbook Collection Framework

### National policies and strategies

Whilst national policies and strategies such as the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework, and the Australian Disaster Recovery Framework are critical to the development of the Handbook Collection, they are not part of the Handbook Collection Framework. National policies are the responsibility of the Australian Government. The handbooks and companion documents should clearly identify how they contribute these policy frameworks.

### **Policy guides**

Policy guides describe how policies are intended to work, how they are accessed and how they can be included in planning and decision-making.

### **Authorising documents**

Authorising documents include legislation, regulations, and codes of practice.

### **Research**

Research provides much of the evidence base and principles through which handbooks are developed and reviewed. Research can present a trigger for handbook reviews and, when handbooks are being produced, research can provide important contributions to its content. Therefore, research is closely integrated into the lifecycle management of the Handbook Collection but is not, of itself, an aspect of the Handbook Collection Framework. The handbooks should be aligned with the research utilisation outputs of the Natural Hazards Research Australia's research program, as well as outputs from other disaster related research.

### **Royal Commission Reports, Inquiries and Reviews**

The findings and recommendations from Royal Commissions, Reviews and Inquiries into disasters and disaster management processes and practices are important to consider when reviewing handbooks. Findings and recommendations may also present a trigger for handbook reviews.

## Section 4: Managing the Handbook Collection

The Handbook Collection is managed to ensure it remains the authoritative, trusted source of knowledge and guidance on nationally agreed disaster management principles and practices. The collection must be correct, comprehensive and continue to meet the needs of its audiences.

Key stakeholder engagement in the handbook management process is critical given stakeholders are ultimately the source of a handbook's legitimacy. Handbooks draw their authority:

- through the strength of their content
- through a rigorous development and review process
- through representation of a nationally agreed view across multiple organisations and stakeholders – consensus approach.

The National Emergency Management Agency makes the decision to adopt, produce or retain handbooks.

### 4.1 Handbook Collection lifecycle management

AIDR is responsible for recommending handbooks for review, development and archiving. The AIDR Knowledge Development Team conducts an annual audit of the Handbook Collection and applies a prioritisation and resource matching process to update the handbook review program of work. The team make recommendations to FACG NEMA on the program of work. Under the 2025-2028 contract, the AIDR program of work (including the handbooks collection) is submitted for approval to NEMA annually.



Figure 4 Handbook Collection lifecycle management process

### **Review prioritisation process**

The identification of handbooks for review or development is determined through a prioritisation process that combines a review of the age, relevance, and currency of existing publications with requests and recommendations from stakeholders and users.

Recommendations to develop or review handbooks are based on factors including:

- national disaster policy frameworks
- known development(s) in practice
- knowledge produced through research that presents new understandings
- new directions from government
- needs identified by disaster resilience and emergency management communities of practice
- content that is frequently suggested for update by authoritative users who can demonstrate a clear need for review
- recent projects supported by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) with content relevant to current and future publications
- known gaps in the collection
- the age and relevance of existing publications in the collection
- resources available to conduct the review.

### **Scheduled review**

Each handbook is subject to a scheduled review that is ordinarily every five years unless otherwise specified. Scheduled reviews are initiated by AIDR Strategic Committee as part of the AIDR annual work plan. The prioritisation process will determine whether a recommendation for review is made to FACG NEMA.

### **Handbook review/development proposal**

At an annual meeting to review the handbook program of work, AIDR will consider proposals made to review or develop a publication in the Handbook Collection.

The ED-AIDR will consider the prioritisation, review and resource allocation process mentioned above to determine which handbooks will be recommended to be developed or reviewed.

### **Urgent review request**

An urgent review can be initiated in response to a request made by a stakeholder when there are critical or substantive issues identified by the requester.

Triggers for urgent ad-hoc reviews can include:

- major events and after-action reviews
- changes to legislation and policy
- new evidence derived from research
- changing demographics.

Once the need for an urgent review is agreed by AIDR and the recommendation is approved by FACG NEMA, the project follows the same handbook review process outlined below. A project manager is appointed who will consider the urgency of the project in developing project plans and timeframes.

