

# Climate change challenges for Queensland's emergency management sector

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The Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) is a direct response to observed and projected effects of climate change and helps the sector identify opportunities and meet the risks communities face.

The emergency management sector is continually challenged by changes to the frequency, intensity, distribution and duration of acute events, major disasters and long-term climate-related stresses. The need to incorporate climate change into the comprehensive disaster management approach across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery is paramount.

The EM-SAP identifies sector-specific climate risks, existing climate adaptation activities, knowledge gaps and barriers to adaptation in Queensland. Some of the issues identified include:

- expected increase in the demand for sector services
- detrimental impacts on the health and wellbeing of sector staff and volunteers
- failures of infrastructure, utilities and supply chains that support service delivery
- strains on workforce availability, recruitment and retention, including volunteering
- variable community understanding, expectations and levels of resilience related to climate change
- financial implications of climate change, which may be slow onset or incurred by acute events.

Barriers to adaptation were also identified during consultation and include:

- low levels of community awareness about climate change
- costs of adaptation programs, in particular those that include infrastructure
- businesses not having climate-related risk as a standard consideration
- amplification of underlying social vulnerability and inequity
- low levels of climate change implications incorporated into land-use planning.

The EM-SAP provides a vision for the sector. It includes principles and priorities that integrate climate change adaptation actions into new and existing programs. It is a plan developed by the sector for the sector and relies on stakeholders of Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements to actively contribute. By working together and across sectors, Queensland's emergency

preparedness can be effective and efficiently tackle the issues arising from climate change.

Eight adaptation priorities have been identified, including:

- sector-led awareness and engagement about climate change
- integrating climate change considerations into governance and policy
- improving the understanding of climate change risk and abilities to adapt
- research and development to create new knowledge and support tools
- allocate resources to support adaptation
- increase the security of critical infrastructure
- promote and enable community resilience and self-reliance
- promote volunteerism and workforce management.

The plan also describes 11 principles that guide implementation of the priorities. Three have been developed specifically for the sector.

- Adaptation should address the comprehensive approach to disaster management; prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.
- Adaptation should be considered using a systems approach, ensuring that it is responsive to local conditions and the needs of the entire community.
- Adaptation should address both acute major events and continuous incremental change.

This approach, founded on priorities and principles, will expose Queensland's current and future disaster risk and strengthen governance and investment in accordance with the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* and the Sustainable Development Goal 13 for Climate Action.

Information about the EM-SAP including the full version of the plan and factsheets is at [www.disaster.qld.gov.au/cdmp/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/cdmp/Pages/default.aspx). For information on QFES climate change activities, contact [sdu@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:sdu@qfes.qld.gov.au).