

Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community

Department of Defence

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Executive Director
Corporate Management Branch
Australian National Audit Office
19 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

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Canberra ACT
16 April 2014

Dear Mr President
Dear Madam Speaker

The Australian National Audit Office has undertaken an independent performance audit in the Department of Defence titled *Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community*. The audit was conducted in accordance with the authority contained in the *Auditor-General Act 1997*. Pursuant to Senate Standing Order 166 relating to the presentation of documents when the Senate is not sitting, I present the report of this audit to the Parliament.

Following its presentation and receipt, the report will be placed on the Australian National Audit Office's website—<http://www.anao.gov.au>.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian McPhee', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Ian McPhee
Auditor-General

The Honourable the President of the Senate
The Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT

AUDITING FOR AUSTRALIA

The Auditor-General is head of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). The ANAO assists the Auditor-General to carry out his duties under the *Auditor-General Act* 1997 to undertake performance audits, financial statement audits and assurance reviews of Commonwealth public sector bodies and to provide independent reports and advice for the Parliament, the Australian Government and the community. The aim is to improve Commonwealth public sector administration and accountability.

For further information contact:
The Publications Manager
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6203 7505
Fax: (02) 6203 7519
Email: publications@anao.gov.au

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Audit Team

Jennifer Myles
Jed Andrews
Deanne Allan
Alex Wilkinson
Stuart Turnbull

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Abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADFAADS	Australian Defence Force Activity and Analysis Database System
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
CDF	Chief of the Defence Force
COMDISPLAN	Australian Government Disaster Response Plan
DACC	Defence Assistance to the Civil Community
DACC Manual	<i>Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual (2012)</i>
Defence	Department of Defence
DOTAM	Directorate of Operations and Training Area Management
EMA	Emergency Management Australia
HQJOC	Headquarters Joint Operations Command
JOSS	Joint Operations Support Staff
JTF	Joint Task Force
MSC	Military Strategic Commitments
SADFO	Senior Australian Defence Force Officer
the Instruction	<i>Defence Instructions (General) OPS 05-1: Defence Assistance to the Civil Community — policy and procedures (2004)</i>
WHS Act	<i>Work Health Safety Act 2011</i>

Summary and Recommendation

Summary

Introduction

1. An emergency situation can be a natural occurrence, such as a bushfire, flood or cyclone, or result from human activities.¹ Emergencies occur frequently in Australia and range in severity from small-scale incidents to large-scale, catastrophic events. The human and economic cost of these events can be substantial. For example, the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009 claimed the lives of 173 people, affected over 78 communities and destroyed 2029 homes; and the insured cost for losses due to Cyclone Oswald in 2013 was estimated at \$1.1 billion in Queensland and New South Wales, with \$154 million in State and Australian Government assistance provided to those affected.²
2. A well-directed, coordinated and timely emergency management response acts to minimise the impact of an emergency on the community and support the recovery process. When a natural disaster or other domestic emergency occurs, it is primarily the responsibility of the relevant state or territory (state) government to protect life, property and the environment. State governments draw on a range of emergency services, volunteer organisations and commercial resources when responding to emergencies. State governments may also request Australian Government non-financial assistance to provide additional resources for response and recovery activities.³
3. The Department of Defence (Defence) undertakes a large majority of Australian Government emergency assistance tasks in response to state requests. When Defence accepts a request and provides emergency assistance, this is referred to as emergency 'Defence Assistance to the Civil Community' (DACC). The benefits of utilising Defence in support of emergency responses include that Defence is often able to deploy Australian Defence Force (ADF)

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- 1 The terms 'emergency' and 'disaster' are often used interchangeably by organisations involved in emergency/disaster response to describe events which require special arrangements to manage the situation. Criteria used to define 'disaster' can be found at Emergency Management Australia, *Disaster Information*, [Internet], EMA, available from <<http://www.emknowledge.gov.au/disaster-information>> [accessed 4 November 2013].
 - 2 Emergency Management Australia, *Knowledge Hub*, [Internet], EMA, available from <<http://www.emknowledge.gov.au/disaster-information>> [accessed 28 January 2014].
 - 3 Non-financial assistance can include, but is not limited to: planning, expertise, provision of mapping services, counseling, advice, management of external resources and physical assistance. Emergency Management Australia, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 5.

personnel (including Reserve personnel) with relevant expertise and skills (for example, engineers), as well as equipment (from transport aircraft to water purification units). Defence may also have the capacity to deploy its personnel and equipment at relatively short notice due to the geographical proximity of certain bases to incident areas and its access to transport assets. Further, Defence has developed approaches to the planning, coordination and conduct of operations, which may be readily adapted to emergency responses.

4. Based on Defence data, 275 emergency DACC tasks were recorded for the period 2005–06 to 2012–13.⁴ Examples of the emergency assistance provided by Defence include: airlift of equipment and personnel; engineering support; search and support; temporary accommodation and general support; health and psychological support; aviation refuelling; and communications.

Australian Government and Defence emergency assistance arrangements

5. The Attorney-General's Department, through Emergency Management Australia (EMA), develops and maintains the Australian Government's emergency management policy and plans. The Australian Government Disaster Response Plan is known as COMDISPLAN. This plan outlines request and coordination arrangements for providing Australian Government emergency assistance, in the event of an emergency in Australia or its offshore territories. One of the guiding principles of COMDISPLAN is that, 'Before a request is made under COMDISPLAN a jurisdiction must have exhausted all government, community and commercial options to provide that effect'.⁵

6. The arrangements established by COMDISPLAN apply to emergency DACC. The provision of emergency DACC is also governed by Defence policy and procedures. *Defence Instructions (General) OPS 05-1: Defence Assistance to the Civil Community – policy and procedures* (the Instruction) applied until December 2012. The Instruction was replaced at this time by the *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual* (DACC Manual), which states that:

Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) is support provided to the civil community where immediate action is necessary to save

4 This report identifies shortcomings in Defence's emergency DACC task recordkeeping. The actual number of emergency DACC tasks for the period 2005–06 to 2012–13 is higher than that recorded by Defence.

5 Emergency Management Australia, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 6.

human life or alleviate suffering, prevent extensive loss of animal life, prevent widespread loss/damage to property or to prevent environmental damage, and when State/Territory resources are inadequate. It also encompasses assistance associated with the recovery from an emergency or disaster.⁶

7. The DACC Manual recognises two types of DACC: emergency and non-emergency. Emergency DACC is divided into three categories according to the type and duration of assistance: local emergency assistance (category 1); significant emergency assistance (category 2); and emergency recovery assistance (category 3). Defence may agree to provide emergency assistance in one of two ways:

- In response to localised emergencies, or as an initial response to a larger emergency, Australian Government resources may be deployed in support of state authorities for limited periods without the need to activate COMDISPLAN.⁷ In this situation, regional, district or local emergency management authorities may request assistance directly from an ADF unit located in the affected area. Local ADF commanders decide whether to undertake the task, taking into account available resources and priorities. This type of assistance is classified as DACC category 1.
- For more extensive or ongoing emergency situations, or assistance associated with recovery from a civil emergency or disaster, requests for Australian Government assistance must be approved and coordinated through EMA, under the guidance of COMDISPLAN. On the receipt of a state government request, EMA determines the Australian Government organisation best placed to undertake the task. EMA informed the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) that approximately 80 per cent of the requests it receives are tasked to Defence.⁸ Defence assesses whether to provide assistance based on its available resources and priorities. This type of assistance is classified as DACC category 2 or 3.

6 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012, paragraph 3.1.

7 Emergency Management Australia, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 6.

8 EMA informed the ANAO that 80 per cent is an overall average which can vary greatly depending on the disaster. For example, some emergencies will see more, or less, requests for assistance tasked to Defence, depending on the type of disaster and the assistance required.

Audit objective, criteria and scope

8. The audit objective was to assess the administrative effectiveness of Defence's procedures to provide emergency assistance to the civil community.

9. Four high-level criteria were developed to assist in evaluating Defence's performance in terms of the audit objective:

- procedures for deploying Defence personnel and assets to provide emergency assistance are clear and robust;
- Defence undertakes adequate planning for emergency assistance;
- there are clear arrangements and lines of authority for Defence to work with other agencies to provide emergency assistance, including with state emergency management authorities; and
- Defence divisions with responsibility for emergency assistance are accurately reporting on tasks and incorporate relevant lessons learned from previous operations.

10. The audit scope focused on Defence's administrative arrangements and practices supporting the delivery of domestic emergency assistance. The audit did not address Defence's management of non-emergency DACC or the conduct of Defence operations.

Overall conclusion

11. Under national emergency management arrangements, state and territory (state) governments have primary responsibility for protecting life, property and the environment in the event of an emergency in their jurisdiction. When state resources are inadequate, the Australian Government can be called upon to provide assistance, representing a 'surge' capacity within the federation. Some of the skills and assets available to Defence to conduct military operations can be readily applied in support of states responding to natural disasters and other emergencies, and as a consequence there is a regular demand for Defence assistance. Defence can provide assistance either directly for local emergency assistance (category 1 tasks), or through Emergency Management Australia (EMA) for significant emergency assistance (category 2 tasks) and emergency recovery assistance (category 3 tasks). Defence's emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) procedures therefore need to establish clear decision making, coordination and

administrative arrangements to guide Defence commanders and personnel on the conduct of tasks outside of core military operations.

12. The effective contribution of Defence in emergency situations is highly dependent on the quality of relationships across the areas of Defence with emergency DACC roles, and between Defence, EMA and state emergency management authorities. It also depends on a strong feedback loop so that on-the-ground experience informs future operations.

13. In recent years Defence has played a prominent role in responding to natural disasters in Australia. As part of five major emergency DACC operations between 2008–09 and 2012–13, Defence has deployed significant human and physical resources, organised in Joint Task Forces (JTF)⁹, to provide assistance to state emergency management authorities. For example, Defence assistance to the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria reached a peak operational strength of approximately 800 Defence personnel per day¹⁰, and over 1250 Defence personnel provided assistance over the seven weeks of the operation. For these major operations, Defence also recorded supplier expenses totalling some \$6.7 million, for items such as travel, consumable goods and garrison support.¹¹ Defence has also undertaken many smaller scale emergency DACC tasks utilising Defence base personnel and resources located in the area of an incident, at the discretion of local commanders.

14. Overall, Defence's emergency DACC procedures are generally effective in guiding and enabling the provision of Defence assistance in response to emergencies. The DACC Manual outlines principles for Defence commanders to consider when judging the merits of requests for Defence assistance, including the need to evaluate the readiness of Defence resources to achieve the Government's expected defence outcomes against the capacity to make those same resources available in an emergency. Defence has also developed sound coordination arrangements with state emergency management authorities, involving the appointment of Defence liaison officers, who communicate with states about their emergency assistance needs and Defence's capability to provide support, both prior to and during emergencies.

9 *Australian Defence Doctrine Publication 3.14* defines a JTF as a force composed of assigned or attached elements of two or more Services established for the purpose of carrying out a specific task or mission.

10 Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2008–09*, Volume 1, 2009, p. 137.

11 These supplier expenses do not include the cost of Defence personnel or the cost of depreciation of Defence assets utilised in emergency DACC tasks.

Emergency management authorities interviewed as part of this audit acknowledged the responsiveness of Defence and the value of the support provided. However, emergency DACC has been largely focused on response efforts, with less attention given to meeting the administrative requirements set out in the DACC Manual, particularly in the areas of task recordkeeping and cost recovery. There is also scope for Defence to develop a stronger feedback loop to inform decision making on future emergency DACC delivery approaches.

