National Emergency Management Protocol

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this protocol is to outline Life Without Barriers' (LWB) response to emergency events.

This protocol does not apply to client incidents or incidents related to the organisation's brand or reputation. See related documents (including the incident management procedure) in Appendix A: List of related documents.

We recognise the important role of local sites in responding to emergency events. This protocol ensures that local employees are involved in response activities and provided with the coordination and support necessary to effectively respond to emergency events.

1.2 Definitions

Emergency event

Every day, LWB manages a variety of incidents at our sites. These incidents do not typically stretch the ability of local sites to effectively manage and continue service delivery.

An emergency event, in the context of this protocol, refers to an event or emerging risk to LWB employees, clients, communities and assets that requires a coordinated effort beyond business as usual operations, to ensure we can effectively respond to or mitigate adverse impacts.

Examples of emergency events, which could be concurrent, include:
- Extreme weather events, such as:
  o Bushfires
  o Extreme heat and heatwaves
  o Severe thunderstorms
  o Cyclones
  o Earthquakes
  o Floods
- Events that impact multiple communities or sites, which could be concurrent such as:
  o Epidemics and pandemics
  o Hostile acts (e.g. terror-related events, cyber attacks)
  o Major power and communications outages
  o Major gas leaks
  o Other complex or mass casualty situations such as major health emergencies or major transport incidents.

Local sites

Local sites include LWB offices and houses providing care, as well as clients' homes, in which employees are providing care.

1.3 Activation of the Protocol

The arrangements in this protocol apply on a continuing basis and do not require activation. Escalation of the arrangements in this protocol is outlined in Section 4.1.

1.4 Exercising, evaluation and review

We will review and update this protocol annually. More frequent reviews may be undertaken if required, for example, after using this protocol or following substantial change to relevant legislation and/or internal policies.

2 Organisational context

LWB supports some of the most vulnerable people around the country, helping people access safe services and participate in the community. We support close to 23,000 people living in over 400 communities across the nation, in urban, rural and remote locations, supported by over 8,000 staff and 3000 carers. We have 120 offices and provide 24/7 care in 650 homes around Australia.

All LWB employees, clients and carers may be impacted by an emergency event. However, the following cohorts may be more vulnerable to impacts of an emergency:

- Children and young people, who may need to be in the care of an approved adult or household member.
- People with disabilities and medical needs, particularly those that require medication, medical equipment, or special transport arrangements.
- People with behavioural issues, who may require additional assistance or care.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including clients from refugee and asylum seeker communities, where language may be a barrier to understanding emergency information and warnings and who may have had negative experiences with emergency services personnel in their countries of origin.
- Employees, clients and carers in rural or remote areas, which may not have the service capacity typically available in urban areas.
- Clients who are experiencing homelessness and may be socially isolated.
- Other employees, clients and carers who, due to their physical or cognitive disability, are unable to understand emergency warnings and directions, or are unable to respond in an emergency event without assistance.

Emergency events may also impact on LWB assets, including offices, homes and transport. The people we support often rely on these assets, as they provide safe accommodation, services and accessible travel arrangements.

3 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Control and coordination arrangements

This section provides an overview of functional roles and outlines who has authority to make decisions during an emergency, and the process for delegating decision-making authority, depending on the level of response required.

The reporting relationship in an emergency response is illustrated below.

Emergency Response Protocol
Reporting structure
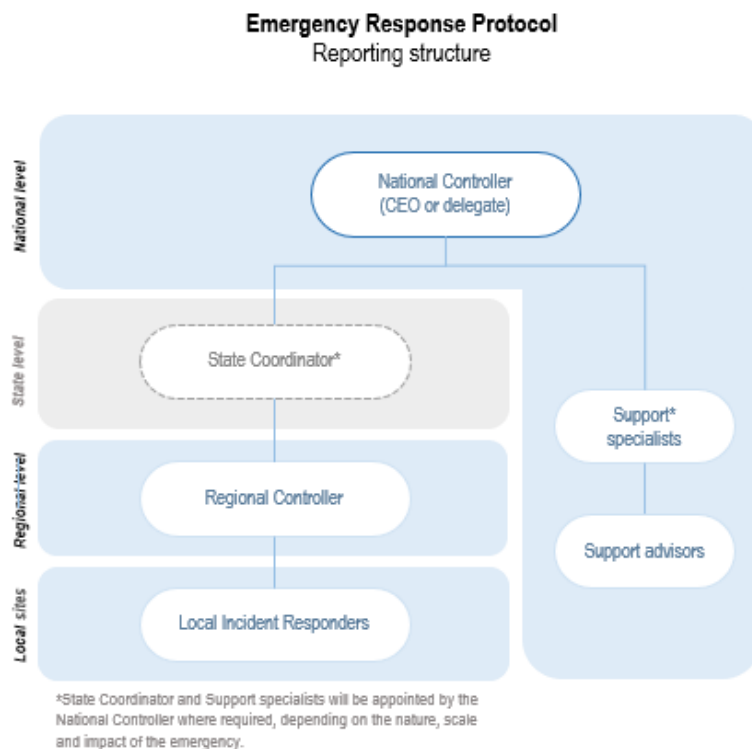
Refer to the table below for guidance on who would typically fulfil these roles.

