

Foreword



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After two and half years as the Director-General of Emergency Management Australia, and several years dedicated to the national effort to manage disasters, this is the final time that I will be writing for the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*.

The 2019–20 bushfires were unprecedented both in scope and in the number of jurisdictions simultaneously affected over a sustained period. These cumulative bushfire events severely tested the collective national response in terms of resource demands and large-scale resource mobilisation across multiple jurisdictions.

Our emergency services and emergency management agencies are world class. This is continuously displayed. However, in the wake of events of recent years, we need to observe - collectively, calmly, and respectfully - what worked and what did not work over the high-risk weather seasons of 2018–19 and 2019–20. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, together with the several state and territory inquiries, will be central to that. Collectively, as a sector, we need to display leadership, learn from the past and ensure that these lessons are applied to reduce the risks we face and to make improvements where we can. This is ever more relevant as we experience the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last couple of years, there have been achievements that are shifting the way we, as a society, are proactively reducing our vulnerability and building our resilience.

Developing the *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* was a truly national effort, with representatives across all jurisdictions, government, industry and the community involved. The framework is the foundational document that captures a shared vision to make disaster risk informed decisions and reduce risks within their control. It was endorsed by the then Council of Australian Governments on 13 March 2020.

With a National Action Plan underway to implement that framework, and a commitment of \$261 million between the Australian Government and states and territory governments to fund disaster risk reduction initiatives, we can see the determination and unity across all governments to reduce disaster risk and build a more disaster resilient Australia.

The early themes that are emerging from the Royal Commission and the various state and territory reviews of the events of this last summer, are pointing to clear themes: that we need to collectively work together to better understand our risks, to do more to reduce our risks and to collectively share our resources.

With the frequency and intensity of natural hazards forecast to increase, and future high-risk weather seasons to commence earlier, last longer and have more severe impacts on Australian communities, there is an expectation that we can act sooner to protect lives, livelihoods, property and communities.

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