



Lessons Management Forum 2026

# Delegate Handbook

📅 19 - 21 May 2026    📍 Brisbane Marriott Hotel, Brisbane



The organisers of the Lessons Management Forum acknowledge the Turrbal and Jagera (Yuggera) peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters, and skies of the Brisbane region, known as Meanjin. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs, and deep connection to country and community and pay our respect to Elders past and present.



# Contents

Program .....	4
Workshops .....	8
Keynote speakers.....	9
Abstracts and speakers.....	10
AFAC Lessons Management Award .....	26
Poster display .....	27
General information.....	27



Tuesday 19 May

## Program | Day 1 | Grand Ballroom

Time (AEST)	Presentation	NZST	ACST	AWST
8.00am	Registrations open	10.00am	7.30am	6.00am
9.00am	<b>Welcome and opening</b> - Welcome to Country - Housekeeping	11.00am	8.30am	7.00am
9.15am	<b>Opening remarks:</b> Alistair Dawson APM, Inspector-General of Emergency Management	11.15am	8.45am	7.15am
10.00am	<b>Keynote: Learning across borders: International insights and            national opportunities</b> Katarina Carroll APM, National Emergency Management Agency	12.00pm	9.30am	8.00am
10.45am	Morning tea (30 minutes)	12.45pm	10.15am	8.45am
11.15am	<b>Lessons to Leverage: Bringing frameworks to life</b> Erin Pelly, Australian Red Cross and Lauren Lombardi, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience	1.15pm	10.45am	9.15am
11.35am	<b>Generating participative value in the lessons process through positive            language</b> Paul Margetts, Paul Margetts Consulting	1.35pm	11.05am	9.35am
11.55am	<b>Implementing a successful lessons management framework across            multiple major disaster events</b> Kelli Hudson and Troy Gersback, City of Gold Coast	1.55pm	11.25am	9.55am
12.15pm	<b>From lessons identified to lessons learned: Copilot supported after action            reviews in Victorian public health incident management</b> Priya Rangarajan, Victorian Department of Health	2.15pm	11.45am	10.15am
12.35pm	<b>The future of lessons management: Learning systems for Australia's            emerging risk landscape</b> Jennifer Pothan, National Emergency Management Agency	2.35pm	12.05pm	10.35am
12.55pm	Lunch (40 minutes)	2.55pm	12.25pm	10.55am
1.35pm	<b>Enhancing real-time monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement            during sustained operations</b> Luke Purcell, Emergency Management Victoria	3.35pm	1.05pm	11.35am
1.55pm	<b>From stories to systems: Turning tacit recovery know-how into lessons            identified—and learned</b> Dr Patrick Fong, Griffith University	3.55pm	1.25pm	11.55am

Tuesday 19 May

## Program | Day 1 | Grand Ballroom

Time (AEST)	Presentation	NZST	ACST	AWST
2.15pm	<b>Learning at the speed of recovery: Rethinking lessons management in recovery in Western Australia</b> Donna Carter, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA	4.15pm	1.45pm	12.15pm
2.35pm	<b>Embedding risk, learning, and trust: The Queensland Police Service journey in disaster lessons management</b> Courtney Russell, Queensland Police Service	4.35pm	2.05pm	12.35pm
2.55pm	<b>The hitchhikers guide to lessons management</b> Mark Cuthbert	4.55pm	2.25pm	12.55pm
3.15pm	Afternoon tea (30 minutes)	5.15pm	2.45pm	1.15pm
3.45pm	<b>From lessons identified to lessons learned: Embedding gender and inclusion into evacuation practice</b> Mel Osborne, Gender and Disaster Australia	5.45pm	3.15pm	1.45pm
4.05pm	<b>Turning lessons into practical change on biosecurity responses</b> Bryar Clayton, Ministry for Primary Industries	6.05pm	3.35pm	2.05pm
4.25pm	<b>Queensland Corrective Services - Embracing the challenge</b> M.Sc. Lisa Cameron de Vries, Phoenix Resilience and Eden Hughes-Barbour, Queensland Corrective Services	6.25pm	3.55pm	2.25pm
4.45pm	<b>From insight to impact: How ERV turned lessons into lasting change</b> Grace Grech and Dana Hehir, Emergency Recovery Victoria – State Capability and Operations	6.45pm	4.15pm	2.45pm
5.05pm	<b>Key insights and lessons emerging from recovery focused events and operations in New Zealand</b> Stefan Michie, National Emergency Management Agency NZ	7.05pm	4.35pm	3.05pm
5.30pm-7.30pm	Networking session (in-person only)			

Wednesday 20 May

## Program | Day 2 | Grand Ballroom

Time (AEST)	Presentation	NZST	ACST	AWST
8.30am	Registrations open	10.30am	8.00am	6.30am
9.00am	<b>Keynote: Erase and repeat: Institutional amnesia and lesson learning</b> Dr Alastair Stark, University of Queensland	11.00am	8.30am	7.00am
9.45am	<b>Finishing well: How lessons drive strategy, strengthen practice, and enable purposeful exits</b> Erin Pelly, Australian Red Cross and Dr Claire Leppold, University of Melbourne	11.45am	9.15am	7.45am
10.05am	<b>Closing the loop: Positioning the lessons management framework as a risk management tool</b> Alex Murray, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	12.05pm	9.35am	8.05am
10.25am	Morning tea (30 minutes)	12.25pm	9.55am	8.25am
10.55am	<b>Bridging strategy and implementation: Lessons management in Queensland's disaster recovery sector</b> Alistair Dawson, IGEM and Simon Dorrington, Queensland Reconstruction Authority	12.55pm	10.25am	8.55am
11.15am	<b>Stories of Jasper</b> Kate Bertola, Mareeba Shire Council	1.15pm	10.45am	9.15am
11.35am	<b>Why we keep relearning the same lessons: Enablers and barriers to lessons management in the Western Australian emergency services sector</b> Jennifer Medbury, Edith Cowan University	1.35pm	11.05am	9.35am
11.55am	<b>Why do lessons fail to stick?</b> Superintendent Mark Langhorn, Victoria Police	1.55pm	11.25am	9.55am
12.15pm	Lunch (40 minutes)	2.15pm	11.45am	10.15am
12.55pm	<b>Lessons Management Award – winning presentation:</b> <b>Turning lessons into action: Advancing organisational resilience post-TC Alfred</b> Coralie Muddle and Chris Barnes, City of Moreton Bay	2.55pm	12.25pm	10.55am
1.25pm	<b>Lessons Management Award – highly commended presentation:</b> <b>Sector wide lessons implementation</b> Gemma Parkin, NZ Land Search and Rescue	3.25pm	12.55pm	11.25am

Wednesday 20 May

## Program | Day 2 | Grand Ballroom

Time (AEST)	Presentation	NZST	ACST	AWST
1.45pm	<b>Making lessons stick</b> Dr Tracy Hatton and David Parsons ESM, Resorgs/RRANZ	3.45pm	1.15pm	11.45am
2.05pm	<b>Tailored for rigour, challenged by tempo: Releasing lessons in continuous operations</b> Sanna Verhoef and Chris Jacobson, Transport For NSW	4.05pm	1.35pm	12.05pm
2.25pm	<b>How lessons learned from 2021-2023 NSW Floods significantly improved field data insights, and understanding of flood impacted communities in 2025</b> Melissa Daley, NSW State Emergency Service	4.25pm	1.55pm	12.55pm
2.45pm	Afternoon tea (30 minutes)	4.45pm	2.15pm	12.25pm
3.15pm	<b>Impressions from a Churchill Fellowship investigating lessons management, NSW Rural Fire Service</b> Superintendent Dan Meijer, NSW Rural Fire Service	5.15pm	2.45pm	1.15pm
3.35pm	<b>Evolving RPAS (drones) from observation to intelligence in Queensland Fire Department operations</b> Dean West, Queensland Fire Department	5.35pm	3.05pm	1.35pm
3.55pm	<b>Insight or illusion? Ensuring accuracy in AI powered lessons management</b> Dorothea Huber, AMSA	5.55pm	3.25pm	1.55pm
4.15pm	<b>Beyond resilience: Agricultural recovery by design — From lessons identified to lessons embedded</b> Leanne Kruss, Australian Integrated Agriculture	6.15pm	3.45pm	2.15pm
4.35pm	End of forum	6.35pm	4.05pm	2.35pm

Thursday 21 May

## Program | Day 3 | Workshops

All workshops are in person only and include catered morning tea and lunch.

