

An extract from COAG Communiqué

Council of Australian Governments' Meeting – 30 April 2009

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) held its 26th meeting in Hobart. The Prime Minister, Premiers, Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association were joined for the meeting by Commonwealth, State and the Australian Capital Territory Treasurers and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretary for Government Service Delivery.

In light of the recent Victorian bushfires and Queensland floods, COAG resolved to re-examine Australia's arrangements for managing natural disasters and has agreed to take immediate steps to enhance these arrangements through the development of a telephone-based emergency warning system.

Natural Disaster Arrangements

COAG agreed on the urgent need for governments to re-examine Australia's arrangements for managing natural disasters and identify any further strategies aimed at building greater resilience. COAG noted such efforts would be critical to Australia's ability to deal with the expected increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters arising from extreme weather events linked to climate change.



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Prime Minister Kevin Rudd with the Premiers and Chief Ministers of the states and territories.

COAG also agreed to take immediate steps to enhance Australia's natural disaster arrangements through the development of a telephone-based emergency warning system that will enable the States and Territories (the States) to deliver warnings to landline and mobile telephones based on the billing address of the subscriber to be operational by October 2009 and to undertake further research into a capability to deliver warnings based on the location of a mobile telephone. COAG further agreed to arrangements for a Commonwealth-provided emergency call centre surge capability that may be called upon by States should their local capacity be overwhelmed following a disaster.

COAG also agreed to the establishment of a working group to consider additional ways to build Australia's resilience to natural disasters in response to an examination of: national governance structures for the oversight and coordination of natural disaster policies and arrangements; the coordination of natural disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities between governments; and, the efficiency and effectiveness of funding arrangements for natural disaster mitigation, relief and recovery. The working group will report to COAG by September 2009.

COAG further agreed to invite jurisdictional police services to consider the appropriateness of South Australia's *Operation Nomad* arrangements to counter bushfire arson.