## Handbook advice notes

The decision to produce an advice note, rather than review or replace an existing publication, lies with AIDR. This decision is based on considering the imperatives involved, and the resources and time available. The process to produce advice notes is a compressed version compared to what is used for a normal publication; available resources and time are applied to meet the need identified. The specific process is decided and managed in detail by AIDR. FACG NEMA is advised of the development of an advice note.

Handbook advice notes remain active for a defined period, after which they are archived. For this reason, as soon as possible after publication of an advice note, the related handbook should be scheduled into the program for review or development.

## Handbook lifecycle management process

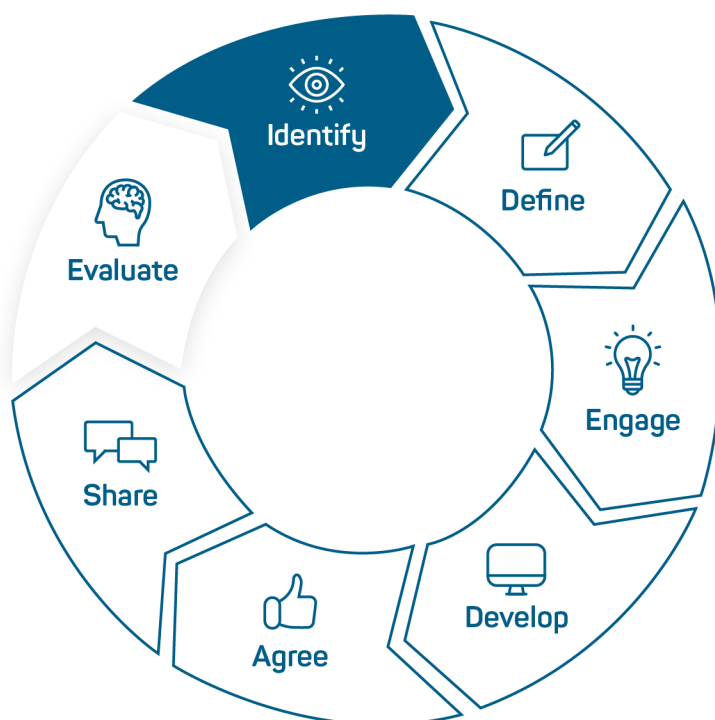


Figure 5 Handbook lifecycle management process

### Identify the need.

Identifying the need (new handbooks) or the need for review (existing/retained handbooks) must be supported by a clear governance and decision-making framework with clearly defined authorities and processes for confirming that the need exists, and that the resources required to initiate the project are justified.

Both handbooks and companion documents should be closely managed to ensure they meet specific and current needs. The opportunity cost of developing and reviewing handbooks impacts both on the lifecycle management of other handbooks and on the people and organisations involved. It is important that only handbooks that have a clear need, purpose and audience are

produced or retained. Inclusion in the Handbook Collection is justified if it offers a net benefit to the disaster resilience community, taking account of the direct and opportunity costs involved.

### **Define the need**

Defining what is to be revised or improved includes identification and selection of the measures that are most likely to achieve the results being sought. The output of this phase is a detailed project plan outlining:

- project scope, purpose, and objectives
- key project milestones
- timeframe for deliverables
- stakeholder engagement and communication plan
- risk assessment.

### **Engage key audiences**

The need to access the tacit knowledge distributed across the nation requires a thorough process of engagement across governments and sectors. Whilst a single subject matter expert might write the handbook, the development and review process should include targeted enquiry and consultation across a broad range of stakeholders, including users and beneficiaries of the handbooks, to ensure it remains the authoritative source of knowledge and an accurate and trusted reflection of national principles.

Tools used in this phase may include surveys, a literature review, stakeholder workshops and environmental scans.

### **Develop**

The review, writing, authorisation, and validation of handbooks brings together working groups made up of appropriate subject matter experts. In the case of government representatives, they need to be senior and authorised to reach across government and the sector and be able to obtain clearances as appropriate.