### Workshop 1 | Room: Queen Adelaide 2

## We learn as one: Victoria's decade of learning lessons together - Practical pathways for embedding lessons management

9.00am – 12.30pm | **Facilitated by:** Luke Purcell and Lee Dagleish, Emergency Management Victoria

#### Workshop overview:

This workshop focuses on practical ways to embed lessons management into everyday organisational practice. Drawing on Victoria's experience, participants will explore the core components of an effective lessons system, including governance alignment, insight development, and cultural enablers. Through guided activities and peer discussion,

participants will reflect on their current approach, identify gaps, and develop realistic actions to strengthen their own systems. This workshop is designed for practitioners seeking clear, adaptable methods to improve learning and continuous improvement in complex environments.

### Workshop 2 | Room: Queen Adelaide 1

## Beginning the journey - A newbie's guide to lessons management

9.00am – 12.30pm | **Facilitated by:** Gemma Parkin, NZ Land Search and Rescue

#### Workshop overview:

They say there's no such thing as a silly question, but that doesn't stop you from feeling silly when asking it. This workshop is a safe space for those starting their lessons management journey. We'll slow it down and break it down, helping demystify the language and elements to give you a clearer understanding.

During this workshop, we will:

- break down the lessons management cycle and the observations, insights, lessons identified and lessons learned (OILL) process
- explore the real steps, missteps, and insights from NZ Land Search and Rescue's 3-year journey to create and implement a lessons framework
- develop practical steps for getting started.

### Workshop 3 | Room: Petrie 2

## From Aboriginal cultural insight to organisational change: Translating recovery lessons into action

9.00am – 12.30pm | **Facilitated by:** Ty Caling, Conservation Collaborators and Carole Macmillan, East Gippsland Shire Council

#### Workshop overview:

This interactive workshop draws on the Aboriginal and Cultural Recovery and Resilience Strengthening Program following the 2019–20 East Gippsland bushfires to explore how community insights from recovery can be translated into practical organisational change. Using a real recovery case study, participants will examine systemic barriers that prevent lessons being embedded and work through a practical

framework for converting qualitative recovery insights into governance, policy, and capability improvements.

Through facilitated exercises and systems mapping, participants will develop actionable pathways to move from lessons identified to lessons learned within their own organisations.

## Keynote speaker 1

### Learning across borders: International insights and national opportunities

**Katarina Carroll APM**, Deputy Coordinator-General (DCG), Emergency Management and Response Group, National Emergency Management Agency

10.00am | Tuesday 19 May

This presentation explores international insights into learning as a system-level capability and their relevance for Australia's disaster risk management arrangements. It focuses on strengthening preparedness and coordination across jurisdictions while respecting existing roles and autonomy.



**Katarina Carroll APM** is the Deputy Coordinator-General (DCG) of the Emergency Management and Response Group of the National Emergency Management Agency.

As DCG, Katarina is responsible for overseeing the Australian Government National Situation Room and coordination of Australian Government disaster assistance (non-financial).

Ms Carroll was previously the Chair of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and was a company director on StarFlight. She is a current company director on LifeFlight.

Ms Carroll served as the 20th Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) from July 2019 until retiring from the role in March 2024. Prior to that she was the Commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) from December 2014 until July 2019. From 2012–14, Ms Carroll was the Chief Security Planner and Operations Commander for the G20, Australia's largest peacetime security operation.

Ms Carroll has significant operational experience and has led both the QFES and QPS response through multiple emergencies and natural hazards. Known as a transformational leader, Ms Carroll influenced the policing and emergency management sector through her involvement as Chair and member of numerous national boards.

Ms Carroll believes in a life of continual learning and holds several tertiary qualifications. In 2020 Ms Carroll was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from James Cook University and was the recipient of the Sir James Wolfensohn Public Service Scholarship, to study at the prestigious Kennedy Business School, Harvard University.

In 2008, Ms Carroll received the Australian Police Medal and in 2015 she was awarded the National Telstra Businesswomen's Award for Government and Academia. In 2015 and 2019, Ms Carroll was named as one of the Australian Financial Review and Westpac's '100 women of influence'.

## Keynote speaker 2

### Erase and repeat: Institutional amnesia and lesson learning

**Dr Alastair Stark**, Associate Professor in Public Policy, University of Queensland and Director, School of Political Science's Graduate Centre

09.00am | Wednesday 20 May

In this keynote, Alastair will introduce the findings from his latest book – *Institutional amnesia and memory in government*. Institutional amnesia represents a profound problem for disaster management agencies because it can undo the work of effective learning systems and cultures. Alastair will discuss the causes and effects amnesia within public agencies and reflect on various 'treatments' for memory loss that might enhance the ability of lesson learners to recall the past so that they can face future events with confidence.



**Alastair Stark** is an Associate Professor in Public Policy at the University of Queensland and the Director of the School of Political Science's Graduate Centre. Alastair specialises in the study of crisis and disaster

management. He is the author of 4 books and has published over 30 articles on a variety of issues including the role of parliaments during crises, pre-crisis planning, crisis coordination, resilience, community participation and lesson learning.

He was awarded the Laswell Prize for his work on the role of public inquiries in relation to post-crisis learning and the Mayer Prize for his research into dam management during the Queensland floods. Alastair's current research projects include an Australian Research Council project examining institutional amnesia in the public services of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom and a Queensland specific project exploring blockages to lesson learning in the disaster management space.

# Abstracts and speakers

Learn more about our speakers and their presentations by visiting our [website](#)



## Lessons Management Forum 2026 MC

**Des Hosie**, National Operations Advisor, Lessons Management Lead, Operational Assurance, Fire and Emergency New Zealand



**Des Hosie** is a career firefighter and 42-year veteran of Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

Currently serving in the Operational Assurance Directorate, he is National Advisor for Safety, Continuous Improvement and Lessons Management based in Fire and Emergency New Zealand’s National Headquarters. Des has extensive operational firefighting and rescue experience.

Through the AFAC partnership, Des has contributed as a lessons management practitioner on a number of major reviews in both New Zealand and Australia. He is the Chair of the AFAC Lessons Management Community of Practice and Deputy Chair of the Work Health and Safety Technical Group. He is a committee member of the AFAC Research Group and the AFAC Lessons Management Forum.

Des also leads a Lessons Management Community of Practice in New Zealand called LessoNZ. Its function is to share lessons from incidents and exercises across all of government, emergency services, defence and key infrastructure sectors.

## Lessons to leverage: Bringing frameworks to life



**Erin Pelly**,  
Australian Red Cross

**11.15am | Tuesday 19 May**

Effective lessons management in recovery requires frameworks that are not only conceptually sound, but operationally usable in complex, real world settings. This paper presents the Red Cross Emergency Services Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework, developed throughout 2020 through collaboration across state and territory, national, and leadership levels. Building on existing practice, the framework was designed to support Red Cross’ goal that communities are strong and resilient, with the capacity to anticipate, respond to, and recover well from disasters.

The framework’s purpose is threefold: to support ongoing learning and improvement across operations and strategy; to meet accountability obligations to communities, partners, donors, volunteers, and governance bodies; and to contribute credible evidence to sector learning and advocacy. Guided by principles of psychosocial wellbeing, community development, ‘do no harm,’ and utilisation focused learning, the framework embeds lessons management across the recovery lifecycle rather than treating it as a post event activity.



**Lauren Lombardi**,  
Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

This paper illustrates how the framework is applied in the field through recovery operations, including community based and psychosocial services. In practice, it provides field teams with guidance and contextual understanding to frame appropriate service delivery, inform community events, and tailor planning and work plans. Systematic monitoring and community feedback enable the early identification of emerging issues, root causes of operational challenges, and timely corrective action. Lessons from field operations have informed the development of new program components, such as targeted workshops, training, reporting mechanisms, and inputs into internal guidance, sector papers, and advocacy initiatives.

By linking field level learning to organisational decision making and sector knowledge, the framework demonstrates how structured lessons management can deliver tangible recovery improvements while strengthening accountability, community capacity, and long-term resilience.