15. While emergency DACC is only a small part of Defence's overall responsibilities, it can involve a large number of Defence personnel, and the utilisation of valuable Defence equipment and supplies. In the circumstances, there is a need for Defence to develop straightforward administrative requirements. The Instruction of 2004 and the DACC Manual of 2012 set out extensive reporting requirements for individual DACC tasks, indicating a desire by Defence to understand the nature and cost of the provision of DACC, and to learn from experience. However, for many years Defence has not met these requirements across the DACC tasks it undertakes. The main focus of Defence units has been to complete tasks, and they have not prioritised reporting on tasks outside of the Service chain of command. The failure to record key task data means that other areas of Defence responsible for emergency DACC strategy, procedures and reporting are not routinely informed about the nature, resource impact and cost of emergency DACC tasks, as well as any task acceptance and delivery issues. To address these issues, Defence should review task reporting requirements to ensure they do not present an unnecessary administrative burden, but instead give priority to meeting an appropriate set of requirements that generates useful information to help shape future emergency DACC activities while satisfying recordkeeping requirements for accountability purposes.

16. To further encourage states to manage emergency recovery efforts using their own resources, the DACC Manual requires that the direct costs¹² incurred by Defence in undertaking category 3 'recovery' tasks be reimbursed by states, and only allows the 'waiver' of cost recovery in limited 'special

12 Direct costs include the cost of the workforce, fuel, spares, stores and the cost of repairing Defence platforms. Direct costs are normally presented as a per/day or per/hour cost.

circumstances'.¹³ However, Defence has not consistently recovered or waived costs in accordance with the requirements of the DACC Manual. In contrast to its current policy, Defence has advised that it plans to amend the DACC Manual to indicate that costs are 'generally not recovered unless the government recipient agrees to pay costs', and that cost recovery 'may not be warranted where it is not cost effective or it would be inconsistent with government policy objectives'. However, this approach does not clarify the circumstances in which cost recovery is warranted and Defence personnel are obliged to pursue the recovery of costs. While it is a decision for Defence and the Government, the ANAO suggests that Defence review and clarify its cost recovery policy for emergency DACC, and develop practical thresholds for the application of cost recovery, in terms of the estimated value and type of recovery assistance provided. Pursuing such an approach would reinforce the responsibility of state governments for emergency recovery when the immediate threat to life, property and the environment has passed.

17. The emergent nature of emergency DACC tasks means that it is difficult to develop and apply objective measures of performance. Nevertheless, identifying lessons from emergency DACC activities, including the efficiency and effectiveness of the approaches adopted remains important. Defence has established some elements of an emergency DACC evaluation and learning system, including reports on major operations¹⁴ and an annual Lessons Board. The Lessons Board considers key themes arising from these reports, and can recommend procedural changes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency DACC. However, these elements are not currently supported by an information system to record and manage key lessons and recommendations arising from DACC activities, creating a risk that learning will be lost and actions not pursued. The initial roll-out of a Defence-wide system for managing lessons learned is planned for July 2014, presenting an opportunity for Defence to develop a stronger feedback loop to inform improvement in the administration and delivery of emergency DACC activities.

18. Within Defence, various office holders, Groups and Services have different emergency DACC responsibilities, ranging from the development of

13 Category 3 tasks are not directly related to saving life and property and are subject to cost recovery. DACC Category 1 and 2 tasks are directly related to saving life and property and are not subject to cost recovery. See Table 2.1 on page 40 for details.

14 Emergency DACC operations involve many individual DACC tasks.

strategy and procedures to the completion of tasks. The audit highlights that the overall effectiveness of emergency DACC administrative arrangements depends on the collective contribution of all of these areas toward planning, delivery, monitoring and review efforts. To this end, the ANAO has recommended that Defence review the minimum information necessary to be reported for each emergency DACC task for planning, management and accountability purposes. The recommendation also encourages Defence to take steps to strengthen the priority afforded by Defence units to meeting mandatory reporting requirements.¹⁵

Key findings by chapter

Defence emergency assistance framework (Chapter 2)

19. Defence's primary focus is to advance Australia's strategic interests by developing the armed forces and conducting military operations, as directed by the Government. Defence is also able to assist the civil community in Australia during emergency situations, in a supporting role to state emergency services authorities, utilising its available capabilities. At the government and community levels, the provision of DACC can be highly visible and result in favourable media coverage. This can lead to further requests and greater expectations for Defence support, potentially stretching available capabilities. To address this set of issues, Defence's DACC Manual includes clear policy and guidance, which informs Defence decision makers about the circumstances and limitations applying to the acceptance of DACC requests. Defence has also actively engaged with emergency assistance stakeholders to build understanding of Defence's supporting role and capability to provide emergency assistance.

20. Defence has established different emergency DACC management and administrative requirements according to three 'categories' or types of tasks. The emergency DACC categories enable local Defence commanders to make on-the-ground decisions and apply base resources in response to localised emergencies (category 1); and provide for higher level Defence decision making and coordination in response to more extensive or large-scale emergency situations (category 2 and 3). The categorisation of emergency

15 The audit report also suggests that Defence clarify cost recovery policy for emergency DACC category 3 'recovery' tasks, and centrally review the content of regional DACC plans on an annual basis. These suggestions are discussed in the key findings at paragraphs 21 and 24.

DACC tasks is not always straightforward or clear, which has at times created uncertainty about the appropriate acceptance, delivery and administration of DACC tasks that do not fit a category definition neatly. Defence revised the category definitions when it released the DACC Manual in December 2012, to provide additional flexibility in categorising tasks.

21. COMDISPLAN advises that cost recovery may be sought by the Australian Government for emergency assistance tasks which are not directly related to the safety of life or property, or that could be handled within the resources of the state government. This policy encourages self-sufficiency within state governments for the management of emergencies, and discourages reliance on the Australian Government after the immediate threat has passed. The DACC Manual goes further in requiring that cost recovery be sought for all DACC category 3 tasks (recovery tasks which are not directly related to saving life or property), or that a cost 'waiver' be approved in limited 'special circumstances'. However, Defence has not consistently recovered or waived costs for category 3 tasks in accordance with the requirements of the DACC Manual, reflecting a generally immature approach to emergency DACC cost recovery. Further, Defence has advised that it plans to amend the DACC Manual to indicate that costs are 'generally not recovered unless the government recipient agrees to pay costs'. If revised along these lines, the DACC Manual will not provide clear policy and guidance on the circumstances in which cost recovery is warranted. The ANAO suggests that, in consultation with the Government, Defence review and clarify its cost recovery policy for emergency DACC. As part of the review, Defence could also develop thresholds for the application of cost recovery to category 3 'recovery' tasks, in terms of the estimated value and type of assistance provided. Another option available to Defence is to develop memoranda of understanding with individual states which formalise the reimbursement of costs when Defence undertakes relevant emergency recovery activities. For example, there is a memorandum of understanding covering aircraft refuelling in Western Australia during firefighting activities.

22. The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) establishes a range of duties that organisations need to meet in order to provide health and safety protection from hazards arising from work. The requirements of the WHS Act have significant implications for emergency DACC, which is often delivered in an environment subject to uncertainty, risks and hazards. The DACC Manual requires that Defence only provide emergency DACC support when its personnel are appropriately prepared or trained, thus minimising the risk of

injury and establishing a primary control to ensure compliance with the WHS Act. The DACC Manual also mandates documentation of formal risk assessments for DACC tasks, but this does not occur in practice. Defence informed the ANAO that in preparing personnel for emergency DACC tasks, it instead relies on existing approaches to skills development, as well as procedural documentation related to specific activities undertaken by ADF personnel, and the transferability of ADF skills and procedures to DACC tasks. In light of the variation between the DACC Manual requirement and actual practice, there would be benefit in Defence reviewing the requirement for formal risk assessments for all DACC tasks, and clearly documenting in the DACC Manual the measures it considers necessary to meet its obligations under the WHS Act when providing emergency DACC. This would increase assurance on the approach adopted, reinforce individual roles and responsibilities, and provide a firmer basis for monitoring compliance with the WHS Act.

Strategies to support operational effectiveness (Chapter 3)

23. A range of Defence office holders, Groups and Services are involved in the administration, coordination and delivery of emergency DACC. Their respective roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in the DACC Manual. The effective delivery of emergency DACC depends on the quality of communication and coordination between the various areas of Defence involved.

24. A set of operational plans provides Defence with guidance on its emergency responses. They include an overarching national plan, which provides standardised guidance and is supported by regional DACC plans. The most significant feature of these plans is that they move beyond the mainly administrative guidance in the DACC Manual to operational considerations, such as execution arrangements and phases, and the roles and responsibilities of various emergency management organisations across Australia. While most of these plans had recently been updated, many still contained references to out-of-date material, such as old versions of COMDISPLAN and Defence's overarching national plan (Charlemagne). This highlights scope for better communication within, and between, the different areas of Defence involved in emergency DACC about agreed policies, procedures and delivery approaches. The ANAO suggests that Defence centrally review the content of regional DACC plans on an annual basis. This

would promote more current plans, and the identification and dissemination of better planning practices.

25. Each regional Joint Operations Support Staff (JOSS) office has appointed Defence liaison officers to engage with emergency management authorities in the area. The ANAO noted evidence of regular contact between relevant Defence personnel and state and regional emergency management authorities, with regional JOSS representatives participating in various state emergency management planning activities. State emergency management authorities informed the ANAO that this resulted in greater awareness of Defence's capability and more effects based¹⁶ requests for Defence assistance from state and regional groups.

26. In addition to the planning and preparatory liaison conducted by JOSS in each state, JOSS coordinate the provision of Defence assistance during an emergency through liaison officers embedded with the state emergency services authority coordinating the response. These liaison officers help communicate and coordinate requests for Defence assistance so that the affected jurisdiction is aware of the available capabilities, limitations and expected timeframes for the provision of emergency DACC. They can also provide feedback to Defence about a jurisdiction's capabilities, and the likely need for Defence assistance, which assists Defence to prepare for and respond to requests for assistance. Nevertheless, EMA, the Directorate of Operations and Training Areas Management (DOTAM) and JOSS noted that during an emergency DACC operation led by a JTF, established chains of reporting can be disrupted or replaced. This can result in a lack of situational awareness or understanding of the emergency response. Defence informed the ANAO that it intends to document liaison officer roles and responsibilities during JTF operations in the next version of the DACC Manual, which is scheduled for release in mid-2014.

Recording and reporting emergency assistance (Chapter 4)

27. The Instruction of 2004 and the DACC Manual of 2012 imposed extensive reporting requirements for individual DACC tasks. With few exceptions these requirements have not been met by responsible areas of

16 According to COMDISPLAN 2013, the most effective method of seeking assistance from Defence is to define or outline the outcome or result required (the effect to be achieved) rather than to seek provision of a specific capability. Defence is then able to consider the usefulness of a broader range of its available capabilities to achieve the required effect.

Defence on a consistent basis. This raises questions for Defence about the balance between the benefits for DACC planning and public accountability of capturing more comprehensive information, and the risks in not capturing certain task information. Against this background, Defence should review reporting requirements to ensure they represent the minimum information necessary to: identify the nature and cost of emergency DACC tasks, undertake any cost recovery, discharge accountability obligations, maintain reasonable records for future use and learn from emergency DACC activities. Defence should also take steps to strengthen the priority afforded by Defence commanders and personnel to meeting the reporting requirements that are determined to be appropriate.

28. The history of Defence not accurately recording the cost of DACC dates back many years. A 1999–2000 ANAO performance audit recommended that, to improve the cost effectiveness of DACC, Defence should regularly monitor the costs associated with the provision of DACC and enforce central reporting of DACC activities.¹⁷ Some 14 years later, the quality of emergency DACC cost data remains low. Defence has described the impact of DACC on its budget as marginal because it largely involves the provision of personnel, which does not constitute additional expenditure. Nevertheless, Defence does not have an understanding of the overall costs of its DACC activities because it has not captured accurate costing data for DACC activities undertaken. In a resource constrained environment, a better understanding of the cost drivers and complete costs of emergency DACC over time would assist Defence to pursue efficiencies in delivery approaches. Defence should also keep in view the opportunity cost associated with the time spent by Defence commanders and personnel preparing for and undertaking emergency DACC tasks.

