

Foreword

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The increasing frequency and intensity of natural hazard events we are experiencing is likely to continue, driven by climate change.



Our essential services such as health care, telecommunications, energy, transport, and banking and finance are more interconnected, as is our reliance on them for our sense of safety and security. Australia is forecast to experience unprecedented population increase, effectively requiring a city the size of Canberra to be built every year for the next 30 years. At the same time, some rural and regional populations are likely to decrease, further intensifying the populations of major cities and exposing more people to disaster impacts. Fire seasons are extending up to nine months within single jurisdictions and, nationally, there is now overlap with the disaster seasons of the northern hemisphere. This severely restricts our ability to draw in international resources. Direct disaster costs are likely to exceed \$39 billion per annum by 2050, and will more than double when indirect costs are taken into account. And finally, climate change is now viewed by the Australian Financial Regulators as a material risk that must be considered in all investment decisions. These drivers for action framed the work of the National Resilience Taskforce.

The taskforce, in consultation with many stakeholders from across the public and private sectors, the third sector, community and academia, ascertained that four key policy challenges needed to be addressed: refocus efforts on disaster risk reduction, better understand systemic vulnerability as a key factor in disaster risk, create a pathway to assist decision-makers make long-term (30 years +) strategic investment decisions taking into account the deep uncertainty of climate and disaster risk and develop a future focused climate and disaster risk information capability.

Left unchecked, Australia's capacity to be resilient to such challenges and their effects will rapidly decline if disaster risk reduction efforts are not refocused. Using the United Nations Sendai Framework along with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the taskforce worked closely with over 80 organisations to develop the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework. This framework was endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management representing all Australian Governments in June 2019. The Framework recognises that public, private and community institutions play a significant role in the creation of society and therefore control many of the levers that create risks that are experienced by others. They also play a significant role in minimising future risk, reducing existing risk and improving risk knowledge. The

Framework outlines four priorities and 25 strategies that address risk reduction across society.

The taskforce addressed the least well understood aspect of risk; vulnerability. Profiling Australia's Vulnerability provides guidance for policy-makers when addressing the interconnected causes and cascading effects of systemic disaster risk. By understanding that hazards only lead to a disaster if they intersect with an exposed and vulnerable society and when the consequences exceed its capacity to cope, the guidance asks policy makers to better understand: the interconnectedness of societal systems; our interdependency on those systems for our sense of safety and security and that the values, trade-offs and choices we make inform those systems as well as where and how we place ourselves upon the landscape.

In appreciating the long-term consequences that decisions about systems as well as where and how we place ourselves upon the landscape have on long-term risk, the taskforce developed a Guidance for Strategic Decisions on Climate and Disaster Risk. In essence, the Guidance informs methods to: develop scenarios of possible futures, understand vulnerabilities arising from those scenarios, develop prioritisation methods of how to mitigate those vulnerabilities and establish alternative governance approaches for decision-making.

Finally, the taskforce developed a blueprint for a new national information capability on climate and disaster risk.

This capability responds to the significant need to equip decision-makers with the information and services they need to coordinate efforts, confidently plan for uncertain futures and take action. The proof of concept is being tested in a whole-of-government pilot project with the freight sector, led by the Department of Home Affairs

Despite the unprecedented challenges that Australia is facing, refocusing efforts on disaster risk reduction to reduce existing and future harm, better understanding systemic vulnerability, making wiser decisions about our collective future and improving our risk knowledge, all lead to a safer and more secure society. A society that we would all prefer to live in and one that we should bequeath future generations.

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