## Generating participative value in the lessons process through positive language



**Paul Margetts**, Paul Margetts Consulting

11.35am | Tuesday 19 May

Emergency and disaster management has traditionally focused on identifying failures, gaps, and corrective actions. While this approach is essential, it often overlooks the powerful learning potential embedded in what went well. This presentation introduces an appreciative inquiry-informed framework for capturing, communicating, and amplifying positive language and successes within lessons identified from emergencies and disasters. By shifting from deficit-based analysis to a strengths-oriented perspective, organisations can cultivate a more resilient, adaptive, and engaged learning culture.

The appreciative inquiry offers a structured, yet flexible methodology built around discovering existing strengths, envisioning improved futures, and designing pathways to achieve them. Applied to post-incident reviews, AI encourages practitioners to explore high performing moments, effective decisions, and collaborative behaviours that contributed to successful outcomes—even in challenging or chaotic environments. These insights not only complement traditional after-action processes but also enhance

psychological safety, promote shared ownership of learning, and reinforce confidence in organisational capability.

The presentation will outline practical strategies for integrating AI principles into emergency management workflows, including appreciative questioning techniques, positive framing of lessons management conversations, and methods for co-creating future focused improvement actions. Real world examples will illustrate how reframing narratives around success can strengthen preparedness, support workforce wellbeing, and improve multi-agency coordination.

Ultimately, this strengths-based approach does not replace critical analysis; rather, it enriches it. By intentionally capturing and celebrating what works, organisations can build a more balanced and motivating learning environment. An environment that recognises competence, fosters innovation, and supports continuous improvement across all phases of emergency and disaster management.

## Implementing a successful lessons management framework across multiple major disaster events



**Kelli Hudson**, City of Gold Coast

11.55am | Tuesday 19 May

The City of Gold Coast is subject to numerous hazards with severe weather having heavily impacted the region in February/March 2022, significant multi hazard events on Christmas and New Years 2023, and Tropical Cyclone (TC) Alfred in 2025, resulting in compounding and overlapping response and recovery programs.

These events identified lessons and opportunities to enhance the city's capability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. Their scale posed challenges in fully understanding lessons and priorities and what can be implemented to bring about genuine change.

Prior to 2022 the City of Gold Coast utilised a standard lessons management approach, progressing lessons as time and resources allowed. Following the 2022 event we integrated a lessons management framework built on simple, effective strategies resulting in an enhanced, proactive and successful program.

Committing a dedicated lessons management resource, we now ensure lessons are identified, registered, prioritised and learnt through a systematic approach. By fostering a culture of learning, effective communication, process development



**Troy Gersback**, City of Gold Coast

and tailored training, we embed and continually evaluate lessons to ensure improvements occur.

Actively seeking observations, multi-agency collaboration and participation in exercises, council-to-council arrangements and after-action reviews (AAR) are now business as usual, allowing us to learn from various operational environments. Our approach is underpinned by lessons focused leadership, embedding continuous improvement into daily operations and strategic thinking, aligned to the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience's (AIDR) approach.

This presentation details how a simple and iterative framework has led to 30 of 59 lessons complete, with 29 in progress. We'll share case studies demonstrating how lessons from the 2023 Christmas storms were applied during TC Alfred and refined to drive continuous improvement, positive community outcomes and lasting change. This includes:

- Gold Coast Faith Community Disaster Network: from community driven lessons to supporting vulnerable communities
- Operation Clean Up: applying lessons across multiple events to enhance response, relief and community resilience.

## From lessons identified to lessons learned: Copilot supported after-action reviews in Victorian public health incident management



**Priya Rangarajan**, Victorian Department of Health

12.15pm | Tuesday 19 May

As organisations develop their lessons management systems, the ability to analyse and implement at pace becomes critical. This presentation shows how an (AAR) model supported by Copilot enables both operational learning and strategic uplift.

Responding to major public health incidents generates valuable experience, but without systematic oversight, these insights can remain ‘lessons identified’ rather than translating into sustained change. AARs and in-action reviews (IAR) provide a structured forum to recognise effective practice, identify challenges, and prioritise improvements.

Consistent with the World Health Organisation guidance, the Victorian Department of Health has operationalised a repeatable AAR/IAR model that drives continuous improvement through a structured cycle of data collection, analysis, implementation, and monitoring and review, underpinned by clear governance and active stakeholder engagement. Insights and recommendations are synthesised across reviews, prioritised, assigned ownership, and progressed through governance to support implementation over time.

Over the past 24 months, this approach has demonstrated institutionalised change. For example, AAR/IAR outputs have informed a substantial rewrite of the Public Health Incident

Management Guidelines, strengthening doctrine for future response and recovery.

Digital tools enable the process at scale. Microsoft Teams transcripts and facilitator notes are treated as primary evidence, and Microsoft Copilot (generative AI) accelerates first-pass coding, synthesis and de-identified drafting, improving timeliness and traceability while focussing on validation and quality assurance. A recent innovation is the use of a Copilot reasoning agent to support a qualitative meta-analysis of recent AARs and IARs to identify emerging trends, opportunities and recurring risks.

Through this presentation, attendees will gain:

- an end to end understanding of AARs and IARs from facilitated debrief to governance and implementation
- insights regarding where Copilot can be safely integrated into analysis and reporting to strengthen lessons to action pathways
- early meta analysis insights, including recurring themes and actionable considerations that organisations can adapt to embed change and strengthen strategic decision making.

## The future of lessons management: Learning systems for Australia’s emerging risk landscape



**Jennifer Pothan**, National Emergency Management Agency

12.35pm | Tuesday 19 May

Observations and participant feedback from the 2024 national exercises conducted by the National Exercising and Lessons Capability indicate a shifting national risk profile that will significantly shape the future of lessons management. When asked to identify the greatest emerging risks Australia is likely to face over the next 5–10 years, participants highlighted climate change (32%), cybersecurity threats (20%), economic instability (18%), geopolitical tensions (12%), public health crises (10%), and natural disasters (8%). These trends reflect an increasingly complex, interconnected, and fast-moving operating environment.

This presentation considers the implications of these emerging risks for the future of lessons management across emergency management and resilience systems. As climate driven impacts intersect with cyber disruption, economic pressure, and geopolitical uncertainty, lessons are no longer isolated to single events or sectors. Traditional, linear lessons management approaches, focused on static reporting and

discrete incidents, are increasingly challenged by the volume, pace, and cross cutting nature of contemporary insights.

The future of lessons management will require a shift toward continuous, adaptive learning systems that can capture insights across jurisdictions, organisations, hazards, and capability domains, and rapidly translate them into actionable knowledge. Digital collaboration platforms, structured data capture, and analytical tools, including AI supported synthesis, offer opportunities to improve the scalability, traceability, and strategic value of lessons derived from exercises and operations.

By drawing on insights from national level exercises, this presentation highlights key trends shaping the next generation of lessons management and explores how learning systems must evolve to remain fit for purpose in Australia’s emerging risk environment. Aligning lessons management practices with this risk landscape will be critical to strengthening preparedness, coordination, and national resilience over the coming decade.

## Enhancing real-time monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement during sustained operations



**Luke Purcell**, Emergency Management Victoria

**1.35pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Real-time monitoring and evaluation has become an increasingly embedded feature of emergency management operations in Victoria.

Building on Emergency Management Victoria's (EMV) previous work on continuous improvement captured through real-time monitoring and evaluation (RTM&E), this presentation explores how EMV has further refined its approach during the 2025-26 high-risk weather season to balance assurance activities and decision making to support continuous improvement.

The focus of RTM&E has evolved towards prioritising effort, testing assumptions, strengthening governance, and applying learning activities that are proportionate to the various stages of an emergency event.

The presentation examines how real-time learning and continuous improvement capture is now being used to:

- provide proportionate assurance to operational teams and senior leaders in real-time
- identify pressure points and decision-making constraints that can inform immediate adjustments

- identify key steps taken towards establishing multi-agency pathways to action and implement multi-agency lessons.
- The session will also reflect on key refinements made during the 2025-26 high-risk weather season to the RTM&E process, including clearer separation between monitoring, improvement capture and lessons analysis, and stronger integration with governance forums responsible for prioritising and actioning identified areas of improvement.

Forum participants will also gain insight into how EMV is evolving the RTM&E concept and its continuous improvement system to support and provide increased confidence to senior leadership while avoiding data and analysis fatigue.

This presentation offers a practical view of how real-time learning can bridge the gap between learnings identified and continuous improvement and demonstrates how organisations need to constantly adjust their learning systems to remain relevant under sustained pressure. The session is suitable for both new and experienced lessons practitioners and offers an approach to real-time learning that can be adapted across various contexts.