### **National endorsement**

Handbooks are intended to be authoritative. Endorsement authorises the handbook as correct, aligned with relevant policies and not in conflict with other handbooks in this or other collections.

### **Dissemination**

A critical element of managing the effectiveness of the Handbook Collection is ensuring that all the elements of the collection are readily available and accessible at reasonable or no cost to those who need them. For this reason, the Handbook Collection is published digitally and made available at no cost through the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub.

The key to successful dissemination of the Handbook Collection is ensuring they are practically and culturally accessible to organisations and users. As some users prefer printed copies or may not have good access to the internet or computers, printed copies are also available for purchase through the [AIDR website](#).

AIDR will disseminate information about new or revised handbooks through its communications channels, including (but not limited to) webinars, short videos, conference presentations, AIDR updates and social media.

## Validation and evaluation

Validation and evaluation is required to test a publication's effectiveness. As circumstances change and knowledge evolves, all handbooks will be validated and evaluated formally or informally through surveys, exercises or in practice. This is particularly important if a handbook addresses innovative approaches, new subject matter, or new areas of responsibilities.

Validations and evaluations can be conducted formally as part of a regular review cycle, through a 'lessons learned' process, or informally via after-action reviews and from feedback. The process of validation and evaluation is critical to organisational learning and growth and should be the focus of sustained effort.

Handbook validation will provide answers to the following types of questions:

- does the handbook describe the current understanding of best practice principles for its subject?
- has technology, or a change in context or higher-level strategy or policy, invalidated something contained in the handbook?
- does the handbook, what it describes, how it is presented or how it is expressed, continue to meet the needs of the intended audiences?
- how will this handbook be incorporated in and support capability development?

The frequency and choice of methods used for validation will be based on the subject area, the accessibility of practitioners and the rate of change typical of the subject area. The outcome of validation is either:

- acceptance that the publication remains appropriate in its present form
- identification of specific updates or amendments
- identification of a need for a full rewrite of the publication.

## Project methodology

The process to review or develop a handbook or companion document is managed using a standard methodology that promotes collaboration, engagement, consistency, consultation, expertise and good governance.

Wherever possible, AIDR should seek to leverage existing communities of practice and similar groups to avoid duplication and gain the benefits of established networks that provide access to sources of knowledge, authority and expertise. Stakeholder engagement beyond the traditional emergency management sector is also important in the development and review of the Handbook Collection.

Key considerations:

- Why are we producing/reviewing this handbook?
- What are its broad purposes?
- Does this subject/content belong in the Handbook Collection?
- Who are the key audiences?
- How will this handbook meet the needs of these key audiences?
- How will the handbook achieve the outcomes sought?
- How will it connect policy and procedures?

- How will the handbook adopt lessons learned and relate to research?
- How will it be validated, reviewed, and refreshed?
- How will it be launched, promoted, and disseminated?
- Is the cost to develop this handbook justified?

## The project teams

The project team provides the knowledge, authority, and support to the project. The key members of the project team and their broad responsibilities are as follows:

- **Manager, Knowledge Development**

The *Manager, Knowledge Development* manages the project from initiation to publication and launch. The manager is responsible for delivering the publication described in the project brief within the time and resources allocated. Responsibilities include the selection of the writer, convening steering committees and working groups, control and support of drafts, presentation of drafts for authorisation, final preparation for publication and dissemination of approved handbooks.

The manager works closely with the steering committee (if applicable) and working groups to ensure that the publication is meeting its defined and agreed scope and purpose in accordance with the project plan. The manager presents the completed publication to the AIDR Executive Director for recommendation for endorsement by FACG NEMA.

- **Project Officer, Knowledge Development**

A project officer is appointed by the *Manager, Knowledge Development* to support the project from initiation to publication and launch. Responsibilities include drafting agendas and minutes, distributing relevant documents, setting meetings, following up on action items and proof-reading drafts.

- **Technical Writer**

The technical writer conducts necessary research and prepares successive drafts of the publication in accordance with a writer's brief. Generally, the writer will possess some expertise in the subject area but need not be the ultimate authority. Good research and written communication skills are the key imperative. The writer may also draft content outlines and framework documents and discussion papers.

