

Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

National Volunteer Incentive Scheme (Climate Army)

Submission by Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC)

February 2025

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1. About AFAC

1. AFAC is the national council for fire, land management and emergency service authorities in Australia and New Zealand. AFAC represents 35 members and 21 affiliate members comprising permanent and part-time personnel and volunteers, totalling approximately 288,000 firefighters and emergency service workers. The AFAC network also includes 38 Research partners and 16,287 Associates.¹
2. AFAC supports the sector to create safer, more resilient communities but does not have a direct role in delivering services to the community. We drive national consistency through collaboration, innovation, and partnerships; our collaboration model encompasses 35 teams (15 groups, 12 technical groups and 8 networks).² National volunteer associations are represented on several Groups within the collaboration framework. AFAC assists the emergency management sector to identify and achieve strategic priorities.
3. A summary of AFAC's work is provided at the end of this submission.

2. About volunteers

4. It is a notable feature of the Australian fire and emergency services sector that volunteers make up around 90% of Australia's fire and emergency service workforce.³ While it is difficult to measure numbers of volunteers in other organisational contexts, it is still clear that volunteers provide immense value to communities across the prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (PPRR) phases of emergency management.⁴
5. When referring to volunteers AFAC draws a distinction between public sector organisations fulfilling governmental responsibilities, with often significant budgets provided from jurisdictional revenues, and voluntary associations, which are not based on legislative authority and rely on voluntary donations and grants for their income.
6. While AFAC member agencies work closely in many cases with civil and volunteer groups and not-for-profit organisations, and some such groups (for example, the Red Cross) are affiliate members of AFAC, AFAC's core business does not involve representation of those groups. AFAC recognises the important role performed by not-for-profit and volunteer organisations in supporting government and community services, especially during recovery.

3. AFAC position

7. AFAC welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Select Committee (the Committee) Inquiry into the National Volunteer Incentive Scheme (Climate Army). AFAC asks the Committee note that the AFAC submission should not be taken as the position of any single AFAC member. Some members will contribute through jurisdictional submissions; nothing in this submission should be taken as implying that AFAC members do not fully support their jurisdictional submissions where made.

¹ AFAC networks, <https://www.afac.com.au/teams/network>.

² AFAC Collaboration Model, <https://www.afac.com.au/teams>.

³ Commonwealth of Australia, 2019, Chapter 9: Emergency services for fire and other events. *Report on government services*, Productivity Commission, Canberra cited in RMIT University, National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC), Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNH CRC), *Scoping a National Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint – Discussion Paper*, June 2021.

⁴ RMIT University, National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC), Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNH CRC), *Scoping a National Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint – Discussion Paper*, June 2021.