29. Defence’s implementation of a national DACC database in December 2013 is a positive development which has the potential to improve emergency DACC recordkeeping if relevant Defence personnel increase the priority given to meeting the reporting requirements of the DACC Manual.

30. Defence does not have a set of objective performance measures to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency DACC, reflecting the emergent nature of activities. To identify lessons, the DACC Manual states that Defence Groups and ADF Services may require individual units providing

17 ANAO Audit Report, No.41, 1999–2000, *Commonwealth Emergency Management Arrangements*, p. 24.

DACC support to prepare a Post Activity Report at their discretion and for their own use, and that Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) may seek a Post Activity Report for DACC operations. Post Activity Reports (or equivalent) were generally completed following the larger emergency DACC responses but not for smaller scale tasks. In addition, HQJOC has run a Lessons Board following the end of the annual disaster season, which considers analysis of key themes arising from Post Activity Reports, and recommends improvements to DACC procedures and activities. As previously discussed, the elements of Defence's emergency DACC evaluation and feedback loop are not currently supported by an information system to record and manage key lessons and recommendations arising from DACC activities. Collection and analysis of lessons learned, and the subsequent identification of improvement actions have been long-term issues for Defence. The implementation of a Defence-wide management system for lessons learned, due for initial implementation in mid-2014, is an important step in creating an integrated approach to the management of lessons learned from Defence operations.

Summary of agency response

31. Defence's covering letter in response to the proposed audit report is reproduced at Appendix 1. Defence's response to the proposed audit report is set out below:

Defence thanks the ANAO for undertaking the Defence Assistance to the Civil Community audit.

Defence welcomes ANAO's comments regarding Defence's prominent role in responding to natural disasters in Australia, in particular the value of the support provided to the Australian community by Defence during times of crisis and that Defence's emergency DACC procedures are generally effective.

Defence acknowledges the findings contained in the audit report and welcomes the Recommendation made by ANAO which, once implemented, will allow Defence to more accurately and fully demonstrate its support to the Australian community at times of domestic crisis. Defence will also consider the feasibility of the suggestions made in the report.

Recommendation

Recommendation

No. 1

Paragraph 4.17

To promote the efficient and effective use of Australian Government resources in the administration of emergency assistance to the civil community, the ANAO recommends that Defence:

- review the minimum information necessary to be reported for each emergency DACC task to discharge accountability obligations, identify costs, undertake cost recovery where appropriate, maintain records for future use and learn from emergency DACC activities; and
- take steps to strengthen the priority afforded by Defence units to meeting these reporting requirements.

Defence response: *Agreed*

Audit Findings

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of state, Commonwealth and Defence emergency assistance arrangements. It also sets out the audit approach.

Domestic emergencies

1.1 An emergency situation can be a natural occurrence, such as a bushfire, flood or cyclone, or result from human activities.¹⁸ Emergencies occur frequently in Australia and range in severity from small-scale incidents to large-scale, catastrophic events. The human and economic cost of these events can be substantial. For example, the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009 claimed the lives of 173 people, affected over 78 communities and destroyed 2029 homes; and the insured cost for losses due to Cyclone Oswald in 2013 was estimated at \$1.1 billion in Queensland and New South Wales, with \$154 million in State and Australian Government assistance provided to those affected.¹⁹

1.2 A well-directed, coordinated and timely emergency management response acts to minimise the impact of an emergency on the community and support the recovery process. When a natural disaster or other domestic emergency occurs, it is primarily the responsibility of the relevant state or territory (state) government to protect life, property and the environment. State governments draw on a range of emergency services, volunteer organisations and commercial resources when responding to emergencies. These include state police, ambulance and fire brigades, the various State Emergency Services and private contractors. State governments may also request Australian Government non-financial assistance to provide additional resources for response and recovery activities.²⁰

18 The terms 'emergency' and 'disaster' are used interchangeably by organisations involved in emergency/disaster response to describe events which require special arrangements to manage the situation. Criteria used to define 'disaster' can be found at Emergency Management Australia, *Disaster Information*, [Internet], EMA, available from <<http://www.emknowledge.gov.au/disaster-information>> [accessed 4 November 2013].

19 Emergency Management Australia, *Knowledge Hub*, [Internet], EMA, available from <<http://www.emknowledge.gov.au/disaster-information>> [accessed 28 January 2014].

20 Non-financial assistance can include, but is not limited to: planning, expertise, provision of mapping services, counseling, advice, management of external resources and physical assistance. Emergency Management Australia, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 5.

Australian Government and Defence emergency assistance arrangements

1.3 The Attorney-General's Department, through Emergency Management Australia (EMA), develops and maintains the Australian Government's emergency management policy and plans. The Australian Government Disaster Response Plan is known as COMDISPLAN. This plan outlines request and coordination arrangements for providing Australian Government emergency assistance, in the event of an emergency in Australia or its offshore territories. One of the guiding principles of COMDISPLAN is that:

Before a request is made under COMDISPLAN a jurisdiction must have exhausted all government, community and commercial options to provide that effect.²¹

1.4 The arrangements established by COMDISPLAN apply to emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC). The provision of emergency DACC is also governed by Defence policy and procedures. *Defence Instructions (General) OPS 05-1: Defence Assistance to the Civil Community – policy and procedures* (the Instruction) applied until December 2012. The Instruction was replaced at this time by the *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual* (DACC Manual), which states that:

Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) is support provided to the civil community where immediate action is necessary to save human life or alleviate suffering, prevent extensive loss of animal life, prevent widespread loss/damage to property or to prevent environmental damage, and when State/Territory resources are inadequate. It also encompasses assistance associated with the recovery from an emergency or disaster.²²

1.5 The DACC Manual recognises two types of DACC: emergency and non-emergency. Emergency DACC is divided into three categories according to the type and duration of assistance: local emergency assistance (category 1); significant emergency assistance (category 2); and emergency recovery assistance (category 3). Defence may agree to provide emergency assistance in one of two ways:

21 Emergency Management Australia, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 6.

22 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012, paragraph 3.1.

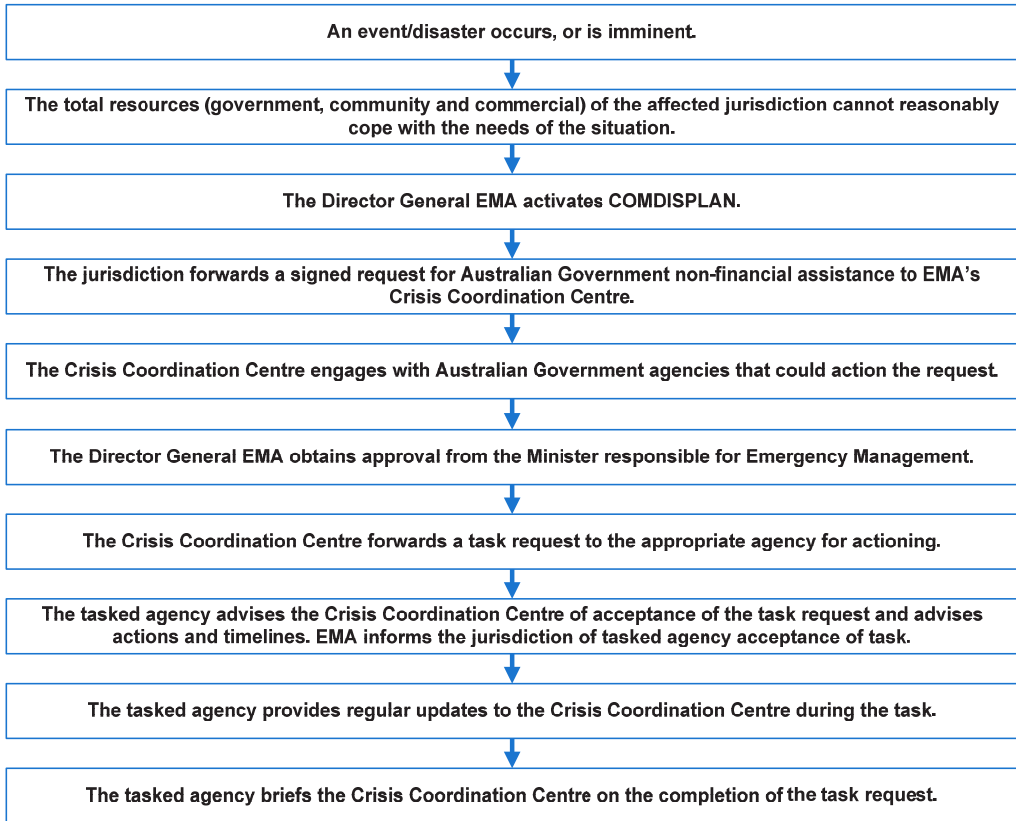
- In response to localised emergencies, or as an initial response to a larger emergency, Australian Government resources may be deployed in support of state authorities for limited periods without the need to activate COMDISPLAN.²³ In this situation, regional, district or local emergency management authorities may request assistance directly from an Australian Defence Force (ADF) unit located in the affected area. Local ADF commanders decide whether to undertake the task, taking into account available resources and priorities. This type of assistance is classified as DACC category 1.
- For more extensive or ongoing emergency situations, or assistance associated with recovery from a civil emergency or disaster, requests for Australian Government assistance must be approved and coordinated through EMA, under the guidance of COMDISPLAN. On the receipt of a state government request, EMA determines the Australian Government organisation best placed to undertake the task. Defence assesses whether to provide assistance based on its available resources and priorities. This type of assistance is classified as DACC category 2 or 3.

1.6 Figure 1.1 shows the process used to request and provide Australian Government emergency assistance, through EMA. EMA informed the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) that approximately 80 per cent of the requests it receives for Australian Government non-financial assistance are tasked to the Department of Defence (Defence).²⁴

23 Emergency Management Australia, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 6.

24 EMA informed the ANAO that 80 per cent is an overall average which can vary greatly depending on the disaster. For example, some emergencies will see more, or less, requests for assistance tasked to Defence, dependent on the type of disaster and the assistance required.

Figure 1.1: Request and provision of Australian Government non-financial assistance under COMDISPLAN



Source: ANAO summary of EMA, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 9.

Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC)

1.7 Defence support to state emergency management authorities during domestic disaster relief has been recognised in successive Defence White Papers and is a regular feature of Defence activity. The 2009 Defence White Paper stated that the 'most basic strategic interest remains the defence of Australia against direct armed attack'. However, it also acknowledged that Defence has 'significant capabilities that can be used to support ... disaster recovery' and that Defence's 'vital role in supporting domestic security and

emergency response efforts will continue.²⁵ This approach was reaffirmed in the 2013 Defence White Paper, which discussed the need for Defence to provide capabilities in support of disaster response and acknowledged Defence's significant contribution to the emergency responses to extreme weather events in Australia.²⁶

1.8 The benefits of utilising Defence in support of emergency responses include that Defence is often able to deploy ADF personnel (including Reserve personnel) with relevant expertise and skills (for example, engineers), as well as useful equipment (from transport aircraft to water purification units). Defence may also have the capacity to deploy its personnel and equipment at relatively short notice due to the geographical proximity of certain bases to incident areas and its access to transport assets. Further, Defence has developed approaches to the planning, coordination and conduct of operations, which may be readily adapted to emergency responses.

1.9 Examples of the emergency assistance provided by Defence include: airlift of equipment and personnel; engineering support; search and support; temporary accommodation and general support; health and psychological support; aviation refuelling; and communications.