- **Steering committee (as needed)**

Steering committee members ensure the project remains within scope and is meeting project key milestones and timeframes. Whilst the members of the steering committee may possess some expertise in the subject area, it is their authoritative role, ability to lead, influence and champion the project which are key in this role. They also assist in resolving any contentious issues that may arise. It is likely that senior leaders will form the project steering committee (see Template 9: Steering Committee Terms of Reference).

In the development process of some handbooks, a steering committee may not be necessary. In this instance, the Manager of Knowledge Development can perform the function of the steering committee.

- **Working group**

Working group members consist of individuals with appropriate subject matter expertise. They will review original content and consider drafts. The working group members need to possess sufficient expertise to provide good input and to give the handbooks a degree of intellectual authority. They also need to be sufficiently senior to speak with the authority of their organisation or government. Well-engaged working groups are a powerful way to expose tacit knowledge – if the right people are present. Sub-working groups may be established to focus on specific areas according to subject matter expertise (see Template 10: Working Group Terms of Reference). Members of the working group may also be members of the steering committee (if applicable).

### The review process

The following stages for a handbook review project should be considered for all projects noting that the emphasis on specific activities may vary between individual projects. The outputs and outcomes for each of the broad steps are outlined below.

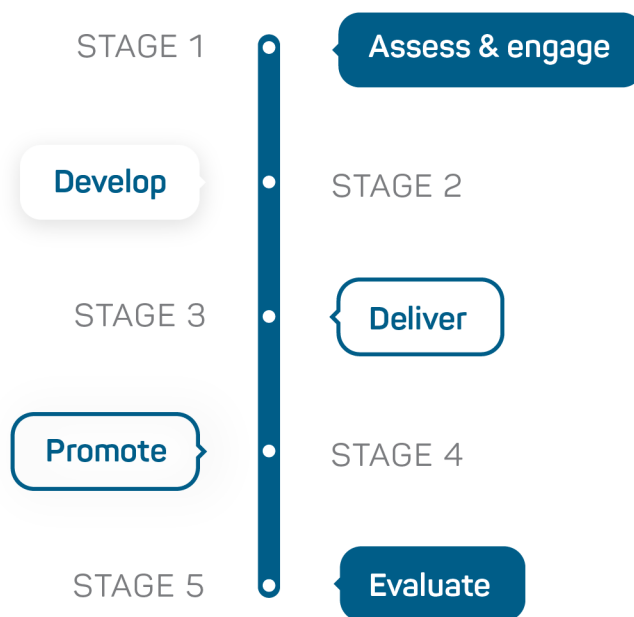


Figure 6 Handbook review process

### **Stage 1: Assess and engage**

- Once a handbook has been approved for review or development, a project manager is appointed, and project initiation meetings are conducted to review the purpose, scope, audiences and key messages, and identify key stakeholders and potential content writers. An outline of project key milestones and timeframes is developed (see Template 7: Project key milestones and timeframes).
- Environmental scans and literature reviews will be undertaken to identify new knowledge and developments, specific issues requiring resolution, clarification or authorisation. This may include a research component. This is often the first task of the technical writer.
- Socialisation of the project is important to ensure all handbook users and stakeholders are aware of the review and could contribute and input to the process.
- User engagement such as stakeholder workshops may be part of the project initiation to get input on key themes and areas for development.
- A project brief is a useful tool to share with audiences to provide a brief overview of the project scope and intended deliverables and timeframes (see Template 6: Handbook review project brief).
- A detailed project plan will be required which outlines project purpose, scope, milestones and timeframes, project methodology, stakeholders, risk management plan, budget and governance arrangements (see Template 8: Handbook project plan).
- A writer is appointed, and scope of engagement is agreed. The writer should attend meetings of the Steering Committee (if applicable) and Working Group as appropriate. This is a good way to share information and context and the writer engages firsthand with the groups to get insights into their approach (see Template 4: Writer's letter of engagement).
- The steering committee (if applicable) oversees and endorses the development of the project plan and project scope (see Template 9: Steering Committee Terms of Reference).