8. AFAC's activities are focussed on helping its members to provide for safer, more resilient communities. This submission has been developed with this in mind and with the belief that new initiatives in its pursuit should support the work that is already done on behalf of those communities.
9. Emergency management in Australia has its roots in local-level volunteering and remains heavily reliant on volunteers today. In AFAC's view there is no undiscovered, alternative model for structuring emergency response and disaster recovery that would provide previously unrealised benefits for the community. The current system provides an agile, community-based workforce for emergency response and disaster recovery that is interoperable across the country and can be, and often is, deployed across jurisdictional boundaries to provide national resilience. Organised and disciplined emergency management agencies should continue to be the backbone of emergency response and disaster recovery in Australia.
10. AFAC contends that emergency management arrangements in Australia provide the necessary framework for managing high-risk events and their recovery. As the Committee will be aware, emergency management is constitutionally a responsibility of the states and territories and so, AFAC members play a key role, enshrined in legislation and state emergency plans, in maintaining public safety and providing prevention, preparedness, response, and some recovery services.
11. AFAC considers that the proposal to establish a 'Climate Army' of volunteers has the potential to create a silo if its establishment does not form part of the existing emergency management arrangements within each state and territory. Volunteers play a role in all phases of emergency management, whether they are members of AFAC or not. The skills they develop and apply during the prevention, preparedness, and response phases are equally valuable in recovery efforts after a major disaster.
12. When fire and emergency services agencies deploy career and volunteer personnel intra- and interstate, everyone needs to be confident that deployed personnel have the required skills and experience. Building on the existing structures and training regimes already in place will ensure a level of confidence in the capability of career and volunteer personnel.
13. Spontaneous and gig volunteering, especially during the recovery phase of emergencies, plays a crucial role in providing immediate support. Volunteers often step in quickly to help with tasks like debris removal and distributing supplies, but integrating them into coordinated efforts requires clear communication, rapid training, and matching their skills to recovery needs. Digital platforms can help streamline coordination, ensuring volunteers are effectively deployed. However, managing quality and sustaining long-term engagement remains a challenge. To maximise impact, emergency managers must balance flexibility with strategic oversight in utilising spontaneous volunteers.
14. The Queensland experience during the Brisbane floods in 2022 highlighted the value and contribution of spontaneous volunteers (referred to as the 'Mud Army'). While incredibly valuable, the response involved large-scale, uncoordinated volunteering, which created challenges in management and coordination. Emergency volunteer mobilisation requires coordination and planning for managing spontaneous volunteer efforts. This is an area where further pre-planning can be put into effect in advance of these events. [Queensland floods: 'Mud army' Brisbane's cry for volunteer soldiers | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site](https://www.news.com.au/queensland/news/queensland-floods-mud-army-brisbanes-cry-for-volunteer-soldiers/news-story/20221215)
15. AFAC member agencies apply work health and safety (WHS) laws to their paid and volunteer workforce in accordance with jurisdictional legislation. In recovery, the responsible organisation is often the local government authority (or other non-response organisation),

which would take responsibility for WHS compliance of volunteers deployed to them. There is a risk that a volunteer cohort operating separately from existing structures may not be supported to comply with WHS laws.

16. AFAC contends that a sustainable approach to building a volunteer pipeline across the emergency management community to deal with disasters requires strengthening and resourcing of the existing structures that currently support volunteering. By building on these existing arrangements and by focusing on creating inclusive and rewarding work environments, organisations are more likely to attract, recruit and retain community members of all ages as volunteers.
17. AFAC also recognises that competition for volunteers has become more intense as various sectors, including non-profits, education, aged care sector, and corporate social responsibility programs, vie for their time and skills. To retain volunteers, AFAC recognises that organisations need to offer meaningful experiences, provide clear roles, and ensure a sense of community and appreciation. Recognition, skill development opportunities, and flexible engagement are also crucial to maintaining volunteer loyalty. When volunteers feel valued, supported, and aligned with an organisation's mission, they are less likely to be drawn away by other opportunities. Risk that existing volunteers may leave their current roles if new incentive structures favour over another.

4. About the terms of reference for the formation of a National Volunteer Incentive Scheme (Climate Army) to respond to the immediate aftermath of natural disasters in Australia

18. AFAC has published a document that explicitly recognises the challenges for AFAC members in responding to more frequent, more severe events as a consequence of climate change.⁵ The Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC has also published two papers in recent years that noted challenges for sustaining the current emergency management workforce in the face of the impacts of climate change.^{6 and 7} These complexities are understood by the fire and emergency services sector and given the implications for workforce planning and management, AFAC suggests that statutory, publicly funded emergency services should continue to take the lead in providing organised emergency response services into the future, whether delivered by career or volunteer workforces.
19. AFAC has identified the following factors as important to support national capability, whether through collaboration between AFAC members, governments, the voluntary sector, and the Australian Defence Force (ADF), or through sharing of resources across state/territory and national boundaries:
 - **Interoperability.** Targeted initiatives should be designed with the ability to work jointly in mind. This should not be an afterthought but should be at the heart of organisational policies and doctrine in the voluntary sector as well as the public sector.

⁵ AFAC, *Climate Change and Disasters*, https://www.afac.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/afac-climate-change-and-disasters_key-messages-and-resources_nov-2020.pdf.