## From stories to systems: Turning tacit recovery know-how into lessons identified—and learned



**Dr Patrick Fong**, Griffith University

**1.55pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Recovery is where organisations improvise under pressure, and where the most valuable lessons are often invisible. Post-event reports capture what happened, but the 'how we actually made it work' lives in tacit knowledge: the situational judgment, workarounds, trade-offs, and informal coordination that never make it into forms, dashboards, or debrief minutes.

This session argues that many programs stall not because they lack lessons, but because they fail to surface and steward tacit know-how early, when lessons are still being identified. Drawing on recovery-focused operations, I will present a practical, beginner-friendly yet practitioner-challenging approach to move from lessons identified to lessons learned by treating tacit knowledge as a first-class asset. The method combines critical moments capture (a simple protocol to capture decision points and near-miss

saves in real-time), a tacit lesson canvas (to translate stories into testable lesson statements, owners, and triggers), and learning-to-change governance (linking lessons to risk, capability, training, and strategic decisions so they survive staff turnover and operational tempo).

I will also demonstrate technology-enabled lessons management using AI as a co-pilot, not an autopilot: rapid clustering of field narratives, detection of recurring patterns across incidents, and 'what to ask next' prompts to reduce hindsight bias, while maintaining human verification, context, and accountability.

Participants will leave with tools to capture higher-quality lessons identified during recovery, convert them into embedded changes, and apply historical recovery insights to strengthen preparedness for the next event.

## Learning at the speed of recovery: Rethinking lessons management in recovery in Western Australia



**Donna Carter**, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA

**2.15pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Lessons management practices in emergency management in Australia have evolved from response environments, characterised as short, high-tempo periods with frequent opportunities to learn and highly observable activities. Learning typically occurs post-event, with improvements implemented for future events.

Fundamentally different, recovery unfolds over extended timeframes, operates across multiple domains, with many diverse stakeholders. There are a few clear 'gateways' to take stock, capture insights and validate lessons. Instead, recovery lessons emerge incrementally and often informally. They are frequently strategic, relational, and systemic. Wherever possible, the lessons need to be 'learnt' when they are identified, to address the systemic issue and improve outcomes for that community, rather than delaying the learning until next time. Traditional, formal feedback loops do not suit this continual improvement model; a more agile and responsive learning approach is needed.

This session will present case studies to examine WA's journey in managing lessons across significant recoveries as

we develop and mature our recovery capability. The paper will show how recovery necessitates modified approaches to lessons methodologies: different thematic categorisation, a greater emphasis on adaptive change, and new governance arrangements. The case studies will showcase how adaptive change has been implemented to improve community recovery outcomes and support future decision-making.

The session will also consider our incremental work towards a recovery lessons management framework that marries the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' established lessons management process with what we have learnt about learning in recovery. We will share our vision to move beyond compliance-based registers, toward simple, collaborative systems and practices that genuinely strengthen recovery outcomes and capability and support an organisational learning culture. By sharing WA's experience, this presentation aims to challenge existing paradigms and offer practical insights for other jurisdictions seeking to strengthen recovery capability.

## Embedding risk, learning, and trust: The Queensland Police Service journey in disaster lessons management

**Courtney Russell**, Queensland Police Service

**2.35pm | Tuesday 19 May**

As disasters grow in scale and complexity, so too must the systems that learn from them. This presentation traces the QPS's journey in building a modern, adaptive lessons management framework (LMF), a transformation that began in 2023 and continues to reshape how Queensland prepares for, responds to, and recovers from disasters.

Initially designed to bring clarity and consistency to the lessons process within the State Disaster Coordination Centre, the LMF quickly evolved from a procedural guide into a culture-building tool. What emerged was not a rigid checklist, but a set of foundational principles co-created through experimentation, honest feedback, and active engagement across the disaster management sector. As input expanded, so did opportunities for shared learnings, stronger communication, and leadership-driven improvement.

The 2025–26 higher-risk weather season marked a significant shift as QPS integrated risk assessment into lessons management for the first time. Inspired by national practitioner insights, this approach enabled senior leaders to

prioritise actions based on risk, reinforcing transparency and trust across operational teams.

Today, the LMF continues to mature through the exploration of AI and other emerging technologies. AI powered insights, tempered by expert validation, are beginning to reshape real-time observation analysis and continuous improvement practices. Early innovations during the season highlight both the potential of AI to enhance learning and the irreplaceable role of human judgement. This, coupled with risk assessment, strengthened lessons management in QPS.

Looking forward, QPS recognises that strong networks from local, national, and international are essential to sustaining momentum. The journey toward embedding lessons as 'lessons learnt' is ongoing, but cultural change is increasingly visible across staff and leadership. Ultimately, this work aims to position lessons management firmly within the Queensland Disaster Management Training Framework, strengthening consistency, collaboration, and shared capability across Queensland's disaster management sector.

## The hitchhikers guide to lessons management



**Mark Cuthbert**

**2.55pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Both in Australia and overseas we continue to be presented with a wide range and a growing number of lessons identification opportunities. This shows no signs of abating.

Significant progress has been made by a number of organisations, jurisdictions and nationally on learning from experience, but the struggle to convert 'lessons identified' into 'lessons learned' across tactical, operational, and strategic levels continues. Even those that are making progress and embedding lessons management processes are now identifying new challenges with the implementation and learning of lessons.

This presentation will provide a snapshot of where we are now with lessons management in Australia including what is working well. It will cover the challenges we are currently facing but more importantly it will talk about where we should or could be going next.

Significant effort has been invested in recent years to develop lessons management capability and improve learning from experience but there is an ongoing need to maintain the focus on and momentum of lessons management at all levels.

## From lessons identified to lessons learned: Embedding gender and inclusion into evacuation practice

**Mel Osborne**, Gender and Disaster Australia

**3.45pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Our foundational research with disaster-affected individuals and communities has consistently exposed patterns of gendered harm, family violence, and the exclusion of marginalised groups in evacuation and response environments. These lessons are frequently identified in reviews and inquiries yet are rarely embedded into operational systems. This presentation examines how intersectional consultation can be translated into structured, actionable change within a lessons management framework.

Drawing on our recent Creating Safer Shelter Spaces project work across Victoria and NSW, Gender and Disaster Australia engaged older Australians, young people, multicultural and First Nations communities, LGBTQIA+ stakeholders, young parents, disability advocates, and academics to identify systemic risks within evacuation centres and broader disaster practice. These insights informed the design of training, implementation checklists, and evacuation guidance to move from awareness to operational integration.

The session will explore:

- recurrent lessons on gendered risk and family violence in disasters
- why social and equity-based lessons often stall at the 'identified' stage
- practical mechanisms used to translate consultation findings into training content, implementation checklists, and evacuation guidance
- how intersectional risk can be treated as core operational risk.

This case study demonstrates how socially informed insights can be integrated into formal lessons management processes, strengthening preparedness, evacuation safety, and long-term system resilience.

## Turning lessons into practical change on biosecurity responses



**Bryar Clayton**, Ministry for Primary Industries

**4.05pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Over the past 4 years, Biosecurity New Zealand has taken deliberate steps to shift from identifying lessons to truly learning from them. This journey has centred on making continuous improvement an integral, expected, and visible part of every biosecurity response. By capturing feedback across all responses, large or small, we have built a maturing lessons management system that not only records insights but actively drives change.

This presentation will explore how Biosecurity New Zealand has translated insights into action and embedded improvements into both operations and strategic decision-making. Key developments include the replication of a regionally based response model, enabling faster mobilisation and stronger regional relationships; a significant uplift in geospatial capability, providing better situational awareness and more informed decision-making; and

an expansion of response leadership capacity to ensure consistency, resilience, and depth across events.

We have also strengthened collaboration with our contractors, recognising their critical role in operational delivery and the value of their on-the-ground insights. In parallel, we have developed threat-specific plans and exercised them regularly, building confidence within our organisation, capability, and shared understanding before a response is required.

Collectively, these changes demonstrate what is possible when lessons are not treated as an administrative output but as a tool for change. The session will share practical examples, reflections, and challenges from Biosecurity New Zealand's continuous improvement journey, offering insights for organisations seeking to embed learning, enhance readiness, and lift performance across complex response environments.

