



Australian Government
National Indigenous
Australians Agency



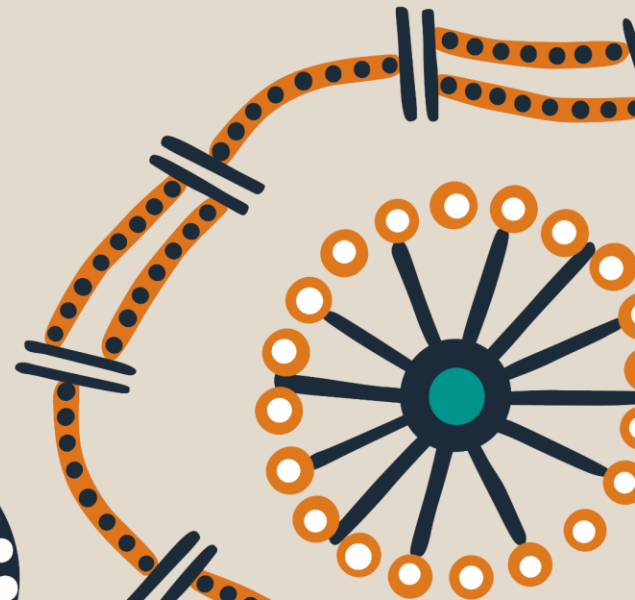
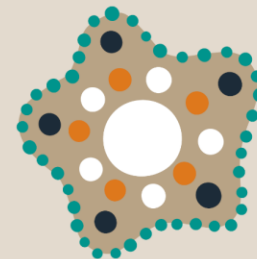
NIAA

Disaster Management and the Indigenous Rangers Program

Information Session for IRP Ranger Groups

NIAA Environment Branch

Tuesday, 15 September 2026



Welcome, acknowledgements and introductions

- The National Indigenous Australians Agency acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.



Photo: WOC Photo Competition 2010 Entry - Cycads regenerating after fire

Context

Purpose of this information session

- Provide information for IRP ranger groups interested in undertaking disaster management activities under their Indigenous Rangers Program (IRP).
- Provide guidance on the participation of ranger groups in disaster management activities under the IRP.
- Ensure understanding of the need to communicate with NIAA.
- To advise of the Fact Sheet for IRP providers on disaster management.
- The Fact Sheet is a live document. We can refine the Fact Sheet as appropriate. If you have any questions which aren't covered in the Fact Sheet, please let us know and we will update it.

Definitions

Disaster

For the purposes of the Indigenous Rangers Program (IRP) disaster management activities, the definition of 'disaster' is based on the [Australian Government Crisis Manual](#) definition of 'domestic natural hazard disasters' and includes bushfires, earthquakes, riverine floods, storms, tropical cyclones, storm surges, landslides, tsunamis, meteorite strikes and tornados.

Longer term events and patterns such as drought and climate change, man-made events (social disruption) and health-related events (COVID-19) are not disasters.

Disaster Risk Management

Disaster risk management, or disaster management, incorporates a range of activities across all phases of a disaster, including prevention, preparation, response and recovery.

Activities may include

- Hazard reduction and cultural burning to reduce fuel loads around community infrastructure, cultural sites and high priority ecosystems.
- Revegetation and weed management of areas impacted by fire/flood.
- Repair of fencing and debris removal around important cultural sites, rivers, wetlands, and priority ecosystems.

Role of Government

- All levels of government have an important role in managing natural disasters.
- **The primary responsibility and accountability for disaster management and response lies with states and territories.**
- The Australian Government has a role to play, through national leadership of support measures. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) coordinates Australian Government support.
- The Australian Government has mechanisms to cost share preparedness, response, and recovery through programs managed by the National Emergency Management Agency, such as the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) and Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).
- The Australian Government also supports a range of non-financial response assistance through the Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN). This can include Defence Force capability, the National Emergency Management Stockpile and volunteer support through Disaster Relief Australia.