⁶ Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, *Implications of Climate Change for Emergency Services Operations – Insights from The Literature*, https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/sites/default/files/02-Implications_of_climate_change_for_emergency_services_operations-insights_from_the_literature_1.pdf, retrieved 10 February 2023, currently available through Monash University until the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC website is relocated in January 2025. <https://research.monash.edu/en/publications/implications-of-climate-change-for-emergency-services-operations->.

⁷ Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/biblio/bnh-8351>, retrieved 10 February 2023, currently not available until the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC website is relocated in January 2025.

- **Fit-for-purpose governance structures.** In the voluntary sector, appropriate governance is important to ensure the organisation, its members and any targeted initiatives operate safely, with integrity and in the public interest.
- **Fit-for-purpose skills and surge capability.** Nationally recognised training for career and volunteer staff underpins the effectiveness of state and territory government organisations. In the voluntary sector, adoption of nationally recognised training ensures fit-for-purpose and interoperable workforces.
- **Exercised and well-tested cooperation.** Meaningful exercising can be complex to organise and expensive to deliver. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has established a national exercising capability, which should extend to include all organisations that are recognised as having a part to play in Australian disaster resilience.
- **Common incident management that is scalable.** AFAC's Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) is at the heart of Australasian fire and emergency services interoperability.⁸ It means, for example, that personnel from Western Australia can travel to Queensland and immediately slot into local incident management arrangements, understanding the functions and relationships they will be required to undertake. All organisations that wish to play a formally recognised part in the management of disasters and emergencies in Australia need to understand AIIMS and have appropriately trained people that can work within the AIIMS operating environment.
- **Ongoing commitment to national standards.** By using national training and national incident management systems, emergency management agencies across Australia can work together, based on common standards. This extends to such things as standards for equipment and public information – with the Australian Fire Danger Rating System and the Australian Warning System examples of a national commitment to community safety.
- **Addressing PPRR needs.** Linking organisational structures and arrangements to the prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery activities planned and undertaken best provides for strong and resilient communities.

5. Terms of reference

a) Establishing targeted initiatives to encourage young people to participate in the National Volunteer Incentive Scheme

20. Encouraging young people to volunteer for emergency management organisations, or to undertake recovery activities after natural disasters in Australia, requires strategies that cater to their diverse desires and needs. Initiatives are most effective when they match volunteer interests, aspirations, and preferred ways of engaging in activities, while addressing specific community needs. Effective volunteer programs align with community needs and offer young people transferable skills useful in other jobs. Successful initiatives should address real community challenges and have a meaningful impact.
21. The undertaking of recovery activities is often closely linked to undertaking prevention and preparedness activities. Removing barriers to participation by including work performed in other emergency management phases would increase the number, type and frequency of activities open to young volunteers.

⁸ AFAC, AIIMS Products, <https://www.afac.com.au/docs/default-source/conference-posters/afac/aiims-products.pdf>

22. Linkages to response organisations and appreciation of the response activities undertaken by volunteers would provide additional perspective for volunteers engaged in non-response activities. It may even lead to volunteering in response roles.
23. While the approaches outlined below can be applied in many contexts, what makes successful volunteer programs are those where the initiatives address genuine community challenges and result in meaningful change. By combining digital tools, peer engagement, flexible opportunities, and clear incentives, these targeted initiatives can significantly enhance youth participation in volunteering, help cultivate a generation of socially conscious, community-oriented young people, and provide young people with a framework to channel their interests and energy into community volunteering.

Skill-building and professional development.

- **Workshops and training programs.** Offer specialised training and skill-building workshops related to volunteering roles. For example, organising volunteer leadership training for new and experienced volunteers, communication skills workshops, or project management courses for young volunteers.
- **Career development.** Partner with employers or educational institutions to provide volunteer opportunities that also offer career-related benefits, such as traineeships or practical experience in fields like health care, environmental sustainability, or education.