### **Stage 2: Develop**

- The working group or other review group meets to review content of the existing handbook or develop a chapter outline for a new handbook. This process guides the development of the writer's brief. Sub-working groups may be established to focus on specific areas according to subject matter expertise. The members of the working group are expected to canvass their organisations for feedback on the publication being reviewed and provide comments in the content review template (see Template 13: Content review template).
- A detailed writer's brief is an expansion of the publication outline detailing the proposed contents, down to section and possibly paragraph headings with supporting text. The brief should be sufficient for the content writer to understand and assess what is intended to be developed or reviewed in the draft. The writer's brief is based on the issues listed in the content review. The brief should give the writer detailed guidance on what is to be written, including style, level, tone and language (see Template 5: Writer's brief).

- Drafting is the process of developing a draft document ready for presentation to the working group. Drafting is managed by the project manager and executed by the content writer in consultation with the project team. The writer will develop the document based on the outline presented in the writer's brief and consult with the project team and any relevant authorities, examine references and conduct any other research required. At the conclusion of this step, the writer will have developed a first draft and issues papers.
- After the writer produces a first draft, it is circulated to the members of the working group for draft review and formal comment. The draft and the formal comments are considered and noted in a marked-up draft of the publication and direction is provided to the writer to develop an updated draft.
- There may be several draft and review phases but only as necessary.
- The working group considers whether the draft conforms with the writer's brief; that the content is correct and unambiguous; and that the language and expression are correct, clear and concise.
- Approvals may involve circulating a draft for broader stakeholder input and feedback. This consultation should include appropriate levels of clearance within agencies or government.
- Additional stakeholder feedback is collated and shared with the writer for inclusion in the final draft as part of the editorial review process.
- Following the final consultation and feedback, the writer finalises drafting and presents the final draft to the working group and steering committee (if applicable). The project manager then takes the publication into the authorisation stage.

### **Issues resolution**

- It is possible that some issues may not be resolved by consensus. In this case it is the responsibility of the steering committee (if applicable) or AIDR Strategic Committee to arrive at a determination by one of the following:
  - negotiate a consensus position.
  - commission a focused study by external experts
  - make an executive decision.
- It is important that the issue and its resolution are specifically considered by the AIDR Strategic Committee when they are deciding whether to recommend authorisation of the publication to FACG NEMA. The AIDR Strategic Committee should explicitly support the determination made by the steering committee (if applicable).
- If specific issues remain in contention that cannot be resolved by the steering committee (if applicable), the AIDR Strategic Committee will present the draft to FACG NEMA with a detailed explanation of the outstanding issues and a description how they have been accommodated in the draft (*see* Template 14: Handbook review issues paper).

### **Stage 3: Deliver**

- Authorisation is the process by which a completed publication, still formally a draft, is accepted as being complete, accurate and fit-for-purpose as a publication in the Handbook Collection. There will be a series of draft publication sign-off processes through the working group, steering committee (if applicable) and AIDR Executive Director before NEMA endorses the draft and authorises its inclusion in the Handbook Collection – or directs any necessary amendments or actions.
- There are three stages of authorisation for publications in the Handbook Collection:

- Statement of Completion

The members of the steering committee (if applicable) and working group confirm that the draft has addressed the agreed purpose, is technically accurate and is ready for approval. If there are any matters that were resolved through the 'Outstanding Issues' process, a member will still be required to sign off but will be able to note any areas of concern (see Template 15: Statement of Completion).

- Authorisation for use

The project manager presents the final draft to AIDR Executive Director. AIDR ED signs off on the process of the handbook. If AIDR ED is satisfied that the draft appropriately responds to the project directive created at initiation, and is complete, accurate and fit-for-purpose, it recommends the draft to FACG NEMA for inclusion in the Handbook Collection.