## Queensland Corrective Services - Embracing the challenge



**M.Sc. Lisa Cameron de Vries**,

Phoenix Resilience

**4.25pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) operates in a volatile, high-risk environment, with strict legal and regulatory requirements, balancing community, staff and prisoner safety. Services are delivered within tight budgets, with frugal resource use, and under constant threat in the most natural disaster-prone state. To deliver lessons management in this context is a challenge, but since 2022, QCS has steadily refined its lessons management program and gradual implementation of lessons. This program is embedded in QCS' Disaster and Emergency Management and Continuous Improvement frameworks.

In 2025, QCS embraced an even larger challenge by developing and delivering an exercise that explored a catastrophic scenario: What would we do if we had to evacuate a correctional centre affected by a cyclone? As fate would have it, that same year Cyclone Alfred passed the South East Queensland coast, affecting correctional centres as well as the QCS Headquarters, initiating an AAR of the response.

QCS recognised that balance is required between resources dedicated to identifying vs learning lessons. To streamline the review process and improve its effectiveness, QCS



**Eden Hughes-Barbour**,

Queensland Corrective Services

applied a standardised methodology, research and a context assessment, plus an evaluation led by subject matter experts. The learning management program design included:

- standardised processes and templates for debriefs, allowing for easy analysis and consolidation with similar lessons
- stakeholder feedback on reports and agreement on actions
- lessons implementation allocated to specific roles with accountability
- sharing lessons and corrective measures through multiple avenues
- a lessons database with a dashboard for easy review

This approach is effective in this context. Since 2022, many incident management lessons have been identified, and corrective measures have been validated and implemented. Through AARs, additional refinement opportunities have been identified and implemented. QCS rigorously follows the lessons management cycle, and it works!

## From insight to impact: How ERV turned lessons into lasting change



**Grace Grech**, Emergency Recovery  
Victoria, – State Capability and Operations

**4.45pm | Tuesday 19 May**

Organisations often capture observations and undertake assurance activities without realising sustained improvement. This presentation examines how Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) has applied the lessons management cycle organisation wide to move beyond surface-level reviews, and toward meaningful change and governance reform. Drawing on a practical experience from relief and recovery operations, presenters illustrate how structured processes for identifying, prioritising and implementing actions from insights and lessons have influenced internal decision-making processes, and led to enhanced coordination internally and with external stakeholders. This session highlights how lessons management, when used as a cyclical tool, fosters sustained improvement across organisations, systems and relationships.



**Dana Hehir**, Emergency Recovery  
Victoria, – State Capability and Operations

Attendees will gain insights into:

- how lessons management principles supported ERV during significant organisational change
- the intersection between operational delivery and organisational capability
- how to prioritise lessons management activities to identify gaps and risks, and the application of evaluation tools to form an evidence base
- how to use structured processes to identify, prioritise and implement actions from insights and lessons identified, embedding lessons management as a core organisational capability to inform decision-making
- how ERV matured its business processes to apply evidence-based decision-making, increase executive confidence and support strategic planning.

## Key insights and lessons emerging from recovery focused events and operations in New Zealand



**Stefan Michie**, National Emergency Management Agency NZ

**5.05pm | Tuesday 19 May**

As disaster impacts grow more complex worldwide, Aotearoa New Zealand's recent recovery experiences offer transferable insights into how governments can build more adaptive and culturally grounded recovery systems. This presentation distils lessons from recent recovery operations, focusing on 3 interconnected enablers: regulatory relief, Indigenous partnership, and the integration of scientific expertise into local decision making.

First, flexible regulatory relief mechanisms, including temporary adjustments to planning, building, and environmental requirements, have proven essential for speeding up recovery while safeguarding long-term resilience objectives. These tools help reduce administrative barriers, support rapid restoration of access and critical infrastructure, and empower local authorities to respond to community specific needs without undermining future risk reduction.

Second, the active involvement of iwi and Māori can strengthen legitimacy, inclusiveness and effectiveness of recovery in both the long and short term. Their leadership ensures that recovery approaches recognise relationships with whenua (land), address community defined priorities, and embed holistic outcomes that extend beyond physical reconstruction. These insights are relevant for jurisdictions seeking to elevate Indigenous or First Nations governance within emergency management systems.

Finally, embedding scientific advice and natural hazard modelling capability within local government is increasingly vital. Improved access to imagery, geospatial tools and hazard forecasting supports better and faster situational awareness and more effective recovery investment decisions.

## Finishing well: How lessons drive strategy, strengthen practice, and enable purposeful exits



**Erin Pelly**, Australian Red Cross

**9.45am | Wednesday 20 May**

This presentation explores a lessons management case study drawn from the independent evaluation of the Australian Red Cross 2019–20 bushfire recovery program delivered across 4 Australian states and territories. The evaluation identified program improvement opportunities in the design and operational planning of embedded exit and transition planning within the recovery model. While the program demonstrated strong practice in community engagement, service delivery and community-led recovery, there was no structured guide to support the transition of program activities back to communities, services, and local operators as recovery programs concluded.

This finding reflects a broader sector issue. Exit planning is rarely discussed in recovery programs and there is limited research literature providing practical guidance for this phase of recovery. As a result, transition planning is often underdeveloped in both program models and recovery frameworks. This has operational implications for both recovery practitioners, policy makers and community, reducing program impact, sustainability, and community resilience.



**Dr Claire Leppard**,

University of Melbourne

In response, these evaluation findings were translated into operational change using a lessons management approach. Drawing on recovery program insights, available academic literature, sector frameworks, and applied practice knowledge, the program developed and embedded an operational transition planning framework to support and guide decision makers and field recovery officers. This framework now guides field staff in exit planning, implementation of structured exit processes, service handover, workforce transitions, and community informed planning.

The session will demonstrate how organisations can move from lessons identified to lessons learned by embedding change into operational practice and strategic program design. Presented as a case study, it shares practical insights to inform other organisations, strengthen recovery planning and contribute to the limited evidence base on exit and transition planning. It aims to support improved sector practice, sustain program impacts and guide future research in a critical area of disaster recovery.

## Closing the loop: Positioning the lessons management framework as a risk management tool

**Alex Murray**, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

**10.05am | Wednesday 20 May**

The lessons management framework (LMF) is fundamental to continuous improvement in emergency management. Its utility as a risk-management tool, however, remains constrained by the absence of residual risk assessment to progress identified lessons to lessons learned.

Wicked problems rarely achieve validated behavioural or organisational change required to become a 'lesson learned', leaving them stalled, indefinitely open, or closed prematurely without a defensible basis.

Current practice assumes that lessons must be fully learned, requiring complete risk elimination before agency institutionalisation. Yet in environments characterised by complexity and change, many lessons cannot reach full resolution, leading to indefinite retention or premature closure without a structured risk-based justification.

Established risk management frameworks including ISO 31000, recognise residual risk assessment as an essential component of risk-treatment and decision-making; a mechanism for reducing scientific, strategic and operational uncertainty that undermines response objectives. However,

LMFs including the AIDR's LMF, do not integrate residual risk evaluation as a mechanism for lesson closure. This paper introduces a structured enhancement to the LMF.

Application of residual-risk assessment within the LMF facilitates lessons to be evaluated against an agency's enterprise risk tolerance or tolerable risk threshold. Where residual risk is deemed acceptable, a lesson can be reclassified as 'lesson acknowledged', allowing progression through the framework while enabling resources to be redirected toward higher priority risks. This approach optimises the LMF's function as a risk based decision-making tool, ensuring lessons management supports strategic resource allocation and enhances organisational resilience.

This paper presents a structured model for integrating residual risk-assessment into AIDR's LMF through the introduction of a residual risk decision gate within the OILL cycle, positioning it as a functional risk management framework. Transitioning from a binary model to a risk-based continuum agencies enhance their ability to manage risk, uncertainty and drive continuous improvement in emergency response.

## Bridging strategy and implementation: Lessons management in Queensland's disaster recovery sector



**Alistair Dawson**, Inspector-General for Emergency Management

10.55am | Wednesday 20 May

Queensland's disaster recovery system is underpinned by a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptive practices, ensuring that lessons identified during recovery efforts are translated into meaningful actions. This presentation will be jointly presented by Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) and Queensland's Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management (IGEM), and will explore how QRA and IGEM collaborate to strengthen lessons management frameworks, governance, and practices within recovery contexts.