Digital platforms and social media campaigns

- **Online volunteering platforms.** Create user-friendly platforms or apps where young people can easily discover, sign-up for, and track volunteer opportunities.
- **Social media challenges.** Launch campaigns on various platforms where young people can share their volunteer work, raise awareness, and challenge others to volunteer. Hashtags, videos, or online contests can make participation feel more engaging and rewarding.

Incentive programs and recognition

- **Recognition and rewards.** Offer certificates, awards, or public recognition for volunteer contributions. Highlighting volunteers in local media, at schools, or through social media can give them a sense of accomplishment.
- **Volunteering as an extracurricular activity.** Integrate volunteering into school, TAFE, and university extracurricular offerings.

Peer-led initiatives

- **Youth leadership programs.** Encourage older or more experienced volunteers to mentor and guide younger volunteers. Creating peer-led groups can help make the idea of volunteering more appealing as young people tend to trust and relate positively to their peers.
- **Youth volunteer ambassadors.** Designate young volunteer ambassadors who can act as role models and spread the word about volunteering opportunities among their peer groups.

Flexible and socially relevant volunteering opportunities

- **Micro-volunteering.** Offer short-term, flexible volunteer opportunities that can be done in their community or remotely. This will appeal to young people with limited time.
- **Cause-based volunteering.** Align opportunities with issues that resonate with young people, such as climate change, mental health, social justice, or animal rights.

Community-based initiatives

- **Youth volunteer hubs.** Set up physical or virtual hubs where young people can gather, share ideas, and find local volunteer opportunities. These spaces can also foster a sense of community and belonging, creating a network of engaged young volunteers.
- **Collaborations with local youth centres.** Partner with existing youth organisations, community centres, or sports clubs to create volunteering projects that tie into youth activities or spaces they already visit. This provides easy entry points for young people.

Corporate social responsibility initiatives

- **Corporate volunteering programs.** Design programs for young professionals, in collaboration with youth-focused non-profits, that give young people a way to volunteer while gaining work-related experience. Collaboration with employers is crucial.
- **Partnerships with businesses for mentoring.** Partner with businesses to create mentorship programs where young volunteers can not only give back to their communities but also learn valuable skills from industry professionals.

b) Exploring strategies to enhance volunteer engagement, including systems to recognise and compensate volunteers to promote satisfaction and positive culture

24. Creating incentives for both individuals and employers is something that individual fire and emergency services have considered at great length – specific agencies will undoubtedly provide an overview of their efforts and outcomes.
25. State/territory governments may provide grants to fire and emergency services for initiatives at the local level in support of volunteers.
26. AFAC is also involved in research conducted by Natural Hazards Research Australia, such as:
 - ‘Emergency management volunteering: more than just words.’ This project has been conceived with a clear goal in mind: to move the emergency management sector past discussing challenges for emergency management volunteering and the need for change in the sector, into practical, tangible action to tackle the challenges, guided by a *National Volunteer Sustainability Blueprint*.
 - ‘SES fit for task.’ The aim of this research was to develop an evidence-based program that defined the minimum physical fitness required to undertake certain SES tasks, supplemented with a set of physical fitness assessments that could be undertaken by SES units and groups.
27. A combination of strategies could be employed to enhance volunteer engagement, recognise their contributions, and provide appropriate compensation. These strategies would focus on motivating volunteers, acknowledging that volunteer efforts are appreciated, and highlighting the benefits of investing in a cause. By combining these strategies, organisations can enhance volunteer engagement, ensure that volunteers feel recognised and appreciated, and provide meaningful compensation in ways that align with volunteer interests and the organisation’s mission.
28. Once again, many of these strategies are being and have been successfully employed by organisations across different issues.

Clear communication and expectations

- **Onboarding and training.** Provide volunteers with clear instructions, training, and context about the organisation’s goals and their volunteer role. Proper onboarding ensures volunteers understand how their work contributes to the mission.

- **Regular check-ins.** Maintain consistent communication through regular check-ins or feedback sessions. This helps volunteers feel connected and valued and allows for adjustment as needed.