- Acceptance into the Handbook Collection

The publication is sent to NEMA with a recommendation that it be authorised by FACG NEMA (or their delegate) and accepted into the Handbook Collection (see Template 16: Recommendation to NEMA).

- It is possible, but unlikely, that at either of these stages a need could be identified to change the document. If this is the case, the authorisation will not be granted, and the procedures described for the evaluation and review stage will be followed.
- The draft is subjected to final copy and sub-editing, and design and layout in preparation for publication in the approved format.

#### **Stage 4: Promote**

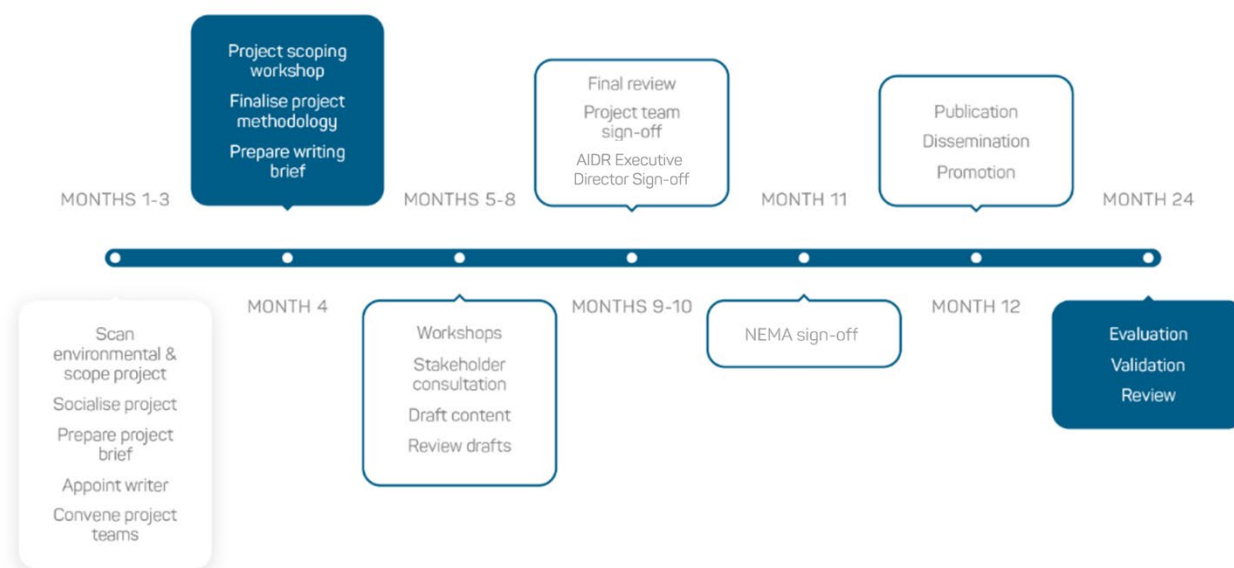
- The project manager arranges for handbook dissemination. The steering committee (if applicable) and working group give guidance on the dissemination of the publication, confirming that any companion documents have been prepared to an appropriate standard, or make recommendations for the development of companion documents.
- All publications are published electronically on the Knowledge Hub and made freely available for download. Printed copies will be printed on demand for a fee. Costs of print on demand publications together with an order form will be available via the Knowledge Hub.
- Companion documents will be disseminated under the same arrangements.
- A handbook promotion and communication plan will be developed in conjunction with the AIDR Communications Team and in consultation with NEMA.
- The plan will include identification of primary and secondary stakeholders and relevant communication mediums including electronic direct mail, newsletters, print and social media, publications, event presentations, national roadshows.