First Nations in Disaster Management

Indigenous Rangers Program

- First Nations peoples are often disproportionately at-risk of harm from disasters while frequently being absent or excluded from emergency management policy, programs, and service delivery.
- Increased occurrence of natural disasters from climate change as well as climate change overall has the potential to increase those risks for First Nations people and communities.
- The recently released National Climate Change Risk Assessment identified impacts on First Nations as nationally significant climate risks within the national assessment. The National Adaptation Plan identified that it is critical to co-design adaptation actions with First Nations people.
- Indigenous rangers are uniquely placed with interconnectedness with Country and local people and networks as well as practical skills to fill gaps in essential, culturally appropriate support before, during and after disasters. It is not surprising that rangers are sometimes called upon or take the initiative to engage in disaster management activities.
- This includes understanding and responding to community needs (such as knowing Elders and community members who may need additional assistance), preparing homes and significant/cultural assets to withstand hazard impacts, cleaning up debris afterwards, providing surge support to other groups impacted by disasters, and rehabilitating Country.

Risks for Ranger Groups

- Indigenous rangers could be engaging in emergency response activities without authority from statutory emergency response agencies; appropriate training; risk management procedures or insurance.
- IRP providers might be engaging in disaster risk management /response activities outside of IRP and assuming NIAA approval. The concerns would be that you are operating without the appropriate training, equipment, cooperation with relevant authorities or insurance, including adequate public liability insurance, placing third parties and their own organisations at risk.

The primary responsibility and accountability for disaster management and response lies with states and territories.

1. IRP groups can be supported under the IRP to undertake disaster management activities within the parameters of their existing project agreement.
2. **The IRP is not a disaster management program** however disaster management is an optional activity in an IRP schedule - as long as activities fit within the IRP grant guidelines and are negotiated and agreed with the NIAA for inclusion in your APP&B.

NIAA Policy

To undertake disaster management activities under the IRP

- Indigenous ranger groups should include disaster management activities in their Annual Project Plan and Budget (APP&B).
- Ranger groups can add proposed disaster management activities to their APP&B throughout the year and following discussion and agreement with the NIAA and once all due considerations have been met.
- Due considerations: ranger groups must have the appropriate level and type of insurance, training, equipment and should have relationships with responsible disaster management bodies to undertake disaster management activities.
 - this is required under the IRP and strongly recommended if operating outside of the IRP.
 - Requests for additional funding for disaster management related activities will be directed to more appropriate agencies and jurisdictions. However, you may be able to adjust your existing IRP APP&B to accommodate some unforeseen activities.

Other impacts of disasters on your IRP project

If a disaster impacts the achievement of activities under the IRP

- If a disaster occurs that would prevent an IRP provider from being able to perform their obligations under the funding agreement, the *Force Majeure* clause under the Additional Conditions of the project schedule applies.
 - Providers should inform their NIAA regional office of the declared disaster and speak to their contact officer (when able) about the impacts on the project.

Disaster Management Activities

- **Disaster preparation/mitigation/recovery activities – can be covered within the APP&B:**
 - Revegetation and weed management activities in areas impacted by fire/flood/storm.
 - Repair of fencing and debris removal around important cultural sites, rivers, wetlands, and priority ecosystems.
 - Hazard reduction and cultural burning to reduce fuel loads around community infrastructure, cultural sites, and high-priority ecosystems.
 - Preparation of a site prior to an anticipated disaster occurring.
 - Training activities with your local State Emergency Services or local council regarding emergency management.
- **Post-disaster response activities - covered with adjustment to the APP&B and, where approved by relevant agencies (if relevant):**
 - Clearing trees or debris, including from public areas (roads etc).
 - Cleaning private properties / land.
 - Distributing food to a community.
 - Providing temporary accommodation.

Activities not under the IRP

Emergency Responses

Disaster management activities that are the responsibility of state and territory emergency services should be undertaken by those services. These can include:

- Rescuing people in fire, flood, storm, cyclone situations.
- Responding to wildfires beyond a ranger groups' own property as landowners or managers.
- Responding to other emergencies during a disaster – e.g. traffic accidents.

Resources

National Emergency Management Agency

[Homepage | NEMA](#)

[Contact us | NEMA](#)

States and Territory Emergency Services

[Respond | NEMA](#)

Volunteer Emergency Services

Northern Territory Emergency Services - [Emergency Service | NT Police, Fire & Emergency Services](#)

South Australia Emergency Services - [SA.GOV.AU - About emergency services](#)

Western Australia Emergency Services - [Emergency services volunteer recruitment in WA | DFES](#)

Tasmania Emergency Services - [Volunteer - Tasmania State Emergency Service](#)

Victoria - [Become a volunteer - Victoria State Emergency Service – VICSES](#)

New South Wales - [Emergency Volunteering | NSW Government](#)

Queensland - [Volunteering with SES | Emergency services and safety | Queensland Government](#)

