

# Making crowded places safe and healthy

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A crowded place can be defined in simple terms: a number of people who intentionally, predictably or spontaneously find themselves gathered in a physical space. Small and large crowds are everywhere—in shopping centres and stadiums; around transport hubs and main thoroughfares; in pubs, clubs, and hotels; at sporting and cultural events and places of worship. The congregation of people in different public places is an important and positive aspect of many societies.

The dynamics of crowded places however are far from simple, evident in the growing body of legislation, rules and regulations applicable to them. The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) has recently published the *Safe and Healthy Crowded Places Handbook*, to support anyone with an interest or involvement in managing a crowded place to understand and fulfil the accompanying legal and moral responsibilities. This includes event organisers, venue owners and operators, health and safety regulators, local governments, businesses, industry suppliers, public health providers, associations, insurers and emergency service agencies.

The handbook replaces the 1998 *Safe and Healthy Mass Gatherings Manual*, following an extensive review process managed by AIDR. The review synthesised expertise, capability and knowledge of Australian and international organisations and individuals; consultation engaged leading event, crowd and security management professionals, as well as representatives from emergency services, the health sector, government, non-government and not-for-profit organisations. The handbook makes reference to current Australian and international standards, legislation and regulations, highlighting where requirements particular to local jurisdictions may apply.

The handbook is structured to provide managers of crowded places an overarching framework for risk management, communication and incident and emergency planning. This gives context to advice relating to security, site safety, and health issues including food and water security, waste management and disease control. The handbook includes reference to crowd behaviour and psychology, preparing managers of crowded places to understand and anticipate different elements that may produce or result from an incident or emergency. The guidance also reflects the heightened focus in Australia and globally on hostile acts, including terrorist incidents.

The *Safe and Healthy Crowded Places Handbook* is not designed to sit on a shelf, but to inform practical planning for both normal and emergency conditions. The handbook contains contemporary terminology but avoids industry jargon; in-text vignettes illustrate principles using real-world examples. The guidance within applies equally to one-off crowds like events and festivals, to the ongoing management of 'predicted' crowded places – central business districts, shopping centres and airports, to name only a few.

Key themes of the *Safe and Healthy Crowded Places Handbook* include:

- encouraging personal resilience and responsibility and safe behaviours in crowds
- volunteer management
- planning for and managing post-incident recovery, including psychosocial
- effective information sharing and communication within and in relation to crowded places, in both 'normal' and emergency conditions
- providing safe, positive experiences for attendees through planning and site design
- collaborative, cross-sectoral event planning and risk management
- using monitoring, situational awareness and data to identify emerging trends and issues in crowds
- crowd psychology

The handbook is freely available online on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub<sup>1</sup>, with supporting companion toolkits including checklists for putting the principles into practice. Hard copies are also available for purchase.

<sup>1</sup> At [knowledge.aidr.org.au/handbooks](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/handbooks)