## Stage 5: Evaluate

- The handbook drafting and authorisation stages encompass processes to provide confidence in the accuracy and utility of the handbook. However, following publication, circumstances change, knowledge evolves, and handbooks need to be continuously reviewed to ensure that they remain valid. Handbook evaluations seek to provide answers to the following types of questions:
  - Does the handbook describe the current understanding of good practice for its subject, and does it accommodate experience gained since its publication?
  - Has technology, or some other change in context or higher-level doctrine or policy, invalidated something contained in the handbook?
  - Does the handbook, what it describes, how it is presented or how it is expressed, meet the actual needs of the intended audiences?
- Evaluation is a continuing process managed by the Manager of Knowledge Development. Formal evaluations will be scheduled; users are also able to request ad hoc reviews at any time with sufficient justification.
- There are several points of evaluation undertaken by AIDR over the course of a year, including the Annual AIDR Stakeholder Survey, quarterly data reporting, and scoping of handbooks up for review.

## Timing

Indicative timings for handbook projects and reviews are shown in Figure 7 below. The figures are indicative. If, for some reason, the production of a publication is considered urgent, it is possible to contract the timings; this requires all the people involved in the review to be able and willing to commit the time and effort required to meet an accelerated schedule.



**Figure 7** Indicative timings for handbook projects and review

## Key milestones and timeframes

**Table 3** Suggested timeframes for key milestones

Suggested timeframe	Milestone
Through the annual review cycle or out of session	Handbook review or development proposal submitted
	Handbook approved for review or development by AIDR Strategic Committee
	Project start date
Months 1-3	Project scoping; socialisation; environmental scan; literature review; needs and gap analysis; user surveys; appoint writer; develop writer's brief; convene steering committee (if applicable) and working group
Month 4	Project planning; project brief and plan; stakeholder consultation (online)
Months 5-9	Content drafting; stakeholder engagement; review workshops
Months 10-11	Final review; project team sign-off; AIDR Executive Director sign-off
Month 12	FACG NEMA sign-off
Months 13-15	Publication; launch; promotion
Ongoing	Implementation support
+ 12 months	Validation and evaluation

Not all handbooks in the collection need to have been developed in-house by AIDR. The emergency management community includes authoritative groups, such as AFAC, which produce industry-focused doctrine, some of which could be adopted into the Handbook Collection. Examples include the Incident Management Handbook and the Public Information and Warnings Handbook. In addition, other national authoritative groups like NFRAG and ATAG may take lead project management role in development or review of handbooks with support from AIDR.

## Authority to approve changes to handbooks

Table 4 Authority required for various changes to handbooks

Scope of change	Authority to approve
Minor amendments e.g. grammatical, editorial, layout	AIDR Executive Director
Minor updates to handbook references, external links, data etc. a. For © Commonwealth of Australia doctrine b. For other guidelines	a. First Assistant Coordinator-General NEMA b. AIDR
New or updated companion documents a. For © Commonwealth of Australia doctrine b. For other guidelines	a. First Assistant Coordinator- General NEMA b. AIDR
New handbooks (including companion documents) or major revision to existing handbooks. a. For © Commonwealth of Australia doctrine b. For other guidelines	a. First Assistant Coordinator-General NEMA b. Head of sponsoring body

## Handbook status

All handbooks and manuals are listed with a status indicator.

Table 5 Descriptions corresponding to various statuses for handbooks

Status	Description
Current	Reviewed within last five years and no urgent need for review identified
Under review	Approved for review or development and entered into the Handbook Collection review program of work schedule
Due for review	Need for urgent content review identified or last review over five years ago
Archived	Content no longer current, watermarked 'not current' and filed in the Handbook Collection Archive section on the Knowledge Hub

# Appendix 1: Handbook Collection document library

## Documents

- Current listing of handbooks and companion documents
- Strategic review of the handbook collection
- Historical listing of handbooks and manuals
- Handbook Collection – annual program of work
- Proposed new handbook collection listing
- AIDR Editorial Style Guide

## Templates

Template 1: Handbook identification, review and approval

Template 2: New handbook proposal

Template 3: Handbook review proposal

Template 4: Writer letter of engagement

Template 5: Writer's brief

Template 6: Handbook review project brief

Template 7: Project key milestones and timeframe

Template 8: Handbook project plan

Template 9: Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Template 10: Working Group Terms of Reference