Application of the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland guides continuous improvement in recovery contexts. IGEM regularly publishes review reports that highlight what is working well in disaster management and what could be improved. IGEM and QRA have established governance to enable the monitoring and evaluation of lessons to provide accountability and give confidence that strategy and operations are delivering the intended benefits.

**Simon Dorrington**, Queensland Reconstruction Authority

QRA will provide an overview of how lessons management operates in practical terms, from strategic recovery and resilience planning to package-level implementation (even when not labelled as lesson management). Identification and connection of lessons from implementation (such as package-level evaluations, AARs, real-time observations and reconstruction monitoring) and strategy (such as the State Recovery and Resilience Plans) will be outlined.

The presentation will also share the challenges of connecting lessons from implementation with strategic decision-making for recovery. This presentation will provide valuable insights into how frameworks, governance, and practices can support effective lessons management during recovery, offering practical takeaways for lessons practitioners and organisations seeking to embed continuous improvement into their planning and preparedness.

## Stories of Jasper



**Kate Bertola**, Mareeba Shire Council

11.15am | Wednesday 20 May

Post-disaster recovery phases present a critical but often underutilised opportunity to capture lessons while lived experience, emotion and context remain fresh. Following the impacts of TC Jasper, Mareeba Shire Council deliberately shifted its recovery approach to prioritise early lessons capture through community storytelling, resulting in Stories of Jasper, a 7-part video series documenting recovery through the voices of those directly affected. Conceived, filmed, and produced within weeks rather than the typical 12-month timeframe, the project emerged from recovery operations and urgent discussions about how to counter disaster complacency and strengthen preparedness outcomes. Council recognised that many lessons identified during recovery—particularly those relating to preparedness failures—are frequently lost or diluted before they can meaningfully inform future decision-making.

Delivered in collaboration with Zoe Maree Media and supported through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, Stories of Jasper demonstrates how lessons identified during recovery can be

translated into practical, enduring learning by embedding them into preparedness messaging, organisational strategy and community engagement.

This presentation will explore:

- key lessons emerging from recovery-focused operations following TC Jasper
- governance and decision-making considerations when capturing lessons in emotionally charged post-disaster environments
- how lived experience storytelling can accelerate the transition from lessons identified to lessons learned
- why timing, authenticity, and early action are critical to ensuring recovery insights inform future preparedness.

The case study highlights a replicable approach for local governments seeking to strengthen lessons management beyond formal reviews, reinforcing how recovery can be leveraged not only to rebuild, but to drive meaningful behavioural and organisational change.

# Why we keep relearning the same lessons: Enablers and barriers to lessons management in the Western Australian emergency services sector

**Jennifer Medbury**, Edith Cowan University

**11.35am | Wednesday 20 May**

After major incidents, emergency services organisations consistently identify similar findings in debriefs and inquiries, yet many of the same issues reappear in subsequent events. The challenge is not discovering lessons but understanding why organisations struggle to implement them.

The study examines lessons management in the WA emergency services sector using the stratified systems theory as an analytical framework. A systematic analysis of external disaster review reports was combined with interviews and focus groups involving operational personnel, middle managers, and senior executives. Considering the sector as a set of distinct organisational strata revealed patterns not visible when agencies are treated as a single organisational level.

Findings show that lessons change meaning as they move through the organisation. Operational personnel identify practical issues relating to procedures, equipment, and coordination. At managerial levels these observations are reframed as capability, resourcing, and inter-agency coordination issues. At executive levels they become governance, risk, and accountability concerns. Consequently,

the people who observe problems are often not those with authority to resolve them, and recommendations may be acknowledged but not embedded into policy, training, or organisational design.

Commonly cited enablers of lessons management, such as organisational culture, communication and coordination, shared terminology, and consistent strategies and policies, were also found to act as barriers when misaligned. Time pressures, competing operational priorities, and difficulty accessing reliable and timely information further reduce the likelihood that lessons will be implemented.

These factors also vary by organisational level. Cultural openness is most influential where reporting occurs, shared language and coordination are critical where information is interpreted, and strategy and governance are decisive where authority to implement change exists. Lessons management therefore fails not because agencies do not learn, but because learning, interpretation, and decision authority often sit in different organisational strata.

## Why do lessons fail to stick?



**Superintendent Mark Langhorn**, Victoria Police

**11.55am | Wednesday 20 May**

Emergency service organisations are adept at identifying lessons after incidents, inquiries, and exercises. Yet the same lessons reappear year after year. This presentation argues that lessons rarely fail because they are wrong or unknown; they fail because they are designed for compliance, not adoption.

Drawing on research and operational experience within policing and emergency management environments, this session reframes lessons management as an adoption problem rather than a reporting or governance gap. Analysis of incident reviews across high-risk contexts shows a consistent pattern: lessons stall when they are imposed from a distance, framed as corrective, overloaded with complexity, or disconnected from the realities of frontline work.

This presentation introduces a set of adoption principles that explain how emergency response personnel take up change derived from lessons in complex, time critical organisations. These principles highlight the importance of clear frontline benefit, compatibility with existing practices, simplicity at

the point of action, opportunities to test and adapt lessons locally, and visible evidence that change makes a difference.

Central to the argument is designing for dignity. Policing, fire, ambulance, and emergency response organisations learn in the aftermath of trauma, scrutiny, and loss. In these contexts, lessons that disregard professional identity, emotional labour, or practitioner expertise are quietly rejected, regardless of how well they are written or mandated. Case examples demonstrate how co-creation, psychologically safe sense making, and visible learning artefacts increase ownership and reduce repetition.

This presentation challenges lessons practitioners to confront an uncomfortable question: are lessons being designed to satisfy the system, or to change behaviour where the work is actually done? Participants will leave with a sharper lens for diagnosing stalled lessons and practical design insights for turning lessons identified into lessons genuinely lived.

## Lessons Management Award - winning presentation

---

# Turning lessons into action: Advancing organisational resilience post-Tropical Cyclone Alfred



**Coralie Muddle**, City of Moreton Bay

**12.55pm | Wednesday 20 May**

The City of Moreton Bay's Disaster Management team is progressing a disciplined and forward-leaning approach to implementing the lessons identified during the response to and recovery from Tropical Cyclone Alfred. A comprehensive, multi-phase debrief and evaluation process revealed several critical insights, pinpointing opportunities to strengthen Council's operational readiness, enhance cross-agency interoperability, and improve community preparedness and resilience.

Acknowledging the importance of translating these learnings into tangible change, Council has prioritised a structured, transparent, and repeatable lessons-management framework designed to drive measurable improvement across the disaster management system. At the core of this framework is a targeted, organisation wide action plan that assigns clear accountability, defines functional ownership, and sets realistic, time-bound deliverables for each improvement



**Chris Barnes**, City of Moreton Bay

initiative. By embedding governance mechanisms that ensure ongoing oversight, review, and escalation when required, the disaster management team is cultivating a culture of continuous improvement and shared responsibility.

This presentation will outline the methodologies used to capture, classify and analyse learnings; the governance model established to support implementation; and the monitoring and reporting tools introduced to ensure each lesson is actively progressed rather than passively recorded. Through this systematic, evidence-informed approach, Council is not only addressing gaps exposed during TC Alfred but also strengthening long-term organisational resilience. The session will provide practical, adaptable insights for practitioners seeking to build sustainable and accountable lessons-management systems that enable organisations to evolve, mature, and deliver more resilient outcomes for their communities.

## Lessons Management Award - highly commended presentation

### Sector wide lessons implementation



**Gemma Parkin**, NZ Land Search and Rescue

1.25pm | Wednesday 20 May

In 2025, New Zealand Land Search and Rescue (NZ LandSAR) undertook an ambitious initiative: sector-wide implementation of a standardised Lessons Management process across the New Zealand Search and Rescue (SAR) Sector.

Historically, lessons data within the NZ SAR environment were captured inconsistently, often remaining within individual agencies or groups. There was no shared system, common language, or structured mechanism for cross-agency learning. As operations became increasingly complex and multi-agency in nature, this fragmentation created risk and duplication of learning.

From a lessons perspective, insights generated within one agency are often directly applicable to another. Increasingly, lessons arise from joint operations. A collaborative, sector-wide lessons approach was therefore logical.