The key roles and responsibilities are as follows:

Role	Authority and role
National Controller	The National Controller is the LWB Chief Executive or their delegate. The National Controller is responsible for ensuring that control and coordination arrangements are in place during an emergency event. The National Controller will be supported by an Emergency Management Team (EMT) at the regional level. The National Controller may also establish an EMT at the national and/or state level if required due to the nature, scale and impact of the emergency (see Section 3.2). The National Controller is responsible for the following decisions and actions: • Verify the relevant response assessment (see Section 4.1.2) • Appoint a State and/or Regional Coordinator, as required • Manage an EMT at the regional level, and at other levels if appropriate • Determine strategic response priorities, strategic resource requirements and/or expert response capability requirements • Identify and appoint Support Specialists and Advisors as required • Approve timely and appropriate internal and external communications • Liaise with emergency services and/or multi-agency response teams, as required. • Develop positions on support to impacted clients, staff and carers.
State Coordinator	During an emergency response, the State Coordinator will be appointed by the National Controller or their delegate. Typically, the State Coordinator will be a Director. If multiple states are impacted, a State Coordinator will be appointed for each impacted state. The State Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the emergency response at the state/territory level during an emergency event requiring coordination across multiple regions and/or states. The State Coordinator is responsible for the following decisions and actions: • Provide timely and appropriate state-wide messaging to National Controller • Provide strategic advice on state-level impact (actual and likely), response needs and resource planning to National Controller, based on situational reports • Ensure LWB continues to meet its responsibilities during an emergency event, to the extent possible.
Regional Coordinator	During an emergency response, the Regional Coordinator will be appointed by the National Controller or their delegate. Typically, the Regional Coordinator will be the most senior operational manager in the impacted area.

Role	Authority and role
	The Regional Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the emergency response at the regional level during an emergency event that requires coordination across multiple sites and/or locations within a region. The Regional Coordinator is responsible for the following actions: • Establish a regional EMT at the direction of the National Controller or their delegate • Provide situational reports to the State Coordinator and/or National Controller on impact (actual and likely) to the region, response needs and regional-level resource planning • Deploy resources to local sites if and as required • Communicate and deliver support to impacted staff and carers, as per position statements developed by National Controller. • Undertake ongoing risk assessment of the emergency event in their region.
Local Incident Responder	In an emergency event, the Local Incident Responder is the most appropriate local representative available in the emergency at each of the local sites impacted. The Local Incident Responder is responsible for managing the emergency response at a local site. The Local Incident Responder is responsible for the following actions: • Identify and assess risks at the local incident level • Determine critical client needs (e.g. access to medication, electricity for medical needs) • Deploy local resources and undertake actions to manage the consequences of the emergency event, including making decisions to halt local client activities and evacuate local sites • Provide situational reports to the Regional and/or State Coordinator • Ensure clients are informed, prepared and supported to respond to or mitigate impacts of the emergency event.

Delegation of authority

The roles and responsibilities described in this protocol should be read in conjunction with the LWB Delegations of Authority Schedule (available here).

> During an emergency, in the event of inconsistencies or conflict, the roles and responsibilities described in this protocol override the delegations outlined in the Schedule.

3.2   Emergency Management Team

During an emergency response, an Emergency Management Team (EMT) will be established to support the National Controller to manage the emergency response.