1.10 Depending on the need, Defence can be requested to provide substantial resources as part of an emergency response. For example, in 2011 Defence provided:

- over 1440 (mainly Army) personnel and 26 aircraft for 572 flying hours, transporting 972 people and over 655 600 kilograms of stores during the Queensland flood response; and
- Rapid Impact Assessments²⁷ in over 28 affected communities following the Victorian flood response.

1.11 DACC forms part of Defence's Outcome 3 in the Portfolio Budget Statements for the Defence Portfolio. In the 2013–14 Portfolio Budget

25 Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2009: Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: Force 2030*, pp. 12 and 24.

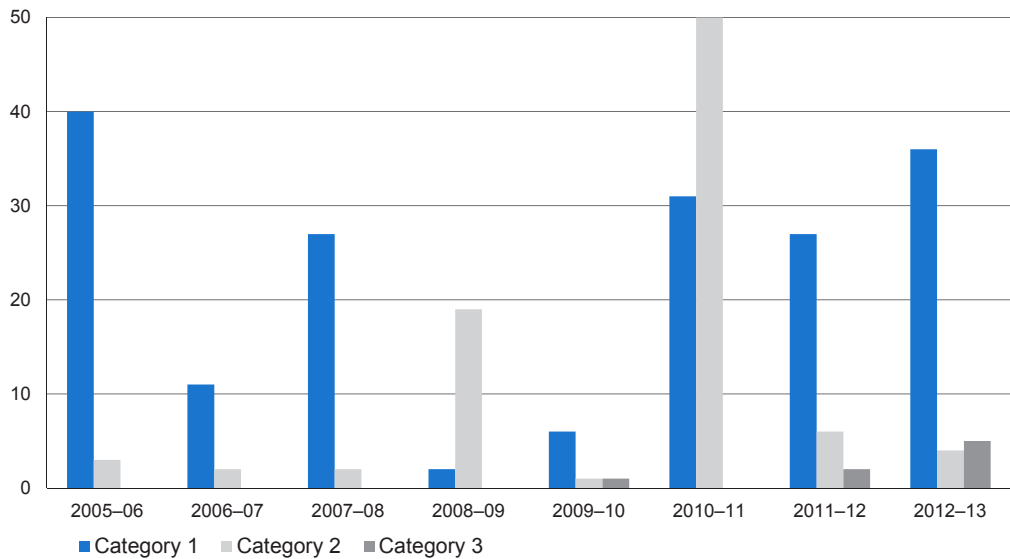
26 Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013*, p. 30.

27 Rapid Impact Assessment involves the collection, analysis and distribution of information on people, property and environment affected by an emergency event. Rapid Impact Assessment is defined in *The Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series, Community Recovery Handbook 2*, p. 162, [Internet], EMA, available from <<http://www.em.gov.au/Publications/Australianemergencymanualseries/Pages/default.aspx#AEMH>>, [accessed 17 October 2013].

Statements, Outcome 3 is described as ‘support for the Australian community and civilian authorities as requested by Government’.²⁸ Outcome 3 includes emergency assistance, search and rescue, disaster recovery, surveillance, security and law enforcement roles. Emergency DACC costs are not funded under Outcome 3 unless the cost of an operation exceeds \$10 million. These costs are instead borne by Defence Groups and ADF Services from within their existing operating and sustainment budgets.

1.12 Based on Defence data, 275 emergency DACC tasks were recorded for the period 2005–06 to 2012–13. Figure 1.2 shows the number of tasks by DACC category and financial year.

Figure 1.2: Number of emergency DACC tasks recorded by Defence, by DACC category, 2005–06 to 2012–13



Source: ANAO analysis of Defence data.

Notes: Data for 2005–06 to 2007–08 was derived from Defence Annual Reports. From 2008–09, Defence stopped reporting the number of DACC tasks in its Annual Report (see Table 4.1).

Defence provided the ANAO with DACC registers for the period 2008–09 to 2012–13. However, some regional registers were incomplete, particularly for 2008–09 and 2009–10. Therefore, this graph represents the number of emergency DACC tasks recorded. The actual number of tasks completed by Defence is higher.

28 Commonwealth of Australia, *Portfolio Budget Statements 2013–14: Budget Related Paper No.1.4A, Defence Portfolio*, p. 79, [Internet], Defence, available from http://www.defence.gov.au/budget/13-14/pbs/2013-2014_Defence_PBS_Complete.pdf [accessed 11 October 2013].

External reports on emergency DACC

1.13 Defence involvement in natural disasters can attract considerable publicity and community interest. It has also been the subject of several strategic studies. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute has published four reports relating to emergency DACC since 2009, arguing that it is likely to be used more frequently in the future, and in a wider range of activities, due to²⁹:

- increased vulnerability of growing populations in coastal development and bushfire-prone areas;
- continual reduction per capita in the number of emergency services personnel and volunteers;
- growing community and political expectations that military resources will be used to support whole-of-government efforts; and
- larger and more frequent extreme weather events due to climate change.³⁰

Related audits

1.14 Previous ANAO performance audit reports relating to domestic emergency response include:

- No.8, 2013–14, Australian Government Reconstruction Inspectorate's Conduct of Value for Money Reviews of Flood Reconstruction Projects in Queensland;
- No.24, 2012–13, The Preparation and Delivery of the Natural Disaster Recovery Work Plans for Queensland and Victoria;

29 A Yates and A Bergin, *Hardening Australia: Climate change and national disaster resilience*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute Special Report, Issue 24, August 2009; A Yates and A Bergin, *Here to help: Strengthening the Defence role in Australian disaster management*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute Special Report, Issue 28, February 2010; A Yates and A Bergin, *More than good deeds: Disaster risk management and Australian, Japanese and US Defence forces*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute Special Report, Issue 43, December 2011; and A Press, A Bergin and E Garnsey, *Heavy Weather: Climate and the Australian Defence Force*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute Special Report, Issue 49, March 2013.

30 There is an active debate on the effects of climate change. For example, the Prime Minister, the Honourable Tony Abbott MP, commented on 23 October 2013, in respect to the October 2013 New South Wales bushfires that 'these fires are certainly not a function of climate change, they're a function of life in Australia.' *Sydney Morning Herald*, [Internet] available from: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/un-official-talking-out-of-her-hat-on-bushfires-and-climate-change-says-tony-abbott-20131023-2w0mq.html> [accessed 11 November 2013].

- No.23, 2012–13, The Australian Government Reconstruction Inspectorate’s Conduct of Value for Money Reviews of Flood Reconstruction Projects in Victoria;
- No.1, 2011–12, The Australian Defence Force’s Mechanisms for Learning from Operational Activities;
- No.36, 2009–10, Emergency Management and Community Recovery Assistance in Centrelink;
- No.27, 2007–08, Emergency Management Australia; and
- No.41, 1999–2000, Commonwealth Emergency Management Arrangements.

1.15 The 1999–2000 performance audit on Commonwealth emergency management arrangements found that Defence was not quantifying the cost of DACC assistance, and that the inadequacies in costing data had implications for DACC management, including for policy generation and Defence’s ability to charge for services provided. Defence agreed to the ANAO recommendation that:

... to improve the cost effectiveness of DACC, Defence regularly monitors the costs associated with the provision of DACC and enforce the requirement for operational commanders to provide DACC reports to Headquarters Australian Theatre [now Headquarters Joint Operations Command].³¹

1.16 The 2011–12 performance audit on the ADF’s mechanisms for learning from operational activities made a number of recommendations relating to the management of lessons learned. These lessons are relevant to the provision of emergency DACC activities.³²

1.17 In 2009, Defence conducted an internal audit titled *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community – Policy, Approvals, Processes – Audit Task 09/006*. The internal audit report concluded that whilst the execution of DACC activities was sound and met the needs of community organisations and governments, procedures for the definition, approval and reporting of DACC activities required strengthening.

31 ANAO Audit Report, No.41, 1999–2000, *Commonwealth Emergency Management Arrangements*, p. 24.

32 The application of lessons learned during DACC operations is discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.

Audit approach

Audit objective, criteria and scope

1.18 The audit objective was to assess the administrative effectiveness of Defence's procedures to provide emergency assistance to the civil community.

1.19 Four high-level criteria were developed to assist in evaluating Defence's performance in terms of the audit objective:

- procedures for deploying Defence personnel and assets to provide emergency assistance are clear and robust;
- Defence undertakes adequate planning for emergency assistance;
- there are clear arrangements and lines of authority for Defence to work with other agencies to provide emergency assistance, including with state emergency management authorities; and
- Defence divisions with responsibility for emergency assistance are accurately reporting on tasks and incorporate relevant lessons learned from previous operations.

1.20 The audit scope focused on Defence's administrative arrangements and practices supporting the delivery of domestic emergency assistance. The audit did not address Defence's management of non-emergency DACC or the conduct of Defence operations.

Audit methodology

1.21 In undertaking the audit, the audit team:

- examined a wide range of plans, reports, registers, correspondence and other documents pertaining to the provision of emergency assistance by Defence;
- interviewed key Defence personnel responsible for the provision of emergency assistance; and
- consulted stakeholders, such as EMA, and state government emergency management authorities.

1.22 The audit was conducted in accordance with the ANAO's auditing standards, at a cost to the ANAO of approximately \$528 000.

Report structure

1.23 The remaining report structure is outlined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Report structure

Chapter 2—Defence emergency assistance framework (includes case study 1)	Examines Defence's emergency assistance policy and procedures. It also examines Defence's approach to meeting its obligations under work, health and safety legislation when providing emergency assistance.
Chapter 3—Strategies to support operational effectiveness (includes case study 2)	Examines Defence's emergency management structure and planning; and the relationships between Defence and emergency management authorities.
Chapter 4—Recording and reporting emergency assistance (includes case study 3)	Examines Defence's records of emergency assistance tasks, external reporting on emergency assistance, and operational evaluation and lessons learned.

Source: ANAO.

2. Defence Emergency Assistance Framework

This chapter examines Defence's emergency assistance policy and procedures. It also examines Defence's approach to meeting its obligations under work, health and safety legislation when providing emergency assistance.

Introduction

2.1 State emergency management authorities have overall responsibility for planning and managing responses to emergencies in their jurisdiction. In situations where state government resources are inadequate, Defence assistance can be requested to support the emergency response. To manage the civil demand for its services, Defence relies on a procedural framework which aims to establish effective communication channels with internal and external stakeholders, and guide the deployment of resources and assets in an efficient and effective manner during emergencies.

2.2 In this chapter, the ANAO examines Defence's:

- emergency DACC policy, including the related issue of managing stakeholder expectations for the provision of assistance;
- emergency DACC procedures, including alternate administrative approaches applied to different categories of tasks, and the treatment of costs for 'recovery' tasks;
- provision of aircraft refuelling services during bushfires in New South Wales in January 2013, focusing on categorisation of the task and the recovery of costs (case study 1); and
- approach to meeting work, health and safety obligations when providing emergency DACC.

Emergency DACC policy

2.3 Defence's primary focus is to protect and advance Australia's strategic interests through the provision of appropriately prepared and equipped armed forces, and the conduct of military operations and other tasks directed by the Australian Government. Defence has also expressed its commitment to assisting the civil community within Australia in both emergency and non-emergency situations. The provision of DACC is therefore a balancing act,

which requires ongoing consideration of the impact of DACC activities on the achievement of Defence outcomes.

2.4 The DACC Manual includes appropriate high-level guidance to assist ADF commanders considering whether to provide DACC, in the form of a policy statement and general principles. The general principles include that:

- DACC provides the means through which Defence can assist other organisations to deliver an outcome when their resources are not sufficient or have been overwhelmed;
- the provision of DACC should be regarded as the exception rather than the rule; and
- the provision of DACC requires continuous evaluation of the readiness of Defence to achieve the Government's expected outcomes against the capacity to make those same resources available in an emergency.³³

2.5 The general principles identify the DACC Manual as a source of guidance in the application of Defence resources to tasks outside of core military operations. They also emphasise that DACC support must not involve the use, or potential use, of force by Defence members.

