



Australian Government

National Emergency
Management Agency

Australia is delighted to be hosting the 2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction – the first regional disaster risk reduction forum to include the full participation of Pacific leaders. We thank the many staff within the Australian Government and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for organising this event.

Climate change is an urgent global challenge. It is the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of peoples of the Pacific and is already having significant impacts in our region more broadly. Our seas are rising, our oceans are warming, and extreme events such as bushfires, cyclones, floods and droughts are more frequent and intense. The Australian Government knows climate change is not an abstract threat, but a real crisis, with climate change playing a major role in disasters now and into the future. These challenges are made more complex and compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Australia comes to the 2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction with widespread, lived experience of the compounding and cascading impacts of disasters. As we face increasing disaster risks, building climate and disaster resilience is now more important than ever.

Since we last met in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia four years ago, the occurrence of disasters in Australia has increased. These disaster events have tested the limits of our capacity and capability.

The catastrophic 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires burnt more than 24 million hectares across south-east Australia during Australia's hottest and driest year on record, following years of drought across much of the country. North and Western Australia have seen cyclones, such as Cyclone Seroja in April 2021, which caused significant damage to homes, businesses and communication systems. This year, widespread severe thunderstorms and rain events in our Eastern states of Queensland and New South Wales resulted in the most severe floods in Australia's recorded history.

The 2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction provides an important opportunity for the Asia-Pacific community to review our risk reduction and climate adaptation efforts, to share and learn about innovative and practical solutions, and to translate outcomes from the 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to inform better implementation across our region. It will also shine a spotlight on the needs of the region's Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, which are a priority for Australia. This spotlight will inform more effective and inclusive disaster risk reduction and preparedness, with a focus on Pacific experience. It will be particularly important that we learn from the lessons of our region in reducing climate and disaster risks as we head towards the global midterm review of the Sendai Framework in May 2023.

Australia works in close consultation with Pacific partners to support a coherent approach to disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation for sustainable development, supported through the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific. As part of the Pacific family, we support each other in times of need. We are also working to lessen the impacts of future climate shocks and to assist our neighbours in responding to and recovering from disasters. We are building climate and disaster resilience into every sector of our international development cooperation and supporting partners to use risk data to inform decisions, assisting them to better prepare for hazards, and supporting early action to minimise disaster impacts. Our capacity to innovate and find new solutions through technology and research continues to grow.

Australia's steadfast commitment to the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement is at the core of our priorities for regional engagement. Australia has a new ambitious 2030 target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels, putting us on track to achieve our net zero emissions by the 2050 target. The Australian Government is implementing a substantial and rigorous suite of new policies across the economy to drive the transition to net zero. We are deeply committed to taking real and significant climate action at home and establishing Australia as a climate leader internationally.



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Australia is finalising our national midterm review, which was just as much about looking back as it was about looking forward, and through the process we have gained insights, identified best practice, and reported on achievements to-date in reducing disaster risks in Australia. Our review also provides examples of innovative best practice within an increasingly complex and evolving disaster risk environment which will guide our national disaster risk reduction efforts to 2030, and beyond.

Since endorsing the Sendai Framework in 2015, Australia has designed and implemented a range of mechanisms and activities which have progressed our national disaster risk reduction and resilience building agenda.

Key to this was the development of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (Framework), which is Australia's domestic implementation mechanism for the Sendai Framework. In establishing Australia's 2030 vision, the Framework outlines a systemic approach to reducing climate and disaster risk. It guides national efforts to proactively reduce risk to minimise the loss and suffering caused by disasters.

The Framework reflects a shift in emphasis from individual resilience to targeted system-wide interventions which prevent or mitigate climate and disaster risks by placing a greater emphasis on institutional responsibilities for risk reduction. The Framework seeks to drive systemic change and recognises that all sectors of society must work together to reduce climate and disaster risk. It also highlights that although a shared responsibility, disaster risk reduction is often not shared equally.

The scale and intensity of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires catalysed concerted action to review and change Australia's disaster management arrangements. This major review, the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, recognised collaboration across all levels of government – Australian, state and territory, and local governments – is required, as is strong community engagement and leadership, to successfully implement and deliver its recommendations.

The Royal Commission highlighted the need for an enduring agency to provide national coordination and strategic leadership, increased investment in disaster risk reduction and resilience, and research bodies which actively provide advice on climate and disaster risk and impact to support the Australian Government make evidence-informed decisions.