Generally, one EMT will be established to support the response activities. However, multiple EMTs may be required in the event of significant or complex response capability, capacity or coordination needs.
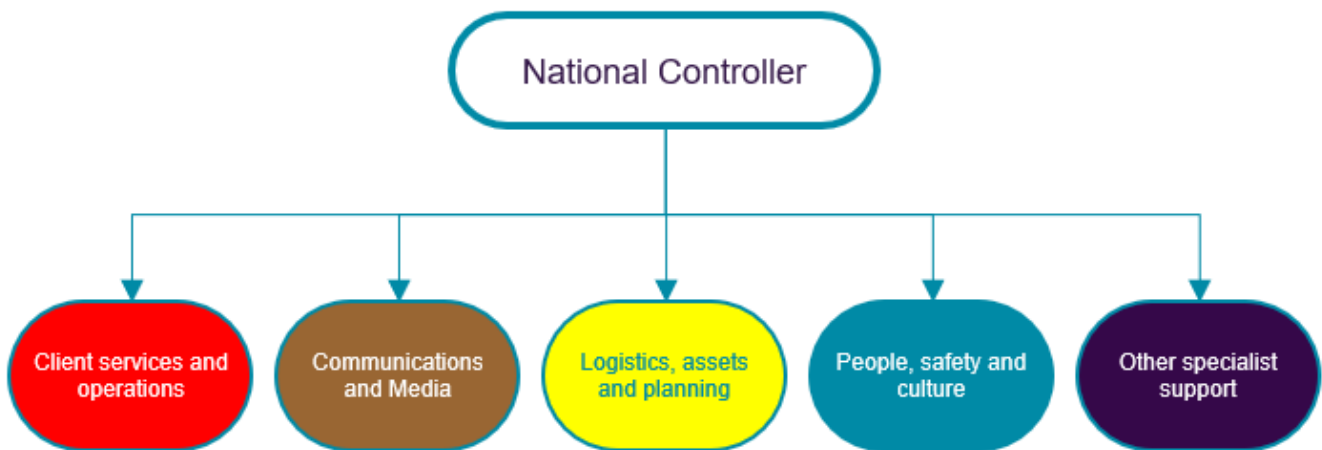
To determine the appropriate response tier/s, the National Controller or their delegate will have regard to the three-step process outlined at Section 4.1, in addition to the following considerations:

- If the emergency response requires capability, capacity or coordination across multiple sites or locations, consider establishing a Regional EMT.
- If the emergency response also requires capability, capacity or coordination across multiple regions, consider establishing a State EMT.
- If the emergency response also requires capability, capacity or coordination beyond one state, consider establishing a National EMT.

There are four core functions that can be established within the EMT. These are: client services and operations; communications and media; logistics, assets and planning; and people, safety and culture. Other specialist support may be established as required.

This EMT structure is scalable and the functions can be expanded or reduced depending on the nature of the emergency event. A function should only be established where it is necessary and appropriate for the effective management of the emergency event.

Example emergency management team structure

Function	Responsibilities
Client services and operations	- Contact clients, carers and families impacted or potentially impacted by emergency event - Manage support for clients and their networks - Maintain continuity of essential client services and suspend non-essential operations - Monitor the situation on the ground and local conditions - Manage LWB employee duty rosters and ensure adequate employee coverage of homes

Communications and Media	• Provide advice on, and develop, relevant internal and external communications including strategies to effect targeted communications • Co-ordinate drafting and preparing of communication • Manage organisations media strategy and response • Monitor external communications (e.g. media updates, official warnings). • Monitor client communications (e.g. through social media). • Offer rapid escalation to the National Controller based on external monitoring • Manage the rollback of communication efforts when NEMT is stood down.
Logistics, assets and planning	• Support employees and clients to find suitable alternate accommodation, if required. • Develop accommodation plans for people needing housing. • Organise transport for employees and clients impacted by the emergency event, particularly those with special needs. • Monitor and manage road closures and critical infrastructure impacts. • Monitor evacuation notices. • Monitor and manage fleet and property (e.g. property and fleet impacted by emergency event, availability of fleet).
People, safety and culture	• Support employees impacted by the emergency event. • Connect employees to appropriate support services, such as EAP. • Support communications team to have access to staff lists for targeted communication and provide information about health and safety. • Advise on recruitment to provide surge capacity. • Monitor publicly available information about emergency situation • Work with the communications function to provide internal updates to employees about the emergency response activities and supports available as required.
Other specialist support, as required	• ICT to ensure technology assets are functioning, or take action to return assets to functioning state. • ICT to provide cyber security specialisation and rectification. • Commercial and Legal Services to support placement of emergency contracts and provide advice, such as whether conditions of contracts are being met • COVID Secretariat to provide COVID subject matter expertise, monitor cluster outbreaks, interpret public health orders and ensure compliance with COVID health regulatory obligations • Project management, coordination and administrative supports • Various specialist supports, as required

4 Emergency event management

4.1 Initial response

4.1.1 Notifications

Route 1: Forecasted emergency events

For emergency events that can be **forecasted** (e.g. extreme weather events, such as bushfires, cyclones and extreme heat, or events that impact multiple communities or sites such as epidemics or pandemics):

- Monitor official weather, public health, and other emergency response agency channels (see Section 5.2),
- Convene a Lean Forward discussion to identify risks and recommend escalation, if appropriate
- Undertake an assessment process to determine the appropriate level of response required under this protocol (see Three-step process below), and
- Advise the relevant Director (who will advise the National Controller) or Executive Director.