Steps taken by Defence to manage expectations

2.6 Expectations management is a practical challenge for Defence, as DACC is not its primary mission, but is nonetheless a highly valued and prominent element of its activities. Clarity of understanding can facilitate the application of Defence's emergency DACC policy and the management of stakeholder expectations.

2.7 A string of severe natural disasters in recent years has, from Defence's own analysis, resulted in Defence's role in assisting in the emergency response appearing to be more prominent than was actually the case.³⁴ For example, a report that was issued following the 2011 Victorian floods observed that many members of the community had an expectation that 'anyone in uniform was

33 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012, paragraphs 2.2–2.6.

34 Media coverage during emergencies often highlights Defence's contribution to response and recovery operations. See for example: The Courier Mail, *Teams of soldiers bolster NQ clean-up in wake of Cyclone Yasi*, 7 February 2011; The Daily Telegraph, *NSW hit with floods on Queensland Cyclone Yasi's anniversary*, 3 February 2012; The Daily Telegraph, *Australian soldiers brave flood waters*, 15 January 2011; The Australian, *Army called in as flooded towns brace for more*, 3 March 2012.

there to assist with anything that they required help with.³⁵ Further, two areas of Defence involved in emergency DACC, Joint Operations Support Staff (JOSS) and Military Strategic Commitments (MSC), have reported that there is an expectation within the community that when Defence supports the emergency response to a bushfire, Defence personnel will be fighting the fires. In fact, the most common and effective use of Defence resources during a bushfire is in a support role, providing refuelling of commercial and civilian aircraft, transporting equipment and personnel, and providing base services.

2.8 Australian governments at all levels have an interest in the emergency assistance Defence can provide. Defence informed the ANAO that:

Managing the expectations of both Federal and State governments of the day is a perennial challenge. Defence involvement in responding to domestic emergencies provides both political capital that governments at all levels are keen to exploit, but also provides kudos to the ADF. Defence will always be sensitive to requests for Defence support which would otherwise be delivered by commercial entities. Defence does not welcome situations in which it appears to be usurping public commercial opportunities.

2.9 Defence has informed stakeholders that its ability to respond to requests for emergency assistance depends on its other priorities and the availability of relevant capabilities. In 2013, Defence informed the Minister for Defence that:

Defence support is limited to that which can be accomplished within the standing core qualifications, skills and resources of Defence. Defence is structured, equipped and trained for the defence of Australia, not for Australia's civil defence. The best role that Defence can perform in supporting the civil authorities ... is to respond to requests for support.³⁶

2.10 Defence has engaged with external stakeholders through a range of mechanisms to inform them about Defence's role and capability to provide emergency assistance. These mechanisms have included whole-of-government briefings, ongoing relationships between Defence personnel and state emergency management authorities, representation in the various state-level

35 N Comrie, *Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response*, 1 December 2011, p. 186, [Internet], available from <http://www.floodsreview.vic.gov.au/images/stories/documents/review_20101011_flood_warnings_and_response.pdf> [accessed 4 July 2013].

36 Department of Defence, Ministerial Representation Smith/MC13-000103, *Defence support, including use of aircraft, to fight bushfires, secure Defence bases and detention centres*, 5 March 2013.

emergency management groups, and actively participating as part of state emergency management centres during an emergency.³⁷

Emergency DACC procedures

2.11 The DACC Manual uses a task categorisation system to define Defence’s framework and procedures for the management and administration of DACC. Of the six DACC categories described in the DACC Manual, three are specific to emergency DACC and are described in Table 2.1.³⁸

Table 2.1: Emergency DACC categories

Category	Emergency characteristics	Standard process
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Localised emergency assistance where immediate action is necessary to save human life, alleviate suffering, prevent extensive loss of animal life or widespread loss or damage to property.• Examples include sandbagging, provision of temporary accommodation and transportation.• Approval Authority: Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO)/Unit Commander.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance is provided by SADFO or Unit Commander.• Manpower and equipment are drawn from within the Defence unit's own resources.• Provision of assistance is short-term (should not normally exceed 48 hours).• Recipient does not require indemnity or insurance.• No cost recovery is available.

37 State emergency management centres operate during an emergency to coordinate emergency responses. They are referred to differently in each State. For example, (ACT) Emergency Coordination Centre, (NSW) State Emergency Operations Centre, and (QLD) State Disaster Coordination Centre.

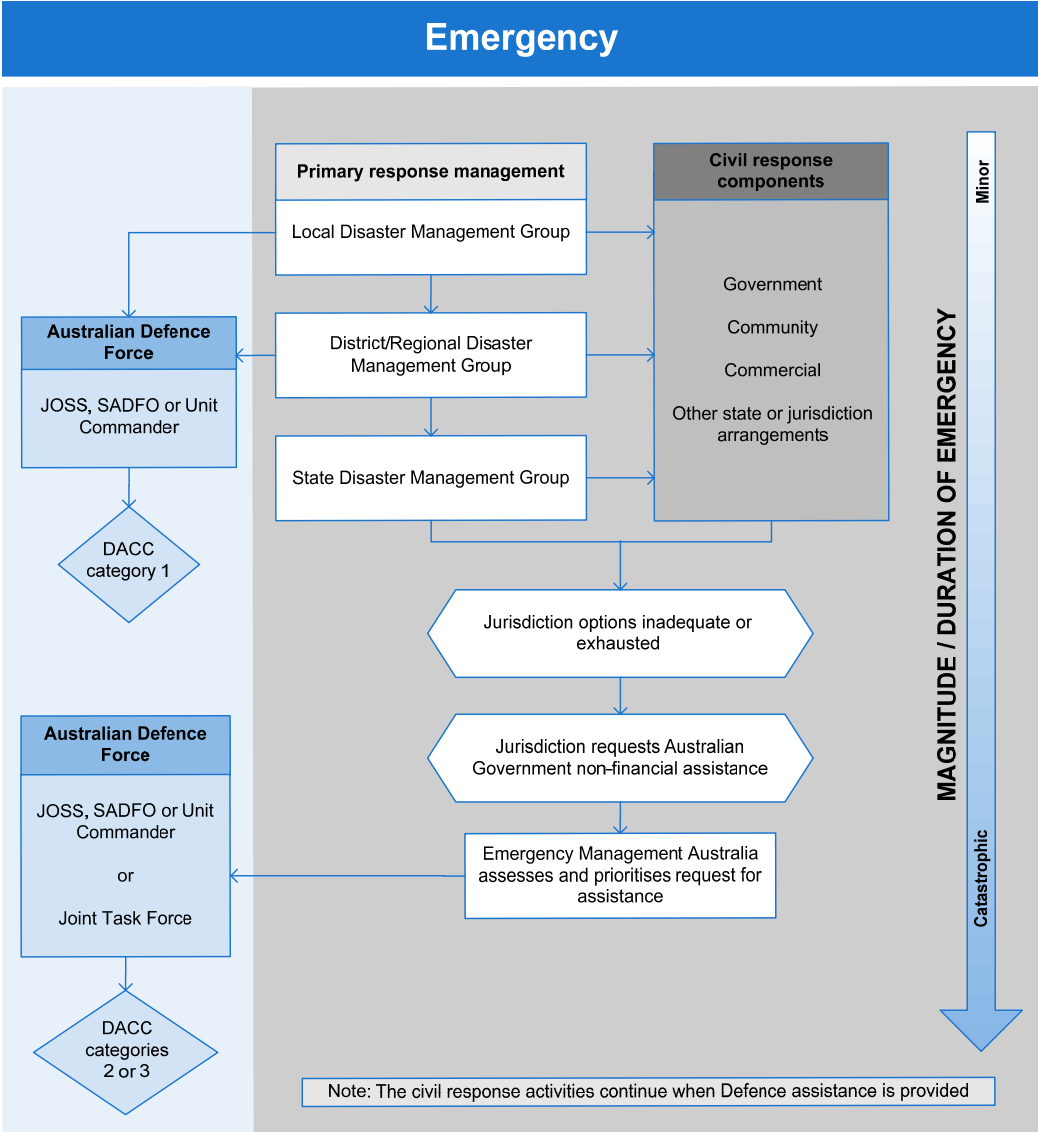
38 Categories 4, 5 and 6 relate to non-emergency DACC activities such as support for public events of significance or use of Defence facilities, and are not part of the scope of this audit.

Category	Emergency characteristics	Standard process
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant emergency assistance beyond that provided under category 1, during a more extensive or continuing disaster, directly related to saving human life, alleviating human suffering or preventing the loss of, or damage to property when state resources are inadequate. Examples include significant aerial transportation, rescue operations and medical evacuations. Approval Authority: Minister for Defence/Chief of the Defence Force (CDF). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State emergency management authorities request assistance through Emergency Management Australia (EMA). Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN) activated. Defence activities coordinated by Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC). A Joint Task Force (JTF) may be established. Recipient does not require indemnity or insurance. No cost recovery is available.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance associated with recovery from a civil emergency or disaster, not directly related to the saving of human life or property. Examples include provision of temporary bridging, road restoration and clean-up operations. Approval Authority: Minister for Defence/CDF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State emergency management authorities request assistance through EMA. COMDISPLAN activated. Defence activities coordinated by HQJOC. A JTF may be established. Indemnity and insurance requirements must be met for non-government entities requesting assistance. Cost recovery is available, although a waiver may be sought through appropriate Defence channels.

Source: ANAO summary of guidance in the *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012.

2.12 Defence informed the ANAO that the categorisation system allows for an appropriate ADF response to an escalating situation or crisis, particularly where there is a threat to life. Defence also noted that the categorisation of tasks enables decisions on the acceptance of tasks to be made at an appropriate level. Decision making is to take account of the level of resources being committed and the potential sensitivities associated with Defence undertaking work that is the responsibility of the state government, and which may be within the capability of commercial entities. The arrangements for the request and provision of emergency DACC are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Arrangements for the request and provision of emergency DACC



Source: ANAO analysis.

DACC category 1 response

2.13 The initial response to a localised emergency, or an event involving a limited time period, will usually result in a DACC category 1 task. These initial requests for Defence support are made directly by district, regional or local emergency management authorities to a Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO), Unit Commander or regional JOSS. Category 1 responses are

managed by the SADFO or Unit Commander in consultation with the local jurisdiction, often without external involvement from the wider Defence organisation or Emergency Management Australia (EMA), and without the activation of Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN).

2.14 Defence informed the ANAO that category 1 allows a SADFO or Unit Commander on-the-ground to help their community respond to an unfolding crisis, within the immediate resources available to the SADFO or Unit Commander. This support is generally short-term in nature and confined to the vicinity of the incident.

DACC category 2 and 3 response

2.15 An emergency may escalate into a more extensive, or large-scale, situation which necessitates a broader response managed by the state government. In this situation, requests for Australian Government assistance are made by state emergency management authorities through EMA, within the framework of COMDISPLAN. Requests accepted by Defence will result in a DACC category 2 or 3 response. Defence liaison officers will be posted to the relevant state emergency management centre (see footnote 37) to monitor the evolving response and liaise with the various agencies on possible requests for Defence assistance.

2.16 The Chief of Joint Operations (CJOPS) will assume overall coordination and manage the Defence response when COMDISPLAN is activated and Defence has agreed to provide a category 2 or category 3 level of support. This may involve the establishment of a Joint Task Force (JTF). A JTF is defined as 'a force composed of assigned or attached elements of two or more Services established for the purpose of carrying out a specific task or mission'.³⁹

Clarity of emergency DACC categories

2.17 The categorisation of emergency DACC tasks is not always straightforward or clear. For example, the Post Activity Report⁴⁰ for the February 2011 Victorian floods observed that:

39 Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Doctrine Publication 3.14*, 2 February 2009, p. 6, [Internet], Defence, available from <http://www.defence.gov.au/foi/docs/disclosures/021_1112_Document_ADDP_3_14_Targeting.pdf> [accessed 18 July 2013].