Resources

Australian Climate Service and Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

[NCRA Climate risks | Australian Climate Service Website](#)

[National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan](#)

[Future climate and hazards](#)

[Extreme events and security](#)

[Natural environment and primary industries](#)

[People and communities](#)

[Economic impacts](#)

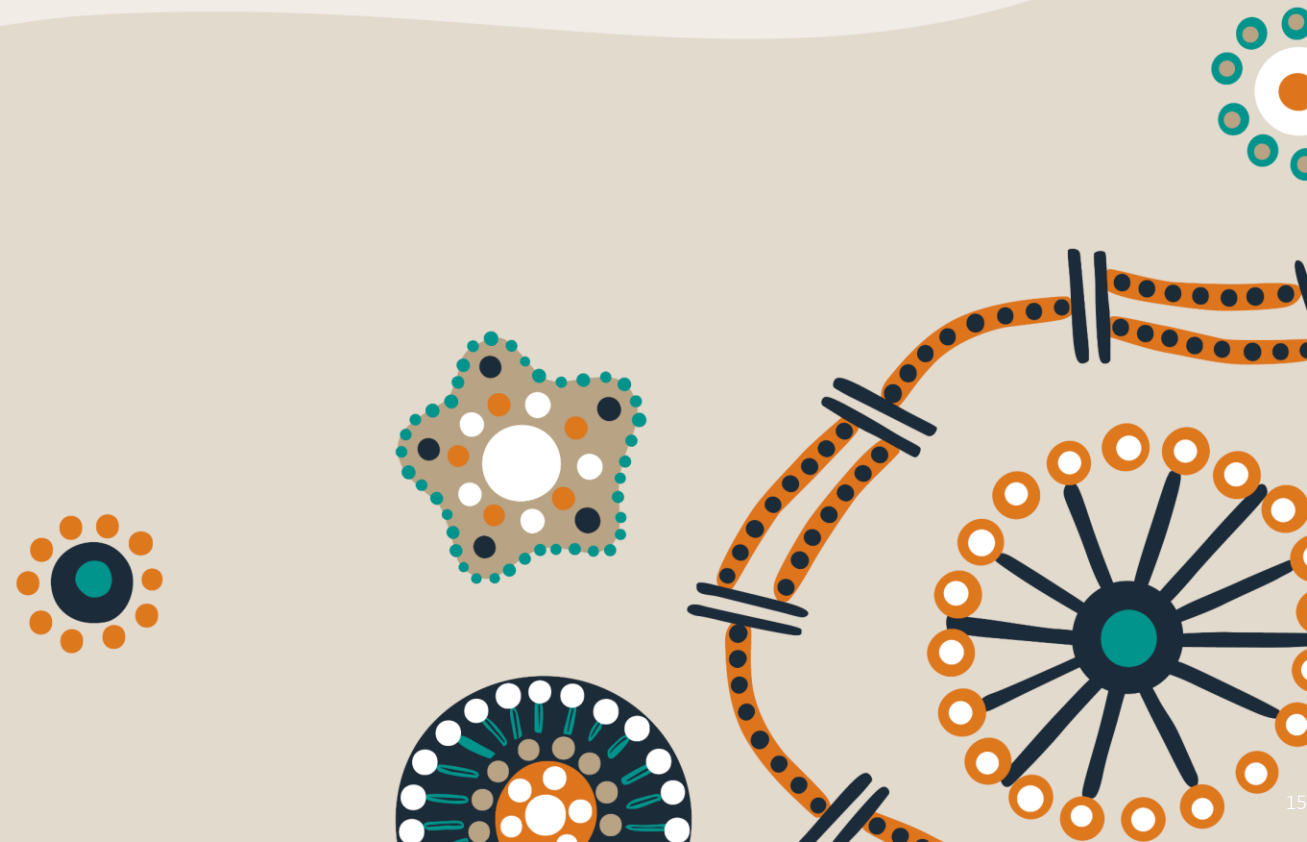
[Climate risks to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#)

Other Resources

There are other relevant organisations in your state and territory including for volunteer fire combat services, disaster relief, and marine/ sea rescue services.

KEY MESSAGE – Engage with your local NIAA Regional Office and disaster management jurisdictional authority and services.

Questions?



Thank you for attending.

Environment Branch

Email: ILWMSupport@niaa.gov.au



Photo: Batehaven Sunrise, Environment Branch Staff Member, 2025