In September 2022, the Australian Government established a new agency, the National Emergency Management Agency, as a lasting agency to provide holistic disaster management at the Australian Government level. This new agency brings together the National Recovery and Resilience Agency and Emergency Management Australia, and ensures that all disaster management – from risk reduction, response, mitigation, recovery and resilience – is managed through one centralised agency. The establishment of this new agency is a significant step forward in strengthening Australia's ability to prepare for, respond to, manage and recover from an increasing number of complex and compounding crises.

Delivering on the commitment to establish an enduring funding source to support sustained and continual investment in disaster risk reduction, the Australian Government will establish the flagship Disaster Ready Fund (DRF), which will invest up to \$200 million per year on disaster prevention and resilience initiatives. The DRF will bolster Australia's ability to reduce disaster risk, and curb the devastating impacts of natural hazards by investing in important disaster mitigation projects like flood levees, sea walls, cyclone shelters, evacuation centres, fire breaks and telecommunications improvements. The DRF will deliver a program that is complementary with, rather than duplicative of, the pre-existing and jointly-funded Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, which are in place to support Australian states and territory governments after a disaster occurs.

These investments are in addition to Australian Government programs which focus on reducing disaster risk. This includes activities delivering critical flood mitigation infrastructure and mitigating the impact of coastal and estuarine disasters on communities and economies. Collectively, these



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initiatives, along with the DRF, support a more strategic and aligned approach to disaster risk reduction.

Australia has also recognised that resilient communities are created and supported when risk reduction is considered during all phases of an emergency response. We have established new capabilities like the National Crisis Exercising Capability to ensure that the Australian Government is working with states and territories to design and deliver multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency exercises that stress test national capabilities before a crisis occurs in order to take proactive steps to prevent nationally significant harm. Australia's National Situation Room is a 24/7 whole-of-government coordination facility that provides near real-time situational awareness for all hazards, and ensures that decision makers have the best available information when preparing for and responding to crises. We know that the quality of community recovery and resilience is dependent on decision that are made during a crisis response. Through the National Coordination Mechanism, we bring together government, industry and community stakeholders during a crisis to understand the scope of first, second and third order consequences and manage these issues proactively to support communities.

We also have the re-designed Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS), which will substantially improve fire agencies' ability to consistently communicate the fire threat across Australia and provide a national decision-making framework that supports operational planning, response and consistent community messaging. It's a great example of how we can adapt for the future.

The AFDRS program aims to improve the scientific accuracy behind fire danger predictions, providing government and industry with better decision-making tools and reducing the costs associated with bushfire. This is an important project, which will arm communities with consistent, simple and accessible information they need to make decisions to keep themselves safe – key to building their resilience.

Australia is committed to ensuring our climate and disaster risk reduction initiatives are prioritised and inclusive, to ensure that no one is left behind when faced with disaster. In particular, we recognise the significant impact disasters have on women and girls, and their roles as leaders and frontline responders. The capacity, networks and insights of all community members are critical for effective and equitable actions to build resilient communities.

Internationally and domestically, Australia's disaster risk reduction and resilience efforts support national and sub-national governments, as well as community-based organisations. This ensures our actions are informed by national, local and indigenous knowledge, support local priorities, and contribute to local capacity and accountability. By working together with First Nations peoples, we can learn from their Indigenous knowledge, skills and techniques to reduce the impacts of future events.

Australia works with our international partners to ensure that everyone is better able to make the changes required to sustain healthy communities, ecosystems and economies while managing climate and disaster risks. This includes progressing bilateral relationships to support cooperative efforts in disaster risk reduction, resilience and recovery. Central to this is doing things differently. Collective efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic response showed us what is possible when we work together at a national, regional and global scale.

As part of our multilateral commitment, we are pleased to reconfirm our on-going partnership with UNDRR. This partnership is realised through Australia's support of both the midterm review of the Sendai Framework and UNDRR's leadership and support to accelerate global efforts in disaster risk reduction to achieve inclusive, sustainable development and the *substantial reduction of disaster risk* by 2030, as outlined in the Sendai Framework.

Moving forward, it is essential we plan for global shocks – be it conflict, pandemic, financial collapse or environmental disaster – and invest in the capacity to adapt to crisis by building the resilience to ensure we come through challenging times together.



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We need to work together to develop a shared, inclusive vision of the future with strategic disaster risk reduction actions, investment pathways, institutional arrangements and respectful partnerships helping us realise this vision. Together we can transform our region's future – for our peoples and for generations to come.

We are proud to host the 2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to bring greater attention to climate and disaster risk resilience in our region. We look forward to sharing our experience and listening and learning from the breadth of expertise the region has in building disaster resilience.



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