Our journey began in 2023 with the development of NZ LandSAR's own Lessons Management Framework. The research and design phase included engagement with organisations across New Zealand and Australia, focusing on those that:

1. Operate with a large volunteer base
2. Manage geographically dispersed membership
3. Use systems capable of scaling across multiple agencies

As a federation, we have limited authority to mandate process adoption. Volunteer buy-in is critical. The innovation was therefore not simply procedural — it was cultural. The framework had to be practical, psychologically safe, and valuable enough that volunteers would choose to engage.

Between 2024 and 2025, we implemented:

- An observation capture platform (from ISW)
- A structured post-operation review process
- Facilitator training for post-operation reviews
- Updated hot and post-task debrief processes
- A Lessons Identified newsletter titled 'Our Stories' (example attached)
- An E-learning package for volunteers

After piloting these internally, we began a cross-agency soft launch. NZ Police were invited to facilitator training, and we supported major post-operation reviews, enabling them to observe the full lessons cycle in practice.

With senior Police support established, we had some momentum. In March 2025, Mark Cuthbert delivered the keynote address at our national conference, attended by leaders from partner agencies, reinforcing the strategic importance of collaborative learning. This momentum led to multiple sector-wide presentations and demonstrations.

In February 2026, all four NGOs and the two coordinating authorities jointly agreed to adopt the same Lessons Framework across all agencies for the management of SAR lessons data. This represents the first coordinated attempt to establish a shared lessons capability across the NZ SAR landscape — shifting from siloed reflection to structured, cross-sector learning.

Subsequently, we have submitted a joint business case to the NZ SAR Council to fund this implementation across the entire sector. It is one of the few truly collaborative applications ever presented to the SAR Council and is already influencing broader thinking about how agencies can work together more strategically.

## Making lessons stick



**Dr Tracy Hatton**, Resorgs/RRANZ

1.45pm | Wednesday 20 May

Organisations involved in emergency management consistently identify lessons from events and exercises, yet often, the same issues repeatedly emerge in subsequent responses. Lessons practitioners know we face a fundamental challenge to go beyond lessons capture and effectively translate lessons into lasting organisational or system change. Drawing on decades of consulting experience across multiple organisations in Australia and New Zealand, this presentation examines patterns in lessons management failures observed across different jurisdictions, hazard types, and organisational contexts. Working with diverse clients over extended timeframes reveals consistent failure points that transcend individual organisations or specific events.

The cross-jurisdictional perspective identifies critical barriers in traditional lessons management: findings are documented but quickly forgotten, lessons disappear when key personnel leave or priorities shift with election cycles, and insights remain trapped in reports rather than becoming embedded in organisational practice. These patterns persist regardless of organisation size, governance structure, or available resources, suggesting systemic rather than situational causes.



**David Parsons**, Resorgs/RRANZ

Effective lessons management requires deliberate program design that addresses 3 key elements. First, intentional dissemination strategies that move beyond report distribution to active engagement with findings across the organisation. Second, mechanisms that keep lessons alive despite staff turnover and political transitions, ensuring knowledge persists across organisational memory cycles. Third, compelling storytelling that transforms dry documentation into memorable narratives that resonate with practitioners and decision-makers.

This presentation demonstrates practical approaches for embedding these design principles into lessons management programs, distilled from observing what works and what fails across multiple contexts and decades of practice. By being strategic about dissemination, building systems that outlast tenure and electoral cycles, and leveraging narrative power, organisations can transform lessons management from a compliance exercise into a genuine driver of continuous improvement.

## Tailored for rigour, challenged by tempo: Releasing lessons in continuous operations



**Sanna Verhoef**, Transport For NSW

2.05pm | Wednesday 20 May

Over the past year, lessons management at Transport for NSW has matured into an established enterprise practice. With a common standard now embedded and gaining traction, the focus has shifted from establishing consistency to deliberately stretching the model for a broader and more varied group of stakeholders, with 12 distinct organisational areas now actively engaged. Rather than relying on traditional AARs and standard capture tools, methods were adapted to suit context from frontline operational crews to corporate enabling areas less familiar with lessons processes, through to senior executives.

Observation capture timing, forums, and formats were aligned to how groups operate so insights could be gathered in a timely way without slowing ongoing work. Validation and feedback pathways were structured to ensure the right people were engaged at the right time, shaping recommended actions for feasibility and gaining ownership before products were finalised. Numerous reports were produced to suit different user groups, and implementation planning, support, and monitoring were tailored to move beyond reporting and drive visible change.



**Chris Jacobson**, Transport For NSW

However, sustained operational tempo consistently challenged the lessons lifecycle. New activations continued to emerge while the process from the previous event was still underway. Activities undertaken through the lessons management process enabled early learning, which teams began applying before formal outputs could be released. This informal implementation tested potential solutions in real conditions, providing additional context and understanding to further refine earlier recommendations. A dilemma emerged: whether to publish the reports and risk issuing outdated recommendations, or delay publication to incorporate new evidence and risk the lessons process never being finalised.

This presentation reflects on the ongoing tension between rigour and relevance. It explores how disciplined, contemporary lessons management retains currency and credibility in an environment shaped by successive activations, where formal conclusions are continually challenged by what unfolds in real time.

## How lessons learned from 2021-23 NSW floods significantly improved field data insights, and understanding of flood impacted communities in 2025



**Melissa Daley**, NSW State Emergency Service

**2.25pm | Wednesday 20 May**

Since 2018, NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) has used digital geographic information system (GIS) field collection tools to capture over 83,000 damage assessments of properties that have been significantly impacted by storms and floods. In 2022-23, NSW experienced record floods across 18 communities with many towns experiencing compounding floods over many months. From this experience, multiple lessons and insights from AARs were noted. The lessons and insights focused on the data capture process, data quality, planning, resources, and tools combined with a focus on flood intelligence, and multi-agency requirements in supporting NSW SES.

In 2022, NSW SES received funding from the NSW Natural Hazards Research and Technology Acceleration Program to investigate priority recommendations and pathways for improvement for damage assessment. NSW SES with the Services Group delved into the insights with surveys,

facilitated multi-agency workshops and interviews of key stakeholders, to provide 18 recommendations with 30 actions for implementation. Some actions have been escalated to the State Impact Assessment Working Group convened in August 2025 who will finalise impact assessment guidelines for NSW.

NSW SES has implemented 23 recommendations since February 2025 including an updated damage assessment schema, redesign of the damage assessment tool and damage assessment process, review and redesign of training resources, guides and field pamphlets. To better plan and prepare transition to recovery, the insights dashboard has been reconfigured, and provision of additional resources in incident management teams in support of damage assessments.

Since implementing the recommendations, NSW SES has seen significant improvements and positive community outcomes in TC Alfred floods (February 2025), mid north coast floods (May 2025), and western NSW storm events (November 2025).

## Impressions from a Churchill Fellowship investigating Lessons Management, NSW Rural Fire Service



**Superintendent Dan Meijer**, NSW Rural Fire Service

**3.15pm | Wednesday 20 May**

During February- March 2026, I am undertaking a Churchill Fellowship investigating lessons management in a range of different organisations and countries.

My Fellowship is focused on the factors that lead to success or failure in the implementation of lessons identified, and the role of lessons management in a learning organisation. My experience as a lessons practitioner in Australian emergency services has reinforced this step as a common frustration in our community.

Through visiting organisations as diverse as the US Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Centre, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Fire Department New York, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Joint Analysis and Lessons

Learned Centre, the UK Resilience Academy, Norfolk Fire and Rescue, Utrecht Fire and Rescue, and the Netherlands Safety Institute, I hope to identify key factors which enable other organisations to implement lessons with more success than is often found in Australia. I will also be undertaking NATO's lessons learned staff officer course in Sweden.

While my Fellowship concludes on 31 March, and my written report will not be submitted to the Churchill Trust and approved for release until July- September, I would be pleased to give a presentation on my initial findings and experiences in meeting with lessons practitioners from around the globe. I expect to be able to highlight similarities and differences in approaches, challenges, and methodologies.

## Evolving RPAS (drones) from observation to intelligence in Queensland Fire Department operations



**Dean West**, Queensland Fire Department

3.35pm | Wednesday 20 May

Increasing scale and complexity of disasters has driven Queensland Fire Department (QFD) to transform how aerial intelligence is captured, analysed and shared. This abstract presents lessons identified and lessons learned from the evolution of the QFD remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) program over the past 6 years, demonstrating how technology-enabled capability has matured from simple visual observation to an integrated intelligence function supporting response, recovery and strategic decision-making.