Provide meaningful roles and responsibilities

- **Skill-based volunteering.** Align volunteer roles with their skills and interests and give them tasks that are both meaningful and challenging. This enhances their sense of purpose.
- **Autonomy and ownership.** Allow volunteers to take ownership of projects or specific aspects of an initiative. This fosters greater engagement and commitment.

Provide growth and development opportunities

- **Training and skill development.** Offer opportunities for volunteers to gain new skills or enhance existing ones. This could include professional development workshops or certifications related to a volunteering role.
- **Leadership opportunities.** Allow volunteers to take on leadership roles or mentor new volunteers. This increases engagement and gives volunteers a sense of responsibility and accomplishment.
- **Scholarships.** Provide scholarships or financial support for education or career advancement as a reward for exceptional volunteer work, especially for youth volunteers.

Compensation

- **Reimbursement for expenses.** Volunteers should not be out of pocket to perform their role – expenses incurred during volunteering should be covered. This ensures that commitment does not put a financial burden on volunteers.
- **Free access to events.** Provide volunteers with free or discounted access to events, conferences, or activities that align with their interests or the cause they are supporting.

Flexible volunteering options

- **Micro-volunteering.** Offer small, flexible volunteer tasks that fit into the busy schedules of volunteers. This allows those with limited time to contribute meaningfully.
- **Virtual volunteering.** Enable remote or virtual volunteering opportunities. This can help those with mobility issues or time constraints to stay engaged.

Offer monetary compensation in special cases

- **Stipends or honorariums.** Offer small stipends or honorariums as a form of compensation in specific cases, such as for highly skilled or long-term volunteers.

c) Integrating volunteer opportunities within educational institutions to increase student participation in volunteer organisations

29. Some initial suggestions for integrating volunteer opportunities within educational institutions follow.

Collaboration with schools, TAFEs, and universities

- **Build a volunteer pipeline.** Provide a structure for students to volunteer by having course offerings in schools and in VET that can lead to higher education qualifications related to disaster management, emergency management or recovery.
- **Incorporate volunteering into educational curricula.** Integrate volunteering into curricula to ensure it is seen as a valued activity that helps students develop both personally and professionally.

- **Volunteering fairs and campus events.** Organise volunteering fairs, community outreach days, or service days where students can easily connect with organisations looking for volunteers and participate in group projects that provide instant engagement.

30. Many volunteer-based organisations are also enterprise RTOs (ERTOs) – these ERTOS could potentially expand their range of volunteer offerings to address the needs of volunteers involved in recovery activities. This arrangement, however, would need to be appropriately funded and resourced.

d) Creating a nationally recognised qualification scheme that provides tangible benefits to volunteers and formally acknowledges their skills and contributions across sectors.

31. Any proposed scheme should use, where appropriate, existing units of competency, skill sets and qualifications, or non-accredited courses that are fit for purpose. A robust range of qualifications and skill sets is already available across the VET system in disciplines such as emergency management, disaster management, relief, and recovery; AFAC member agencies and other emergency services also have robust qualifications for response-related work. AFAC, and other public safety agencies including the ADF also work with Public Skills Australia, the relevant jobs and skills council, to develop and revise relevant qualifications, skill sets, and units of competency in response to industry identified needs.

32. For example, the following credentials are currently available through the national vocational education and training (VET) sector for relief and recovery workers. The development of these credentials was led by the National Emergency Management Agency, supported by AFAC and AIDR, and have the potential to provide training for personnel involved in recovery.