Route 2: Rapid onset emergency events

LWB relies on notifications from local sites about emerging or potential emergency events. To facilitate the rapid notification and response to an emergency event, the senior manager at impacted local incident sites will:

- Assess the scenario and take urgent action if and as required to ensure the safety of employees, clients and others at risk or impacted,
- Consider the appropriate level of response required under this protocol (see Three-step process below), and
- Advise the relevant Director (who will advise the National Controller) and Regional Director.

This dual contact notification process is to ensure notifications are received rapidly and mitigate the risk of delay in responding to notifications under this protocol.

Notifications should include the following information, to the extent known:

- Type of emergency event
- Location/s
- Number of sites and assets impacted or at risk of being impacted
- Number of employees, clients and carers impacted or at risk of being impacted
- Emergency, health or support services required.

4.1.2 Escalation process

An emergency response is escalated when an event is assessed as impacting, or likely to impact, LWB employees, clients, communities and/or assets across more than one site. The aim of the response is to minimise the impact of the emergency event.

Three-step process to determine emergency response level:

| Step 1: Assess the **scale** of the event | → | Step 2: Assess the **potential impact** | → | Step 3: Determine the **response level** |
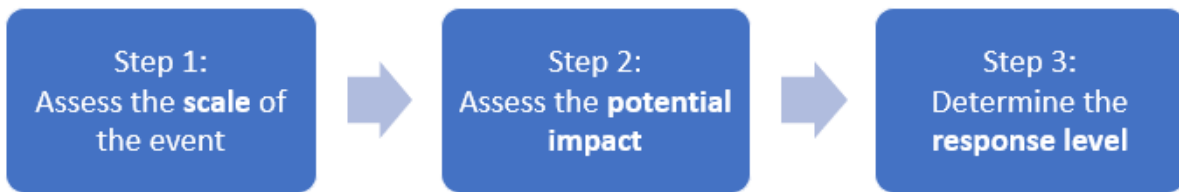
Step 1: Assess scale of event:

Scale	Example indicators
Large	All or most of state, or multiple states, impacted. May involve a large weather event, epidemics or pandemics or critical infrastructure failure.
Medium	Several sites or properties impacted. May be across multiple sites or across a region.
Small	One or two sites or properties impacted. Local event.

Step 2: Assess impact of event

Impact may be physical (e.g. casualties and fatalities), psychological (e.g. witnessing a traumatic event, fear of rapidly spreading virus), disrupt normal community functioning (e.g. state of emergency, evacuations, curfews or do not leave home orders, schools closed), and/or involve the loss of assets (e.g. loss of access to transport or homes due to damage or access to health services due to capacity constraints).

When considering a forecasted or actual emergency event, impact is assessed according to the following five-point scale:

Impact	Example indicators (forecast or actual)
Catastrophic	Very high impact – widespread injuries, casualties, severe illness,property damage or staff shortages that threaten the viability of essential services. Additional resources required to ensure safety of clients and employees in response to event.
Major	High impact – some injuries, casualties, severe illness or widespread property damage. Additional resources required to ensure safety of clients and employees in response to the event.
Moderate	Noticeable impact – may be injuries, casualties, severe illness and/or property damage requiring relocation. Business as usual may be interrupted while response activities take place.
Minor Impact	Minor impact– some injury, illness or property damage to attend to. Manageable at local level within business as usual resources.