40 Post Activity Reports and Post Operation Reports provide details of the operation, and the lessons learned. These reports are discussed further in Chapter 4.

DACC categorisation and doctrine is not well understood or applied and there is also an uncertainty in the approval processes for Defence DACC support. There was some disjoint between DACC categories and tasking and the application of current policy; an example being ... enduring DACC 1 tasks beyond the 24 [hour] period⁴¹ and without the life/property threshold. Whilst not significant, this did create uncertainty in the mind of SES and EMA in terms of what ADF can deliver and by when.^{42,43}

2.18 To address these issues, the DACC Manual, released on 19 December 2012, contained some amendments to the DACC category definitions. Of particular note:

- category 1 was amended to include a provision for the transition to category 2 or 3 ‘upon review’ of a completed task;
- category 2 was expanded to include ‘short-term recovery activities’; and
- examples of the types of tasks associated with each category were included.

2.19 The changes made to the DACC Manual provide additional flexibility in categorising tasks. The addition of short-term recovery activities into the definition of DACC category 2 was undertaken to allow more flexibility for the ADF to help with tasks on-the-ground, where a threat is still active but not necessarily imminent.

Cost recovery

2.20 The Australian Government’s cost recovery policy is set out in the *Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines*. The Guidelines state that ‘agencies should set charges to recover all the costs of products or services where it is efficient to do so’ and that cost recovery ‘should not be applied where it is not cost effective, where it is inconsistent with Government policy objectives, or where it would unduly stifle competition or industry

41 The Instruction, which was valid in 2011, specified that category 1 tasks should not exceed 24 hours.

42 Department of Defence, Australian Army, Headquarters 4th Brigade, *Post Activity Report, Assistance to the Victorian Floods*, 2011, p. 5.

43 Case study 1 on page 50 provides another example of uncertainty in relation to the categorisation of a DACC task.

innovation.’ Further, agencies are to ‘ensure that cost recovery arrangements have clear legal authority for the imposition of charges.’⁴⁴

2.21 The Cost Recovery Guidelines state that ‘many arrangements are not cost recovery for the purposes of the policy’, and that ‘exclusions include any form of intra-agency or inter/intra-governmental charging’. The Guidelines subsequently advise that:

Where Australian Government agencies have service level agreements or other cost recovery arrangements with State/Territory Governments or with other Australian Government agencies, these guidelines should be complied with to the greatest possible extent, depending on other government requirements.⁴⁵

2.22 While emergency DACC tasks generally involve intergovernmental work, the Guidelines outline the Australian Government’s broad approach to cost recovery, which may inform cost recovery policy for DACC.

2.23 COMDISPLAN includes a section on cost recovery, which states:

The Australian Government does not normally seek financial reimbursement from States for assistance provided under COMDISPLAN. However, when Australian Government assistance is provided for tasks not directly related to the safety of life and property or that could be handled by jurisdiction resources (e.g. clean-up teams) the Australian Government may seek reimbursement from the affected jurisdiction.⁴⁶

2.24 The DACC Manual goes further and instructs Defence to recover the direct costs of category 3 tasks, or to seek approval for a cost waiver/variation from the Minister for Defence or the CDF for those tasks. This approach follows from the classification of category 3 tasks as recovery activities, which are not directly related to the saving of life or property (see Table 2.1). Costs can only be waived where there are special circumstances, including ‘tasks with significant public affairs, recruiting or training value to Defence or a task of a one-off nature involving only a minor cost.’⁴⁷ These arrangements are intended to encourage the application of existing state resources to the emergency management recovery activities for which they are responsible.

44 Department of Finance and Administration, *Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines*, July 2005, p. 2.

45 *ibid.*, pp. 10 and 11.

46 Emergency Management Australia, *Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN)*, 2013, p. 12.

47 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012, paragraph 6.25.

2.25 Based on data in JOSS annual DACC registers⁴⁸, Defence recorded a total of eight category 3 tasks between 2005–06 and 2012–13. The costs of four of the category 3 tasks were waived by the Minister for Defence. Defence could not provide evidence showing whether costs were waived or recovered for the other four category 3 tasks. Table 2.2 summarises waiver details for the eight category 3 tasks.

Table 2.2: Approval of cost waivers for category 3 tasks

JOSS region: Year/Task Number	Waiver reported in JOSS register	Waiver provided to ANAO	Waiver approved by	Amount of cost waiver
Western Australia: 2009–10/49	No	No	-	-
ACT/South NSW: 2011–12/104	No	Yes	Minister for Defence	Unknown
South QLD: 2011–12/1	No	Yes	Minister for Defence	Unknown
South QLD: 2012–13/014	No	No	-	-
South QLD: 2012–13/017	No	Yes	Minister for Defence	\$265 335
South QLD: 2012–13/018	No	No	-	-
South QLD: 2012–13/021	No	No	-	-
Vic/Tas: 2012/13-T/009	No	Yes	Minister for Defence	\$258 245

Source: ANAO analysis of Defence documents.

2.26 In the course of developing case study 3 on the 2009 Victorian bushfires (see paragraph 4.48), the ANAO noted that all of the JTF activities undertaken were classified as category 2, even though many activities were in support of recovery efforts. As a consequence, Defence did not seek to recover or waive any costs associated with the recovery assistance provided in Victoria. Further, a 2009 Defence internal audit on DACC administration found that:

48 Annual DACC registers are prepared by regional JOSS and should include details of all DACC tasks undertaken in the area. Maintenance of the registers is discussed in Chapter 4.

limited, or in most instances, no cost recovery is being pursued for activities classified within categories 3, 4 and 6 for which cost recovery is to be undertaken ... unless a waiver is approved.⁴⁹

2.27 Based on these findings, Defence does not consistently recover or waive costs for DACC category 3 tasks in accordance with the requirements of the DACC Manual. As mentioned in paragraph 2.24, the DACC Manual states that cost recovery should only be waived in 'special circumstances'. The incomplete reporting and recordkeeping of cost waivers (discussed at paragraph 2.25), and the limited approach adopted for the identification of recovery tasks and recovery of costs for these tasks (discussed at paragraph 2.26), indicate that Defence's general approach to emergency DACC cost recovery remains immature.

2.28 Defence has advised that it will include additional information in the next version of the DACC Manual to clarify its approach to cost recovery. Defence proposed that it would include the following information:

Costs associated with any form of support to Commonwealth, State/Territory or Local Government are generally not recovered unless the Government recipient agrees to pay costs prior to the support being provided. Cost recovery may not be warranted where it is not cost effective or it would be inconsistent with government policy objectives.

... If the relevant costs are associated with any form of support to Commonwealth, State/Territory or Local Government, then Defence should consult with the Government recipient prior to Defence agreeing to provide the support, on whether the Government recipient can pay net additional costs associated with the support to be provided.

2.29 These statements do not clarify the circumstances in which cost recovery is warranted and Defence personnel are obliged to pursue the recovery of costs. The ANAO suggests that, in consultation with the Government, Defence review and clarify its cost recovery policy for emergency DACC. As part of the review, Defence could also develop thresholds for the application of cost recovery to category 3 'recovery' tasks, in terms of the estimated value and type of assistance provided. Another option available to Defence is to develop memoranda of understanding with individual states which formalise the reimbursement of costs when Defence undertakes relevant

49 Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil community — Policy, Approvals, Processes — Audit Task 09/0006, Final Audit Report*, p. 7.

emergency recovery activities. For example, there is a memorandum of understanding covering aircraft refuelling in Western Australia during firefighting activities.

2.30 The following case study focuses on the categorisation of emergency DACC tasks and recovery of costs.

Case Study 1: refuelling at HMAS Albatross—ongoing category 1 task with cost recovery

2.31 As indicated in Table 2.1, category 1 tasks are usually short-term (less than 48 hours) activities which are authorised by the individual SADFO or Unit Commander, and delivered using their own resources without cost recovery. In this example, an extended category 1 task was authorised by the CDF and cost recovery was sought from the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSWRFS).

2.32 In early January 2013, south-eastern Australia faced a catastrophic fire danger. The New South Wales Government, through EMA, requested that the Naval Air Station at Nowra (HMAS Albatross) supply fuel and provide refuelling services for civilian firefighting aircraft, including those operated by the NSWRFS.⁵⁰ Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) informed the ANAO that in its original request for assistance, the NSWRFS proposed that it reimburse the fuel costs.

2.33 On 8 January 2013, Defence accepted the task request subject to full cost recovery from the New South Wales Government for the fuel provided, and availability of qualified personnel. These conditions were accepted by the State Emergency Operations Centre. The CDF then released the following Task Order (extracts):

Defence is to provide refuelling services to civilian firefighting aircraft ... as a DACC 1 activity. SADFO are authorised to continue this DACC 1 activity beyond 48 hours.

50 The reason given for this request was, 'the ability of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service to ensure the timely refueling of firefighting aircraft has been stretched to capacity'. Other resources requested at the time included accommodation for Rural Fire Service personnel.

SADFO are to record fuel provided to civilian aircraft for reporting in final DACC Post Operation Report. This information will be used to seek cost recovery for fuel used.⁵¹

2.34 While this assistance was initially due to expire on 14 January 2013, the regional JOSS office liaised with the SADFO at HMAS Albatross to check Defence's capability to continue providing support if an extension was requested. Ultimately, two extensions were approved by the SADFO at HMAS Albatross, until 23 January 2013. During this period Defence provided refuelling services to helicopters, sky cranes and fixed-wing aircraft.

DACC categorisation

2.35 The refuelling activity was classified as category 1 as it was a local emergency directly related to the saving of life and property in a New South Wales region, and it was not associated with recovery efforts.

2.36 The DACC Manual defines category 1 tasks as activities that do not normally exceed 48 hours, and are not subject to cost recovery. This task did not conform to the general category 1 definition as it exceeded the 48 hour timeframe and was subject to cost recovery action, which, according to the DACC Manual, is exclusive to category 3 tasks. While this did not impact on the effectiveness of the response, the regional JOSS office reported confusion between the SADFO at HMAS Albatross and HQJOC because the task did not fit within normal guidelines.

Cost recovery

2.37 On 10 and 14 January 2013, the Minister for Defence was incorrectly advised that 'Defence will absorb all of the costs attributed to DACC category 1 local emergency assistance' for the refuelling activity, even though the task order was clear that cost recovery would be applied (see paragraph 2.33). Defence did not provide any further advice to the Minister that the original advice was incorrect and that the costs were actually recovered. On 22 February, Defence issued an invoice to the NSWRFs for \$201 012.19 (excluding GST), which was paid on 4 March 2013.

2.38 Defence has recovered costs for aircraft refuelling services on multiple occasions in recent years. In 2009, NSWRFs helicopters were refuelled at Royal

51 Department of Defence, *Chief of the Defence Force Task Order 02-2013—Use of Defence airfields for refueling of civilian firefighting aircraft*, 8 January 2013, p. 2.

Australian Air Force Base Richmond on a cost recovery basis as two consecutive 24 hour category 1 tasks. In the same year, Royal Australian Air Force Base Pearce in Western Australia provided refuelling services on several occasions to firefighting aircraft on a cost recovery basis.