When first established under a Civil Aviation Safety Authority Remote Operator's Certificate, RPAS training focused on providing live vision to an incident controller. Early lessons identified revealed growing demand for shared situational awareness across regional and state fire control centres, partner agencies, and recovery stakeholders during large-scale bushfires, severe weather and flooding events. This drove deliberate evolution in training, governance and technology integration.

A key lesson learned has been transitioning pilots from aircraft operators to intelligence practitioners. RPAS training now includes GIS drawing, orthomosaic mapping, live-

streaming and multi-platform data integration, enabling pilots to extract, interpret and distribute intelligence in near real-time. Fire behaviour, flood impacts, and infrastructure damage observed on the ground are simultaneously visible across ICCs, RFCCs and the SFCC, shortening the intelligence cycle and improving coordinated decision-making. A further lesson has been integrating RPAS data into enterprise GIS and outward-facing dashboards. Working with QFD GIS teams, RPAS outputs are transformed into live operational mapping layers shared with local government areas, police, main roads, marine safety and recovery agencies. During major bushfires, TCs, and flooding, this capability delivered real-time and post-event spatial intelligence to support recovery planning and coordinate cross-agency operations.

Senior and chief remote pilots continuously evaluate emerging technologies, integrate them into existing intelligence ecosystems and translate lessons into doctrine and training. This sustained learning cycle highlights how partnership, governance and technology integration embed change and shape the future of lessons management in emergency services.

## Insight or illusion? Ensuring accuracy in AI powered lessons management



**Dorothea Huber**, Australian Maritime Safety Authority

3.55pm | Wednesday 20 May

As the volume and complexity of maritime incidents continues to increase in Australia, the demand for timely and rigorous lessons management analysis at Australian Maritime Safety Authority is greater than ever. Yet the resources available to undertake formal assessments have not grown at the same pace. This creates a critical challenge: how to deliver rapid, high-quality insights that enable learning from incidents without an increase in the existing analytical capacity.

AI offers a compelling opportunity to bridge this gap. AI systems can dramatically reduce processing and analysis times, transforming large collections of qualitative and quantitative data into structured outputs. Lessons reports can be prepared in days rather than weeks. Their strengths include exceptional speed in handling high volume data, systematic and replicable qualitative analysis, and the ability to triangulate information drawn from multiple sources. When configured effectively, these tools can also produce well written, credible summaries and reports aligned with predefined formats, supporting more consistent

organisational learning.

However, these advantages come with significant risks and limitations. AI is not a substitute for subject matter expertise. Expert oversight remains essential to ensure outputs are accurate, relevant, and contextually grounded. The quality of AI generated analysis is heavily dependent on the quality and clarity of the inputs it receives—poor instructions or unsuitable data can lead to misleading conclusions. Furthermore, opaque or uncontrolled data sources increase the danger of 'black box' decision-making, where key analytical steps are neither visible nor verifiable. Finally, organisations must take care to manage expectations. While AI accelerates analysis, it does not eliminate the need for expert judgement, quality assurance, and thoughtful interpretation.

This presentation explores how AI can be leveraged responsibly in lessons management, highlighting both its transformative potential and the essential safeguards required to ensure that insights produced are genuine—and not an illusion.

## Beyond resilience: Agricultural recovery by design – from lessons identified to lessons embedded



**Leanne Kruss**, Australian Integrated Agriculture

4.15pm | Wednesday 20 May

Resilience is consistently cited as a defining strength of agricultural communities. Farms remain operational through repeated disaster events, supply chains continue moving, and production resumes. This continuity is frequently interpreted as evidence that recovery systems are functioning effectively.

However, the continuity of agricultural production does not necessarily indicate systemic resilience. It may indicate that agricultural enterprises are absorbing pressures that recovery frameworks have not adequately addressed.

This presentation shares applied insights from an industry-led disaster preparedness and recovery pilot delivered with agricultural enterprises in one of northern Australia’s most hazard-exposed local government areas. The work emerged from repeated recovery cycles characterised by producer fatigue, institutional strain, and repeated observations that lessons identified during recovery were not translating into sustained system change.

The pilot was deliberately structured as a lessons-informed intervention. It reframed disaster preparedness not as an external compliance exercise generating another layer of post-event recommendations, but as upstream adjustments

within core agricultural business systems — workplace health and safety frameworks, risk registers, emergency response procedures, workforce capability structures, biosecurity planning, and compliance documentation — aligning them with disaster readiness objectives within Queensland’s regulatory context. These systems already exist. They are mandated. They underpin everyday continuity, yet are rarely recognised as resilience infrastructure.

Preliminary findings indicate that much of what disaster recovery seeks to stabilise already exists within agricultural business systems. Embedding lessons within these operational structures, rather than retaining them in reports, strengthens preparedness, reduces recovery friction, improves risk visibility, minimises duplication, and enhances coordination and trust between producers and local disaster teams.

The work offers a case study in moving from lessons identified during recovery to lessons actively embedded within operational systems — challenging recovery practitioners to reconsider where resilience truly resides, how it can be protected rather than consumed and safeguarded as critical regional infrastructure.

## AFAC Lessons Management Award

AFAC, along with member agencies, recognise the continued need to develop lessons management capability across the fire and emergency services in Australia. The AFAC Lessons Management Community of Practice develops and advocates approaches that support the development and sharing of good practice in knowledge management, lessons management, innovation and cultural practices that support our business at all levels.

The Lessons Management Award winner will be recognised for their efforts to develop lessons management capability within their organisation and across the sector.

Congratulations to the 2026 Lessons Management finalists:

- From lessons identified to change delivered in City of Moreton Bay: A systemic lessons-to-action model following TC Alfred  
City of Moreton Bay
- Sector wide lessons implementation  
NZ Land Search and Rescue
- Whakaari/White island eruption recovery evaluation  
Emergency Management Bay of Plenty (EMBOP)
- AMSA evaluation and lessons management  
Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- From real events to real change: Embedding lessons management through integrated exercising  
Logan City Council
- Development and implementation of the lessons management framework for disaster management in the Queensland Police Service  
Queensland Police Service
- 2025 inland rivers flooding – Successfully implementing the end to end lessons management process  
SA State Emergency Service
- City of Gold Coast Disaster and Emergency Management Unit lessons management framework  
City of Gold Coast

# Poster display

For the first time, the Lessons Management Forum will feature a dedicated poster display.

Complementing the comprehensive program, the poster display will allow delegates to explore posters during breaks, highlighting lessons management, lessons learned, and examples of good practice. Posters will also be accessible online for virtual attendees.

## 2026 Lessons Management Forum posters:

- Reflection on lessons learnt to deliver a novel drought mental health support response in South Australia  
Penny Kazla, SA Health, Mental Health Strategy and Planning Branch, SA Health Department for Health and Wellbeing
- From lessons identified to lessons learned: Embedding gender and inclusion into evacuation practice  
Mel Osborne, Gender and Disaster Australia
- Inland rivers flooding response and recovery: South Australia, March–June 2025  
Sarah Ridgway, SA State Emergency Service
- Operational ‘hot’ debriefs for potentially traumatic events: Learning while reducing the risk of harm to first responders  
Mark Welch, Fire Rescue Victoria
- Lessons Learned from a Peer-led Approach to Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction  
Michelle Moss, Queenslanders with Disability Network

## General information

### Networking event

All in-person attendees are invited to attend the networking session at the end of day one of the forum. The networking function includes light refreshments, including beverages and canapés.

### Join the conversation

The Lessons Management Forum is being presented to both a virtual and in-person audience to ensure everyone can participate. The Lessons Management Forum uses an audience interaction platform called Slido. Slido allows you to submit your questions as well as upvote the questions of other participants. Questions with the highest number of votes will stand a better chance to get answered by speakers.

1. Go to [slido.com](https://www.slido.com)
2. Enter **#LMF26** or **scan the QR code**, which will be displayed on the slideshow of each presentation.
3. Once you are in the Lessons Management Forum Q&A page you can pick which sessions you wish to ask your questions in.



### Partners

Thank you to the generous support from our partners. The Lessons Management Forum would not be possible without your support.

#### Supporting partners

Australian Institute for  
Disaster Resilience



Australian Government

National Emergency  
Management Agency



Australian and New Zealand Council for fire and emergency services

AFAC.COM.AU | **f** AFACnews **in** afac **X** AFACnews