

Council of Australian Governments Meeting

COMMUNIQUE Canberra, 13 February 2011

7. identify an evidence base to highlight the efficacy of essential public infrastructure improvement and mitigation, with a view to program changes that encourage betterment of infrastructure that is regularly damaged by natural disasters
8. review existing programs and prepare a draft strategy for MCPPEM-EM's consideration for the efficient and effective coordination of volunteer effort in the immediate clean up stage post-disaster
9. develop and research examples of individual and community resilience initiatives which have mitigated damage and / or losses from natural disasters
10. work with Treasuries to review and report on Australia's legal structures regarding charities with particular reference to the application of taxation laws and to the principle of "charitable purposes" in the context of natural disasters, and
11. give particular attention to the emerging role of social media, as part of the work on communicating with, and educating people about risks, under the COAG National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

Noting the value of the telephone-based warning systems, Emergency Alert and State Alert, and the work that is being undertaken on the location-based warning capability, the Emergency Management Council emphasised that these technologies can only supplement emergency warning and information that is delivered primarily through radio and television, and also through a number of other mechanisms.

The Emergency Management Council members noted the importance of achieving COAG's high level objectives following COAG's consideration of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. The Emergency Management Council reiterated its full commitment to a national, integrated approach to building disaster resilience and the delivery of sustained behavioural change and enduring partnerships across Australia.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) held its 30th meeting in Canberra today. The Prime Minister, Premiers, Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association attended the meeting.

Recent natural disasters have had a profound effect on the Australian community. All Australians have been affected by the tragic loss of life and widespread devastation experienced in many communities.

COAG acknowledged the tremendous efforts of volunteers, emergency services personnel and the Australian Defence Force in responding to the disasters, with many crossing borders to help out.

COAG recognised the challenges facing many communities in the rebuilding process that lies ahead and welcomed the generous package of assistance the Commonwealth and affected States and Territories have provided for individuals, businesses, local government and the restoration of infrastructure following recent natural disasters. COAG noted the establishment of the Australian Government Reconstruction Inspectorate, which, together with State arrangements, will strengthen accountability and rigour in the use of substantial public funding to be committed to rebuilding.

To improve Australia's ability to withstand and recover from future disasters, COAG adopted the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience and agreed to take immediate steps to implement it.

The Strategy focuses on the shared responsibility of governments, business and communities in preparing for, and responding to, disasters. It sets out concrete steps governments at all levels can take to reduce risks posed by natural disasters and better support communities to recover from disasters. Other actions will include steps to support improved risk-based planning decisions, the take-up of insurance and the provision and construction of resilient infrastructure.

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience can be found on the Council of Australian Government website at www.coag.gov.au.