2.39 Cost recovery for refuelling non-Defence aircraft or vehicles promotes consideration by states of the most efficient approach to obtaining these resources over time. For example, a 2010 memorandum of understanding between the Commonwealth of Australia and Western Australia states that aircraft refuelling from Royal Australian Air Force supplies during firefighting activities will be provided on a cost recovery basis.⁵²

The implications of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* for emergency DACC

Responsibilities under the Act

2.40 The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) establishes a range of duties that organisations need to meet so that people are given a high-level of health and safety protection from hazards arising from work. Under the WHS Act, the person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers while they are at work, and that the health and safety of other persons are not put at risk from work carried out. The duties of the person conducting the business or undertaking include, so far as is reasonably practicable, the:

- provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to health and safety;
- provision and maintenance of safe systems of work;
- safe use, handling and storage of plant, structures and substances; and
- provision of any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.⁵³

52 Military Strategic Commitments (MSC) informed the ANAO that HMAS Albatross does not have any agreement with the New South Wales authorities.

53 *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, section 19.

2.41 The WHS Act also imposes duties on officers and workers.⁵⁴ An officer must exercise due diligence to ensure compliance with the Act. Due diligence includes taking reasonable steps to ensure the use of appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety from work carried out. Workers must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other persons while at work, and are obliged to comply or cooperate with work health and safety instructions, policies and procedures of the organisation.⁵⁵

2.42 The requirements of the WHS Act have significant implications for the conduct of many Defence operations, as well as for Defence commanders and personnel developing and applying policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Act.⁵⁶ These implications extend to emergency DACC, which is often delivered in an environment subject to uncertainty, risks and hazards. For example, emergency DACC tasks are undertaken during bushfire and flood events, and may involve the operation of complex equipment and the handling of hazardous substances.

Defence's overall compliance with the Act

2.43 At a whole-of-Defence level, Defence faces an ongoing challenge in achieving compliance with the WHS Act. An internal audit on work health and safety was finalised in November 2013. The audit report concluded that 'the requirements of the WHS legislation are yet to be met by Defence and the timeframe for achievement of compliance remains uncertain.'⁵⁷ The report also found that:

The approach to transitioning key Defence policy documents to the changed legislative requirements was focused on making minor adjustments to existing policies. This approach was not appropriate, as the fundamental shift in the

54 The WHS Act defines an officer as a person who makes, or participates in making, decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of a business or undertaking, but does not include a Minister of State. Defence has previously defined an officer as a member of the Defence Committee, which includes all Group Heads and Service Chiefs. Workers include any person carrying out work in any capacity for a person conducting a business or undertaking, such as employees and contractors.

55 *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, sections 27 and 28.

56 Under Section 12D of the WHS Act, the CDF may, by instrument in writing, declare that specified provisions of the Act do not apply, or apply subject to certain declared modifications, in relation to specific activities. This exemption has not been applied in relation to emergency DACC.

57 Department of Defence, *Work Health and Safety — Audit Task — 13-001 — Final Report*, 22 November 2013, p. 4.

new legislation towards proactive assurance could not be effectively implemented. ...

Meeting the due diligence requirements set out in the WHS Act for 'officers' ... has not been clearly communicated in key policy documents. Consequently, a governance framework consistent with the due diligence requirements of the WHS Act is not yet evident across all Groups and Services or at the Portfolio level. ...

Defence Instruction (General) PERS 19-18 ... requires conformance with the WHS Manual, however this manual is not yet compliant with the legislation.⁵⁸

2.44 During the audit, Defence informed the ANAO about its overall approach to work health and safety:

Each of the Defence Services Chiefs, in their respective capacities as Capability Managers, pay particular attention to the governance of skills development and skills quality assurance as part of their force generation, workforce raise, train and sustain obligations and their WHS obligations. The importance each places upon these obligations is based upon the realisation that the skills with which our service personnel are imbued are often required to be applied quickly, confidently and in scenarios of sometimes great duress. Combined with these specific skills, each service person is drilled in applying their respective skill sets both within a coherent team framework where the full command chain is present for direction as well as those circumstances where disaggregated forces require leaders at each level within the team to be able to make sound professional judgements relating to the safety of those within their charge, based upon the circumstances and situations they confront.

Meeting work health and safety obligations when providing emergency DACC

2.45 Chapter 5 of the DACC Manual, 'Managing Safety, Legal and Financial Risks' provides guidance on the management of risks including the following statement:

DACC support should ... be limited to that which can be accomplished within the standing core qualifications, skills and resources ... as augmented by any additional mission training and resources that can be provided within the available time frame.⁵⁹

58 Department of Defence, *Work Health and Safety — Audit Task — 13-001 — Final Report*, 22 November 2013, p. 5.

59 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012, paragraph 5.3.

2.46 This guidance aims to restrict the tasks which Defence personnel undertake during emergency DACC events to those for which they are appropriately prepared or trained, thus minimising the risk of injury and establishing a primary control to ensure compliance with the WHS Act.

2.47 By way of example, the Post Operation Report for the 2011 Cyclone Yasi response noted that Defence personnel were often operating in proximity to asbestos, and were 'requested on a number of occasions to conduct recovery operations involving the clearance of asbestos'. The requests were rejected by the local Defence commander, as available personnel were not adequately trained or prepared to conduct operations where the risk of asbestos exposure was present. However, the requests were later 're-raised at state-level' which necessitated time and effort to explain why the requests were not supported and that correctly equipped and trained HAZMAT⁶⁰ removal services should be sought through other avenues.⁶¹ In this instance appropriate action was taken to ensure that Defence personnel were not directed to undertake tasks for which they were not adequately trained or prepared.⁶²

2.48 The DACC Manual defines further requirements for the assessment and management of safety risks in relation to emergency DACC. Specifically, the Manual states:

... before a DACC task is approved, the responsible Defence authority must be satisfied that a formal risk assessment has been undertaken ... in order to assess the risks associated with accepting the DACC tasks...

Hazards, risk assessment results and risk controls are required to be included in a DACC risk register maintained by the DACC authority.⁶³

2.49 The ANAO sought to obtain examples of formal risk assessments and evidence that the assessment results and controls had been registered for specific emergency DACC tasks, as required by the DACC Manual. Defence did not provide any evidence that met the DACC Manual requirements, and informed the ANAO that 'risk management is inherent to the military planning process' and that 'unit commanders will conduct hazard and risk identification, and register at unit-level.' While the ANAO acknowledges

60 Hazardous Materials.

61 Department of Defence, *Post Operation Report — OP YASI ASSIST*, 2–14 February 2011, p. 10.

62 In 2010 Defence had entered into an enforceable undertaking on hazardous substances with Comcare in lieu of prosecution under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991*.

63 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012, paragraph 5.2.

broader military planning processes, Defence did not provide evidence of unit-level registration of hazards and risks for any of the emergency DACC tasks specified by the ANAO. The gap between the risk assessment requirements in the DACC Manual and Defence's operational practices may reflect a failure of the DACC Manual to recognise existing WHS controls.

Existing work health and safety controls

2.50 The Code of Practice *How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks* identifies situations in which risk assessments may not be necessary, including when other guidance sets out a way of controlling the hazard or risk and the relevant controls are implemented, and when well known and effective controls are in use that are suited to the circumstances.⁶⁴ This is likely to be the case for many emergency DACC tasks, as the ADF maintains a range of operational procedures and guidance material, for specific tasks and management of operational risks.

2.51 Defence informed the ANAO that in the context of emergency DACC:

... The simple reality is that many of the ADF skills and equipment, while not specifically developed or acquired for the circumstances which prevail in domestic emergencies or other domestic events, are nonetheless readily adaptable for these types of contingencies. However, over the years, the Defence Service Chiefs have taken great steps to ensure that the adaptability of the ADF workforce is not exploited to the extent that unreasonable risk is taken on in the course of rendering assistance. An example of where this has been recognised, is in wide area bush firefighting. While some elements of Defence conduct firefighting training, such as naval crews in various forms of ship borne firefighting and localised helicopter based aerial firefighting specifically around the Naval Air Station Nowra hinterland, the majority of the ADF is not trained in firefighting techniques. Consequently, the ADF does not engage in bush firefighting in rendering assistance to civilian communities. However, in years past, ADF personnel were deployed for duties of this nature despite an absence of training in this field.

Much of this change is attributable to a much greater awareness of each Service Chief to their obligations and responsibilities under the new WHS Legislation as well as the introduction of ever more detailed risk management

64 Safe Work Australia, *How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks Code of Practice*, December 2011, p. 9.

processes at the enterprise, operational and tactical level in analysing the types of activities undertaken within the ADF and the associated risks for each. These same risk management methodologies, which include standing risk profiles for activities such as ship borne helicopter operations, low altitude aerial cargo drops, or Army parachute activities, to name but a few, provide the basis from which similar risk assessments can be made when skill sets such as these are applied in non-military roles in support of the community. These processes, when combined with the training of ADF personnel to make sensible judgments regarding the conditions they observe on-the-ground or at sea or in the air, provide a foundation upon which Defence meets its overall WHS responsibilities when applying ADF effort to non-military civilian assistance missions.⁶⁵

2.52 In practice, when preparing personnel for emergency DACC tasks, Defence relies on its existing approach to skills development, as well as a broad range of procedural documentation related to specific activities undertaken by ADF personnel, and the transferability of ADF skills and procedures to DACC tasks. This contrasts with the DACC Manual requirement to conduct a 'formal risk assessment' for each DACC task. In light of differences between the existing approach and that outlined in the current version of the DACC Manual to manage work health and safety risks, there would be benefit in Defence reviewing the need for formal risk assessments for all DACC tasks and clearly documenting in the DACC Manual the measures necessary to meet its obligations under the WHS Act when providing emergency DACC. This would increase assurance on the approach adopted, reinforce individual roles and responsibilities, and provide a firmer basis for monitoring compliance with the WHS Act.

Conclusion

2.53 Defence's DACC Manual includes clear policy and guidance, which informs Defence decision makers about the circumstances and limitations applying to the acceptance of DACC requests. The DACC Manual also sets out different emergency DACC management and administrative requirements according to three 'categories' or types of tasks. The emergency DACC categories enable local Defence commanders to make on-the-ground decisions and apply base resources in response to localised emergencies (category 1);

65 Department of Defence, *ANAO Performance Audit — Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community — Issues Paper, Request for Information*, 18 December 2013.

and provide for higher level Defence decision making and coordination in response to more extensive or large-scale emergency situations (category 2 and 3).

2.54 The DACC Manual requires that cost recovery be sought for all DACC category 3 tasks (recovery tasks which are not directly related to saving life or property), or that a cost 'waiver' be approved in limited 'special circumstances'. However, Defence has not consistently recovered or waived costs for category 3 tasks in accordance with the requirements of the DACC Manual, reflecting a generally immature approach to emergency DACC cost recovery. Further, Defence has advised that it plans to amend the DACC Manual to indicate that costs are 'generally not recovered unless the government recipient agrees to pay costs'. If revised along these lines, the DACC Manual will not provide clear policy and guidance on the circumstances in which cost recovery is warranted. The ANAO suggests that, in consultation with the Government, Defence review and clarify its cost recovery policy for emergency DACC. As part of the review, Defence could also develop thresholds for the application of cost recovery to category 3 'recovery' tasks, in terms of the estimated value and type of assistance provided.

2.55 The requirements of the WHS Act have significant implications for emergency DACC, which is often delivered in an environment subject to uncertainty, risks and hazards. The DACC Manual requires that Defence only provide emergency DACC support when its personnel are appropriately prepared or trained, thus minimising the risk of injury and establishing a primary control to ensure compliance with the WHS Act. The DACC Manual also mandates documentation of formal risk assessments for DACC tasks, but this does not occur in practice. Defence informed the ANAO that in preparing personnel for emergency DACC tasks, it instead relies on existing approaches to skills development, as well as procedural documentation related to specific activities undertaken by ADF personnel, and the transferability of ADF skills and procedures to DACC tasks. In light of the variation between the DACC Manual requirement and actual practice, there would be benefit in Defence reviewing the requirement for formal risk assessments for all DACC tasks, and clearly documenting in the DACC Manual the measures it considers necessary to meet its obligations under the WHS Act when providing emergency DACC.

