

# Public Information and Warnings Handbook

## Briefing toolkit

Includes:

- PowerPoint briefing slides with facilitator's notes
- About the handbook: key themes and key messages
- Warnings principles/Total Warning System handout/poster
- [Public Information and Warnings Handbook](#)
- [Guideline 1: Warning message construction: Choosing your words](#)
- [Guideline 2: Warnings republishers](#)

### Purpose

The purpose of this toolkit is to help with the dissemination, uptake and use of the guidance provided by the *Public Information and Warnings Handbook* within agencies that have a role in providing warnings.

### Intended use

The briefing slides (including facilitator's notes) are intended to assist agency representatives to conduct internal briefings or training sessions. You may modify these materials to suit your needs as required. Additional blank slides have been included in the slide deck to enable you to add additional contextual information relevant to your agency and highlight how the guidance in the handbook can be applied in practice. You can also print these slides as a PDF with notes to use the resource as a handout for self-guided learning.

This briefing toolkit is intended as an overview only, focusing on key areas of new and updated guidance on public information and warnings. It does not cover all elements of the handbook in detail and should be considered as a supplement to other formal training.

### Key takeaways

- Learn about the *Public Information and Warnings Handbook* and how to access it.
- Get up to speed with the latest research, guidance and good practice for the provision of public information and warnings, including:
  - nationally agreed definitions
  - national warnings principles
  - Total Warning System
  - warning dissemination channels
  - providing warnings to diverse audiences and communities
  - public information and warnings during system failure and catastrophic events
  - monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- Reflect on how to put the nationally supported principles and guidance into practice.

## About the Public Information and Warnings Handbook

The *Public Information and Warnings Handbook* contains national principles and guidelines for public information and warnings delivered within Australia before, during and after emergencies. The handbook provides insight and guidance to people who have responsibility for the provision of warnings and public information to the community in the event of an emergency. The handbook presents principles for warning policy and practice; sets out the discipline of developing and issuing public information and warnings; and is underpinned by research and evidence on effective warnings.

### Key themes

The handbook explores a number of key themes in public information and warnings, including:

- **ten revised national warning principles** to guide the development and use of warnings in Australia, replacing the 2008/09 principles in *Australia's Emergency Warning Arrangements*. The Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee endorsed these new principles on 1 May 2018
- **nationally agreed and applicable definitions** of warnings and public information in the Australian emergency and disaster context
- the availability of various **warning dissemination channels** and how they can be used, particularly the use of social media to provide warning information
- effective incorporation of **evidence and research** to support claims within the handbook and companion documents, particularly the national warning principles and *Guideline 1: A guide to warning message construction: Choosing your words*
- a **Total Warning System** for multi-hazard emergencies and disasters, adapted from the Total Flood Warning System contained in *Manual 21: Flood Warning* (2009)
- guidance and considerations for the provision of public information and warnings during **system failures and catastrophic events**
- **monitoring and evaluation** of public information and warnings before, during and after an event to identify lessons and build a stronger evidence-base to inform warnings policy and practice.
- provision of warnings to **diverse audiences and communities**, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Dr Scott Hanson-Easy from University of Adelaide has reviewed and provided considered and informed feedback on the handbook and *Guideline 1: A guide to warning message construction: Choosing your words* with regards to non-English speaking communities.
- Two new **companion documents**:
  - *Guideline 1: A guide to warning message construction: Choosing your words* to replace *Emergency warnings: Choosing your words* (2008)
  - *Guideline 2: A guide for warnings republishers* to replace *Code of Practice for Warning Republishers* (2013).
- in-text **vignettes and case studies** to assist in understanding key warning principles
- references to relevant Australian and international **standards, legislation and regulations**.

## Key messages

### About the handbook

- The Public Information and Warnings Handbook and supporting resources are available for free download from [www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/warnings-handbook](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/warnings-handbook).
- The new handbook contains national principles and guidelines for public information and warnings delivered within Australia before, during and after emergencies.
- The handbook was developed collaboratively with cross-sector input from experts in Australia and internationally.
- The handbook replaces existing national doctrine, including Australia's Emergency Warning Arrangements, Best Practice Guide for Originators and Code of Practice for Warning Republishers.
- The handbook responds to Recommendation 2 of the 2014 National Review of Warnings and Information (ANZEMC 2015), to advance a national approach through improved knowledge management.
- The handbook was developed through a collaborative process managed by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, on behalf of the Australian Government.

### About public information and warnings

- In an emergency, the provision of public information and warnings plays a significant role in making people and communities safer.
- Timely, targeted and tailored information and warnings empower people to make informed decisions, to take protective action, and to reduce the potential impacts and consequences of a hazard.
- Warnings on their own will never be able to assist everyone, every time. Complex factors impact every person's situation and decision making, particularly during times of significant stress.
- Good warnings interpret and explain both the impacts and consequences a hazard will have and including a clear call to take protective action.
- Ten principles guide the development and use of warnings in Australia. They outline why warnings are important and how warnings are provided most effectively.
- Warning systems and protocols should continuously adjust in response to new technology, trends, research and feedback from community engagement.

## Contacts

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