Insignificant	No impact – Business as usual

Step 3: Determine response level for emergency event:

Emergency Event Risk Matrix		Impact				
	Response Level	**Insignificant** *No impact*	**Minor** *Minor impact*	**Moderate** *Noticeable impact*	**Major** *High impact*	**Catastrophic** *Very high impact*
Scale	**Large** (All or most of state impacted)	Low	Medium	High	High	High
	Medium (several sites impacted)	None	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Small (one or two sites impacted)	None	None	Low	Medium	High

Response Level	Actions required
High	• Stand up National Controller. • National Controller to verify the response level assessment. • National Controller to appoint Regional Coordinator (and State Coordinator if required). • Establish a Regional EMT • Consider scale, impact and coordination requirements to determine if National and/or State EMT must also be established.
Medium	• Stand up National Controller. • National Controller to verify the response level assessment. • National Controller to appoint Regional Coordinator (and State Coordinator if required). • Establish a Regional EMT • Consider scale, impact and coordination requirements to determine if State EMT must also be established.
Low	• Stand up National Controller. • National Controller to verify the response level assessment. • National Controller to appoint a Regional Coordinator. • Establish a Regional EMT.
None	• No action required under this protocol. Refer to relevant local incident procedures.

Other factors

Consider any other factors that may elevate or lower the appropriate response level. Factors may include:

- remote nature of site affected

- density of people we support at the impacted site or location, or the complexity of client cases within the affected area

- resilience of the local site (e.g. generators in place/not in place, recent experience).

The need to escalate or de-escalate should be continuously reviewed as the situation changes or new information becomes available. If in doubt, escalate. Arrangements may always be de-escalated after further observation or if the perceived risk doesn't eventuate.

4.1.3 Alert to local sites

The National Controller or their delegate will send an alert (via text and email) to all sites impacted or at risk of being impacted by the emergency event.

All local sites that receive an alert under this protocol need to consider what impact, if any, the emergency event will have on their employees, clients and operations and respond as required.

The Local Incident Responders at each impacted site will be the **single point of contact** responsible for communications to and from the EMT during the emergency response.

Non-critical business operations will be on hold for those local sites and/or employees involved in the emergency response.

4.2   Ongoing response

4.2.1 Situational reports

It is important that LWB maintains situational awareness for the duration of the emergency response to ensure appropriate support is provided. This includes reports on the location, physical environment, client and employee profiles.

The Local Incident Responder must provide regular situational reports to the EMT. This may include regular verbal updates as well as written situational reports. This will enable the National Controller (or delegate) and EMT to continuously assess risks as the emergency event unfolds, and to plan for and provide the support and resources needed to respond appropriately.

Situational reports should be concise and provided once or twice daily (at set times) as directed by the National Controller (or delegate). The information in the situational report may include:

- Number of injuries or casualties

- Number, location, and sector of positive viral infections for clients, staff and carers

- Number of evacuations

- Number of employees and clients at evacuation centres

- Assets damaged or impacted, such as property and fleet

- Resources needed at local sites

- Risks and mitigating actions.

4.2.2 Stand up meetings

Stand up meetings may be needed when an emergency event continues for an extended period. Depending on the nature, scale and impact of the emergency event, daily 15-30 minute stand up meetings may be convened to provide an update on the emergency event and our emergency response, such as:

- Information on progress of the emergency response

- Ongoing and emerging risks and mitigating actions.

The stand up meetings will be chaired by the National Controller (or delegate) and attended by the EMT, relevant Coordinators and Incident Responders, and any other relevant team members.

The communications team will be responsible for preparing key messages to employees, clients, carers and relevant stakeholders, as appropriate. These messages may be delivered by either the communications team or through local channels as appropriate, determined according to

- the nature of the emergency,

- who holds knowledge of who is impacted and, if relevant, their upcoming working rosters

- who best supports the impacted individual, for example, due to past working relationships, and

- the extent to which the individual is impacted.

See Appendix B: Stand up meeting agenda template.

4.3 Review and closure

4.3.1 Emergency response closure

When the deployment of resources and employees is no longer required, the National Controller or delegate is responsible for notifying the EMT to close out the emergency response.

Once notified of emergency response closure, the EMT will stand down emergency response activities.

The National Controller or their delegate should consider the following activities, where relevant:

- Notify relevant local sites of emergency response closure and return to business-as-usual operations

- Debrief with all employees involved in the emergency response

- Make available peer support, information and advice for employees involved in the response. This may include informal communications (e.g. texts and phone calls) and formal support (e.g. EAP support).

4.3.2 Transition to relief and recovery

Once emergency response activities have concluded, relief and recovery arrangements will be put in place.

Relevant business units should consider the following actions, as required:

- Ensure support is offered to client families and employees impacted by the emergency event, including personal support (e.g. psychological support) at incident sites and across the community
- Develop accommodation plan for clients and families impacted or evacuated from local sites
- Rectification of LWB' critical infrastructure (property, fleet and technology systems) and process insurance claims
- Inform employees and clients impacted by the emergency about available supports (e.g. emergency relief funding).

