



# PACFA Disaster Response Framework and Policy

## **Purpose**

Disasters affect the wellbeing of individuals and communities and have enormous cost and impact (Commonwealth Government, 2009). PACFA is able to make a significant contribution to the psychosocial recovery of individuals and communities during and post disasters.

## **Frequency**

Australia experiences an average of eight disasters per year (Commonwealth Government, 2009).

## **Levels of Government Responsibility for Disaster Response**

### ***Commonwealth***

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Office is responsible for issues relating to disasters. The Commonwealth Government provides financial assistance to State, territory and Local Governments to implement Disaster Response programs.

Emergency Management Australia (EMA) is a division of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Office which provides physical emergency and disaster response. EMA becomes involved in Disaster Response only where the resources of a State or Territory government are overwhelmed. The framework for this assistance is set out in the Commonwealth Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN).

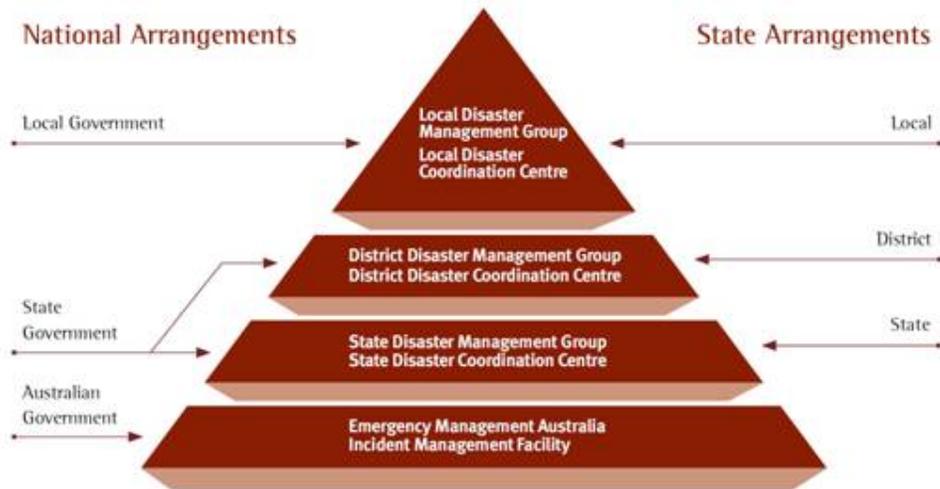
### ***State and Territory***

State and Territory Government Disaster Management plans target the physical safety of disaster-affected communities and the provision of financial assistance. Interventions occur on a district and local level.

### ***Local Councils***

Local Councils are responsible to implement Disaster Management and Recovery Plans in their local areas.

The Figure below (Queensland Government Disaster Management Group website <http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/about/>) demonstrates these levels of intervention:



**Queensland disaster management arrangements**

### **PACFA’s Disaster Response**

The PACFA Board and Executive Officer will maintain current awareness of the Disaster Management arrangements for each state and territory.

1. PACFA will respond quickly in times of disasters:

- Registrants in the affected State will be asked to respond immediately if they are willing to volunteer.
- Volunteer Registrants’ names, contact and availability details will be sent to the Premier’s Office and the State Disaster Response Services with a message of support.
- If the affected State or Territory Government requests assistance from the Commonwealth, PACFA will send EMA the Volunteer Registrants’ names, contact and availability details.
- Rural and remote areas should be considered in PACFA’s response. District and Local Disaster Management Groups in disaster-affected areas will be sent the contact and availability details for local Volunteer Registrants.
- PACFA will liaise with Lifeline agencies in the affected state or area and provide the contact details for Volunteer Registrants.

### **Requirements for Volunteer Registrants**

- Registrants must have a current Working with Children’s check.
- Volunteer Registrants will be aware that the recommended response to the psychosocial needs of individuals, families and communities affected by disasters is based on the principles of Psychological First Aid (see Appendix).

- Volunteer Registrants should be aware of the guidelines for Disaster Recovery interventions in Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Volunteer Registrants must be willing to attend Induction Training.

### **Longer Term Follow Up**

The Register listings for the affected State or area to the Premier's Office and the State Disaster Response Services will be sent as a resource for longer term follow up.

### **Disaster Recovery Training**

Registrants with an interest in Disaster Response are encouraged to complete the Certificate IV in Disaster Recovery course offered by Lifeline.

### **Psychological First Aid Principles**

- Support the natural resilience of individuals, families and communities.
- Engage supportively and unobtrusively with survivors in field settings and assess their immediate needs.
- Ensure physical safety and provide emotional comfort.
- Support short and long term adaptive coping strategies.
- As far as possible, reunite individuals separated from their family and supports with their support systems/primary attachments.
- Resource parents to provide emotional support and be responsive to their children.
- Reduce the initial distress/ stress response to the disaster by providing information on adaptive coping skills.
- Refer on to other services as required.

### **References**

Uhernik, J.A. and Husson, M.A. (2009). Psychological First Aid: An evidence informed approach for acute disaster behavioural response. In G.R. Walz, J.C. Bleuer and R.K. Yep (eds), *Compelling counselling interventions: VISTAS 2009*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

(2006). Acute Preventive Interventions, Raphael, B. John Wilson, Lenore Meldrum, and Alexander C. McFarlane. Psychological First Aid. In B. Van der Kolk, McFarlane,

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