PUA60120	Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management)
PUA50120	Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management)
PUA50722	Diploma of Public Safety (Recovery Management)
PUASS00095	Participate in a recovery team skill set
PUASS00096	Coordinate functional recovery group skill set
PUASS00097	Lead a recovery team skill set
PUASS00098	Manage a recovery centre skill set
PUASS00099	Manage recovery – community involvement skill set
PUASS00100	Manage recovery – complex incident planning skill set
PUASS00101	Manage recovery - data management skill set
PUASS00102	Manage recovery – finance skill set
PUASS00103	Manage recovery – logistics skill set
PUASS00104	Manage recovery – public information skill set
PUASS00105	Conduct recovery liaison skill set
PUASS00106	Provide community liaison skill set

33. AFAC supports the wider promotion of these existing relief and recovery credentials to volunteers. While some RTOs have some of these credentials on their scope of registration, there is no obvious evidence that these credentials are being delivered. These credentials (training products) were funded by the Australian Government and released on the national training register in June 2022. As it is the Skills Ministers' priority to remove training package products from the national training register that have not been implemented within the past three years, there is a real risk that these credentials could be lost to industry before they have been given a chance; targeted support to implement these training products is needed to avoid this happening.

34. AFAC delivers the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) for the Commonwealth. One of the roles AIDR plays is as a knowledge broker, providing resources to support uplift. There is scope in AIDR's workplans to support targeted uplift in the sector.
35. AFAC has developed the following nationally accredited short courses, and has licensed RTOs to deliver them:
 - 22611VIC Course in Awareness of the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS)
 - 22612VIC Course in the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS)
 - 11318NAT Course in Basic Wildfire Awareness.
36. The units of competency that make up national VET credentials can also be packaged in other qualifications where that qualification allows for imported units.
37. The community services sector has also developed national VET active volunteering qualifications that may useful:
 - CHC14015 Certificate I in Active Volunteering
 - CHC24015 Certificate II in Active Volunteering
 - CHC34015 Certificate III in Active Volunteering.

e) Investigating whether there are appropriate laws and safeguards to protect the health and safety of volunteers.

38. WHS laws apply to volunteers. AFAC member agencies apply WHS laws to their paid and volunteer workforce in accordance with jurisdictional legislation. In recovery, the responsible organisation is often the local government authority (or other non-response organisation), which would take responsibility for WHS compliance of volunteers deployed to them. There is a risk that spontaneously formed volunteer groups may not comply with WHS laws when supporting emergencies.
39. While concern may be voiced from time to time that 'head office' can interfere with local response and that response agencies are unwilling to take risk, such viewpoints need to be assessed against decisions made by jurisdictions over many years to legislate a health and safety culture in which organisational leaders face censure and punishment if their workforce is exposed to danger. Having taken this policy route, it would be inconsistent for governments to now take an approach that voluntary organisations should be allowed to undertake emergency response activities without the concern for the safety of their workforces and the community that has driven public sector organisations to increase the levels of training and oversight provided to their response workforces.

f) The structure and governance of the National Volunteer Incentive Scheme

40. As stated in point a):
 - **Fit for purpose governance structures.** In the voluntary sector, appropriate governance is important to ensure the organisation, its members and any targeted initiatives operate safely, with integrity and in the public interest.

g) Comparison of relevant overseas models and best practices

41. The organisation and ethos of the US Peace Corps is an example of how participation in a volunteer organisation can be promoted and made attractive to potential participants (www.peacecorps.gov). The US Peace Corps model provides substantial incentives, such as full scholarships, priority access to tertiary education, and government employment pathways. This approach contrasts with existing volunteer incentives, which are typically smaller forms of recognition rather than significant financial or career-based benefits. Such a model

fundamentally changes the volunteer workforce, attracting a different demographic and potentially impacting existing volunteers.

h) Any other related matters

42. Mechanisms and logistics required to activate, transport, support, and return volunteers to and from deployments would need to be established in consultation with fire and emergency services.
43. Access to often scarce logistical resources would need to be managed.
44. Access to existing relevant training to develop volunteers – such as AIIMS Awareness – could be investigated.