Template 11: Meeting agenda

Template 12: Meeting minutes

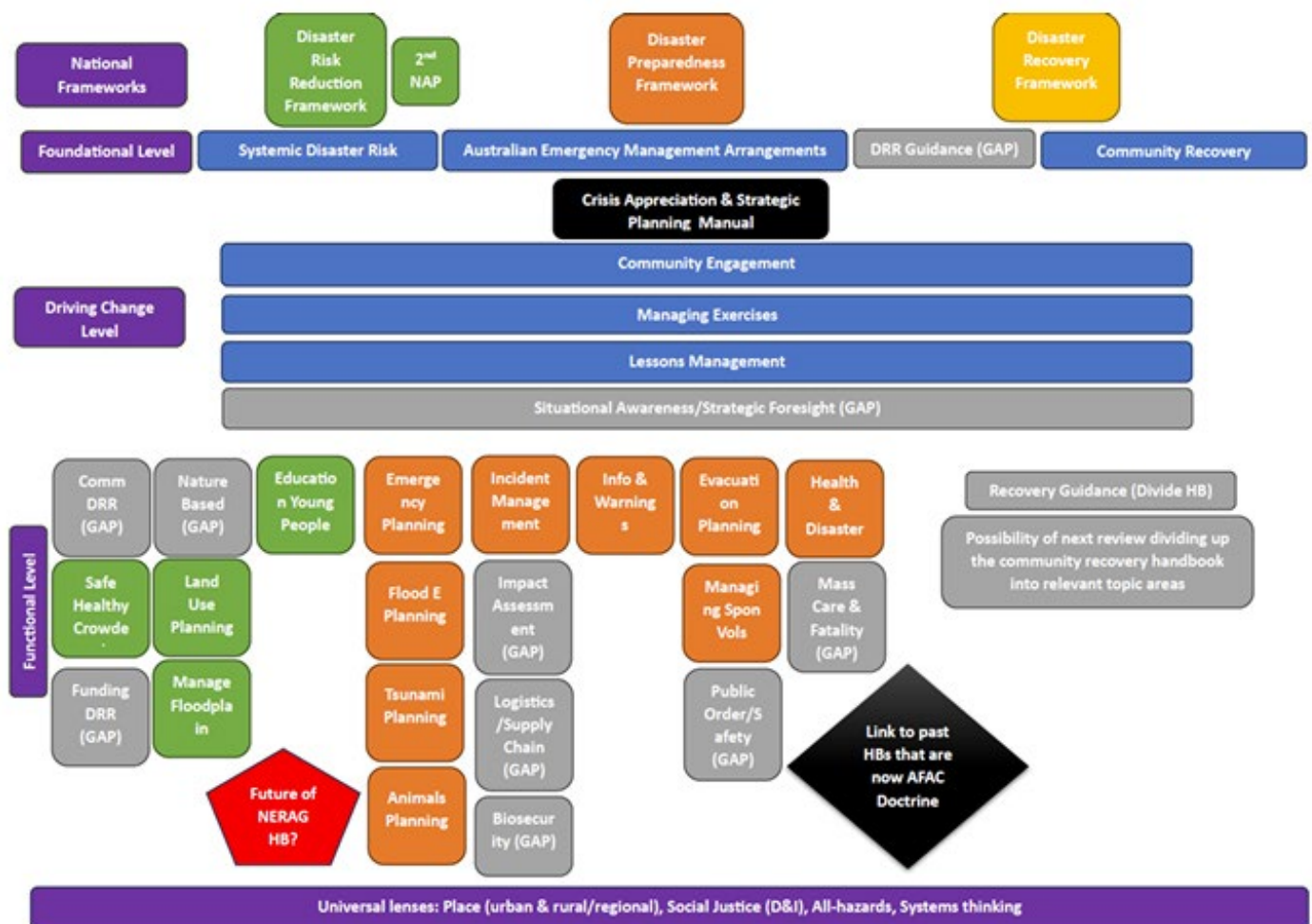
Template 13: Content review template

Template 14: Handbook review issues paper

Template 15: Statement of Completion

Template 16: Recommendation to NEMA

# Appendix 2: Draft Handbook Collection Structure





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