Relief and recovery efforts may begin while the emergency response is still ongoing, if required.

4.3.3 Emergency event evaluation

Following an emergency event, LWB will review the emergency response and this protocol (see Section 1.5).

5 Communication during an emergency event

5.1 Communication to employees, clients and carers

Communications issued under this protocol should be:
- Relevant, timely, accessible and clear
- Tailored to impacted communities and cohorts
- Provided through a range of communication channels (e.g. text, email, social media, where relevant).

Collaboration and coordination of both internal and external communications from and between the National Controller and the Emergency Management Team is necessary to ensure that employees, clients and carers receive consistent, accessible and timely communications during an emergency event.

5.2 Public information and warnings

Access to official alerts, information and warnings can assist employees, clients and communities to make informed decisions during an emergency event.

The table below provides links to some key official websites where employees and clients can access relevant and timely official communications during emergencies.

State/ Territory	Source
Federal	Bureau of Meteorology, http://www.bom.gov.au/ Emergency Alert, http://www.emergencyalert.gov.au/ Department of Health, https://www.health.gov.au/health-alerts/

State/ Territory	Source
Australian Capital Territory	ACT Emergency Services Agency, https://esa.act.gov.au/ ACT Health, https://health.act.gov.au/
New South Wales	NSW Rural Fire Service, https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/ NSW SES https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/ NSW Health, https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/ Live Traffic https://www.livetraffic.com/
Northern Territory	Secure NT, https://securent.nt.gov.au/alerts NT Health, https://health.nt.gov.au/health-alerts
Queensland	Queensland Rural Fire Service, https://www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au/Using_Fire_Outdoors/Pages/Fire-Bans-and-Restrictions.aspx Queensland Disaster Management, https://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/warnings/pages/default.aspx Queensland Government, https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts
South Australia	SA Country Fire Service, https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/site/warnings_and_incidents.jsp SA State Emergency Service, https://www.ses.sa.gov.au/site/home.jsp SA Health, https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/public+health/alerts/health+alerts?mr-sort=date-desc&mr-pg=1
Tasmania	TasAlert, http://alert.tas.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx Tasmania Fire Service, http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/Show?pageId=colGMapBushfires Tasmanian Department of Health, https://www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19
Victoria	Vic Emergency, https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/ CFA, https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/home Victorian Department of Health, https://www.health.vic.gov.au/
Western Australia	Emergency WA, https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/ Western Australia, Department of health, https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/

Appendices

Appendix A: List of related documents

Document	Description
National Emergency Management Protocol - Summary	Provides a summary of this protocol, designed to be printed on a double sided A3 page.
National Incident Management Procedure	A step-by-step outline of the client incident management process, including roles and responsibilities. A client incident is an event or situation that causes harm or creates a risk or danger as a result of action or inaction.
COVID 19 Pandemic Plan	The Pandemic Plan support the organisational priorities during the COVID 19 pandemic: 1. Continuity of care for the people we support. 2. Promoting the ongoing health and wellbeing of our clients, carers, and employees. It guides the management of the impacts of COVID-19, and has been updated to reflect the learnings and practical experience gained over the course of the pandemic.
Aged Care - Safety and Emergency Planning Policy Guideline	An internal document that guides planning for aged care clients and provides relevant resources to protect the safety and welfare of both employees and clients.
Aged Care - Safety and Emergency Planning Procedure	An internal procedure outlining process to ensure employees are able to appropriately identify and mitigate potential risks and hazards in relation to aged care clients, homes and transport, and where possible, develop a response plan for individuals involved.
Emergency Management Plan	Describe the requirements and associated responsibilities to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond and recover from emergency situations.
Preparing for emergencies	A reference guide developed by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services for organisations in the Health and Community Services Sectors to plan for and effectively respond to external emergencies.

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Appendix B: Stand up meeting agenda template

Stand Up Meeting Agenda		
Chair: National Controller Date and Time: Location: Teleconference link:		
Agenda		
#	**Focus**	**Lead**
1	Overview of known impact of emergency and response activities to date	National Controller
2	Updates on response activities completed and planned activities and resource requirements by functions: • Emergency Event Update • Client services and operations • Logistics, assets and planning • People, safety and culture • Communications and media	Functional leads (EMT)
3	Risks and mitigating actions	National Controller
4	Anything else?	All
Actions		
#		
#		
#		
Next stand up meeting: Date and Time: Location: Teleconference link:		