6. AFAC's work: a summary

45. AFAC's work is guided by the *Strategic Directions for fire and emergency services in Australia and New Zealand 2022—2026*.⁹ These *Strategic Directions* provide the fire and emergency services sector with a shared vision and a joint commitment to enhanced community resilience.
46. AFAC has engaged in two Cooperative Research Centres, the Bushfire CRC and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, and now Natural Hazards Research Australia.¹⁰ All three research entities have engaged in research relating to volunteering.
47. AFAC leads the publication of national industry doctrine, which articulates good practice based on the knowledge and experience of our members and is informed by research where it is available. It is evidence-based, constantly reviewed, and vested as the official view by the AFAC National Council and sector leaders. Individual agencies make tailored decisions on how they apply this doctrine in their organisational context.¹¹
48. The AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group, for example, has developed the *Volunteer Inclusion Guideline*. This Guideline guides AFAC members and the AFAC Office in developing strategies and actions to improve consideration and involvement of volunteers earlier in planning and decision-making. This Guideline draws on Australia's National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (the National Standards) and New Zealand's Best Practice Guidelines for Volunteer-Involving Organisations.¹²
49. AFAC is a managing partner in the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR). AIDR develops, maintains, and shares knowledge and learning to support a disaster resilient Australia. AIDR creates, grows, and supports a range of networks; provides opportunities for learning, development, and innovation; shares knowledge and resources to enable informed decision-making and action; and facilitates thought-leadership. AIDR is supported by its partners: the Australian Government National Emergency Management Agency, AFAC and the Australian Red Cross.¹³
50. AFAC is a managing partner of the National Resource Sharing Centre, established by AFAC in 2017 to develop and maintain the national Arrangement for Interstate Assistance (AIA); pursue collaboration opportunities with international jurisdictions; maintain the National Statement of Capability for Fire and Emergency Services and provide coordination support to

⁹ AFAC Strategic Directions, <https://www.afac.com.au/docs/default-source/network/afac-strategic-directions-2022-2026.pdf>.

¹⁰ Natural Hazards Research Australia, <https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/>.

¹¹ AFAC Doctrine, <https://www.afac.com.au/insight/doctrine>.

¹² AFAC, *Volunteer Inclusion Guideline*, https://www.sasesva.org.au/docs/public/afac_doctrine_volunteer-inclusion-guideline_v0-120c7a691b1e86477b58fff00006709da.pdf.

¹³ AIDR, <https://www.aidr.org.au/>.

jurisdictions involved in deployments. It has supported, on multiple occasions, the management of large-scale incidents by facilitating interstate and international deployments.¹⁴

51. The National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) is also a business unit of AFAC. NAFC provides aerial firefighting resources on behalf of the states and territories. Formed in 2003 by the Australian states and territories, with the support of the Australian Government, it provides a cooperative national arrangement for the provision of aerial firefighting resources for combating bushfires. The national aerial firefighting fleet has been instrumental in protecting communities and saving lives and property over past bushfire seasons. NAFC also provides national systems to service aerial firefighting. For example, ARENA is a ground-breaking information system developed collaboratively with the states and territories to support effective management and administration of the fleet.¹⁵
52. AFAC established the Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme (EMPS) to advance the cause of professionalisation in the practice of emergency management in Australia and New Zealand. The Scheme is open to all emergency management personnel regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer, and regardless of the emergency management function they undertake. EMPS provides credentialling based on agreed national benchmarks, for proficiency in various operational aspects of emergency management.¹⁶
53. AFAC is the custodian of the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS). This is the nationally endorsed system for managing incidents used by all fire, emergency service and land management agencies within Australia. Through the application of AIIMS in training, exercising and incident response, people from fire and emergency services, career or volunteer, government, not-for-profit agencies, and industry have been able to build trust and confidence in each other's ability to work together and effectively manage the most challenging of incidents.¹⁷

¹⁴ AFAC, National Resource Sharing Centre, <https://www.afac.com.au/initiative/nrsc>.

¹⁵ AFAC, National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC), <https://www.nafc.org.au/>.

¹⁶ AFAC, Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme (EMPS), <https://www.emps.org.au/>.

¹⁷ AFAC, Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS), <https://www.afac.com.au/initiative/aiims>.