3. Strategies to Support Operational Effectiveness

This chapter examines Defence's emergency management structure and planning; and the relationships between Defence and emergency management authorities.

Introduction

3.1 The *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual* (DACC Manual) outlines policy and procedures for the areas of Defence involved in the administration of Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) activities. In addition to this framework, complementary operational strategies should provide clear guidance to Defence commanders and personnel planning and undertaking emergency DACC activities. A key operational strategy is to develop effective working relationships with the state emergency management authorities primarily responsible for emergency management in their jurisdiction.

3.2 In this chapter, the ANAO examines:

- emergency DACC roles and responsibilities within Defence;
- the content and currency of Defence's emergency DACC operational plans;
- Defence's approach to managing key relationships in the context of emergency DACC; and
- assistance provided by Defence as part of the emergency response to the 2013 Queensland floods, focusing on the construction of a temporary bridge in Bundaberg, and the issues of coordination, stakeholder management and prioritisation (Case Study 2: 2013 Bundaberg floods and temporary bridge construction).

Emergency DACC roles and responsibilities

3.3 The administration, coordination and delivery of emergency DACC is managed by a range of Defence office holders, Groups and Services. Table 3.1 outlines their respective roles and responsibilities, which are clearly set out in an annex to the DACC Manual. The effective delivery of emergency DACC depends on the quality of communication and coordination between the various areas of Defence involved.

Table 3.1: Emergency DACC roles and responsibilities

Defence Office Holder, Group or Service	Emergency DACC responsibility
Chief of the Defence Force (CDF)	Approve DACC tasks with a direct cost under \$100 000. Direct formation of a Joint Task Force (JTF).
Chief Joint Operations (CJOPS)	Command and control of designated emergency DACC operations.
Vice Chief of the Defence Force	Sponsor policy and procedures in the DACC Manual.
Military Strategic Commitments (MSC)	Ensure emergency DACC policy aligns with Government direction. Prepare emergency DACC strategy for CDF and Minister for Defence approval.
Service Chiefs (Navy, Army, Air Force)	Assign capabilities to CJOPS for emergency DACC.
	Ensure emergency DACC is recorded in accordance with the DACC Manual.
Head Defence Support and Reform Group	Approve emergency DACC tasks with a direct cost under \$50 000.
	Provide Group capability to CJOPS for emergency DACC.
	Oversee maintenance of accurate records for emergency DACC.
Directorate of Operations and Training Area Management (DOTAM), Defence Support and Reform Group	Command and control JOSS.
	Assign Liaison Officers to CJOPS for emergency DACC.
	Collect and maintain emergency DACC reporting data.
Manager Joint Operations Support Staff (JOSS), DOTAM	Primary state government and community point of contact. Maintain relationships with emergency management authorities. Liaise with requesting organisations and the community. Liaise within Defence to facilitate situational awareness. Provide Liaison Officers to emergency management centres during an emergency.
	Maintain accurate records of approved emergency DACC.
Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO)	Approve and coordinate category 1 support. Maintain situational awareness of DACC tasks and issues.
	Ensure task data detailed in the DACC Manual is provided to the relevant JOSS.
Base Support Manager	Liaise with JOSS and emergency management authorities. Action approved requests for the use of the Defence estate.
	Report community requests for Defence assistance to the JOSS for recording and processing.
Unit Commanders	Approve, command and control category 1 tasks. Execute or contribute to CJOPS directed emergency DACC.
	Ensure task data detailed in the DACC Manual is provided to JOSS.

Delivery
 Liaison
 Administration

Source: ANAO analysis of DACC Manual, Chapter 1, Annex B

3.4 As part of the roles and responsibilities in the DACC Manual, the Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF) sponsors DACC policy and procedures, and MSC develops emergency DACC strategy, seeking to ensure its alignment with government direction. However, the Vice Chief of the Defence Force and MSC are not involved in the command and control, or delivery, of emergency DACC activities, which is the responsibility of Chief of Joint Operations (CJOPS), the Services, Senior Australian Defence Force Officers (SADFO) and Unit Commanders. This separation of roles and responsibilities necessitates consultation and a strong feedback loop to ensure strategy, policy and procedures are informed by on-the-ground practice, capability and lessons learned.

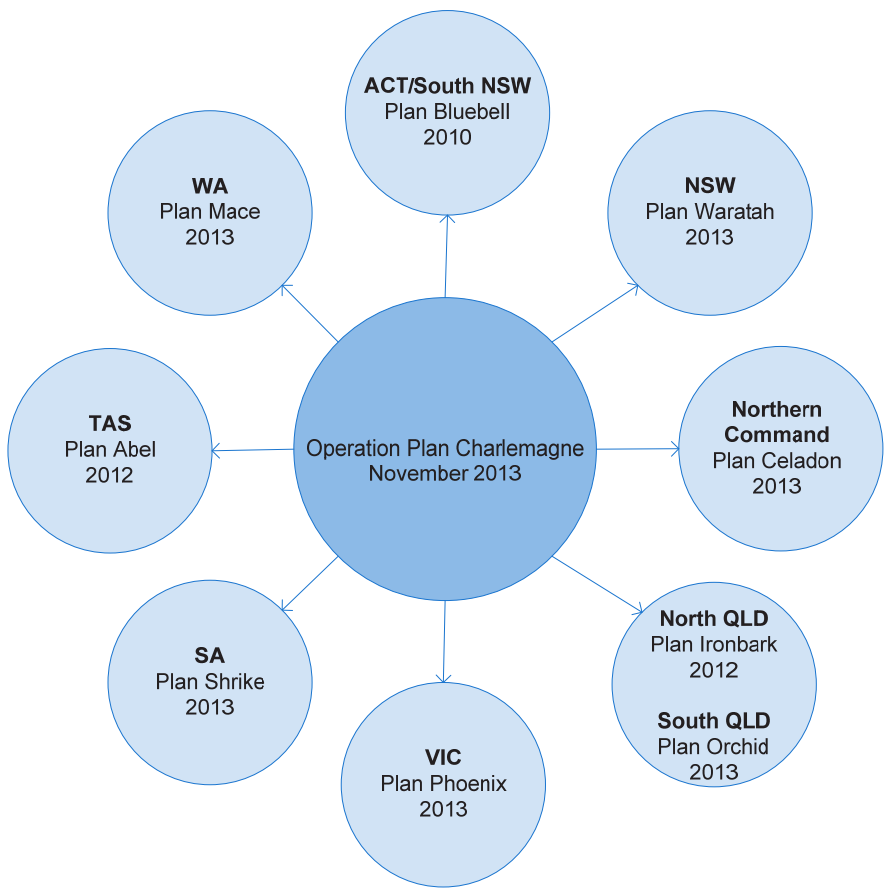
3.5 Directorate of Operations and Training Areas Management's (DOTAM) regional Joint Operations Support Staff (JOSS) develop and maintain Defence's relationships with emergency management authorities in the states. When an emergency DACC activity commences, the responsible regional JOSS may also perform a formal liaison officer role, representing CJOPS at the relevant emergency management centre and supporting situational awareness within the Defence chain of command. The regional JOSS therefore have a pivotal role in working between emergency management authorities and Defence, to understand emergency assistance needs and Defence's capacity to respond, which facilitates the effective delivery of emergency DACC.

3.6 DOTAM and regional JOSS are also responsible for the maintenance of accurate records of DACC in accordance with the DACC Manual. This relies on the provision of accurate and complete data by the areas of Defence that undertake DACC tasks. The recording and reporting of details of emergency DACC tasks are examined in Chapter 4.

Operational planning

3.7 A set of operational plans provides Defence with guidance on its emergency responses. They include an overarching national plan which provides standardised guidance, supported by regional DACC plans. Defence's emergency DACC plans are shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Defence emergency DACC plans



Source: ANAO analysis.

3.8 Defence’s CJOPS issued the overarching national plan, known as Operation Plan Charlemagne, in November 2013. This plan sets out CJOPS’ approach to enable the Australian Defence Force’s (ADF’s) provision of DACC, and includes detailed operational guidance for Defence commanders and personnel. Matters covered by Operation Plan Charlemagne include: Defence’s policy goals for emergency DACC, such as its strategic objectives and intent; restrictions or constraints on the provision of support; facts and assumptions about the operating environment; and emergency DACC execution arrangements, including phases, roles and responsibilities. The most significant feature of the plan is that it moves beyond the mainly

administrative guidance in the DACC Manual to in-depth operational considerations.

3.9 Regional plans reference the overarching national plan as a guiding document, and detail specific procedures for the delivery of emergency DACC within their respective area, taking into account the environment and likely threats. The regional plans describe the roles and responsibilities of the various organisations involved in emergency management, both within Defence and external to it, including emergency management committees and groups at the state, district and local level.

3.10 As indicated in paragraph 2.51, Defence's DACC plans are supplemented by other policies and procedural documentation relating to a range of tasks undertaken by members of the ADF. Relevant examples include mission risk profiles relevant to air support operations, standard operating procedures and risk assessment tools relevant to the operation of specific equipment such as vehicles or chainsaws.

Currency of operational plans

3.11 Emergency management plans should be up-to-date, relevant and reviewed when necessary. This promotes consistency in administrative approaches, supports operational effectiveness and can help avoid uncertainty in emergency situations.


3.12 Operation Plan (OPLAN) Charlemagne was released in November 2013, replacing the December 2012 Concept Plan (CONPLAN) Charlemagne. Operation Plan Charlemagne referenced current policy and guidance at the time of its publication. However, Concept Plan Charlemagne did not reference the then current version of Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN) and included out-of-date information on reporting requirements for emergency DACC tasks.

3.13 The ANAO reviewed the regional plans shown at Figure 3.1 to check their alignment with other relevant emergency DACC policy and procedures. While most plans had been recently reviewed, many referenced out-of-date versions of COMDISPLAN and overarching plan Charlemagne (see Table 3.2). This highlights scope for better communication within, and between, the different areas of Defence involved in emergency DACC about agreed policies, procedures and delivery approaches. The ANAO suggests that Defence centrally review the content of regional DACC plans on an annual basis. This

would promote more current plans, and the identification and dissemination of better planning practices.

Table 3.2: Currency of regional emergency DACC plans

Regional Plan	Referenced document version		
	DACC procedural document ^a	COMDISPLAN version ^b	CHARLEMAGNE version ^c
ACT Plan Bluebell December 2010	DI(G) OPS 05-1 16 March 2004	2008	Australian Operational Concept (AOC) Charlemagne November 2009
NSW Plan Waratah 5 April 2013	DACC Manual 19 December 2012	2008	AOC Charlemagne November 2009
Northern Command Plan Celadon 5 November 2013	DACC Manual 19 December 2012	2013	AOC Charlemagne November 2009
North QLD Plan Ironbark 25 September 2012	DACC Manual 19 December 2012	No reference	AOC Charlemagne November 2009
South QLD Plan Orchid 3 May 2013	DACC Manual 19 December 2012	2008	AOC Charlemagne November 2009
SA Plan Shrike 31 October 2013	DACC Manual 19 December 2012	2013	CONPLAN Charlemagne 21 December 2012
TAS Plan Abel 22 October 2012	DI(G) OPS 05-1 16 March 2004	2010	AOC Charlemagne November 2009
WA Plan Mace 12 November 2013	DACC Manual 19 December 2012	2013	CONPLAN Charlemagne 21 December 2012
VIC Plan Phoenix June 2013	DACC Manual 19 December 2012	2008	AOC Charlemagne November 2009

 Indicates out-of-date material

Source: ANAO analysis of emergency DACC regional plans.

- Notes:
- a. DI(G) OPS 05-1 (the Instruction) was replaced by the DACC Manual on 19 December 2012.
 - b. COMDISPLAN versions were issued in 2008, 2010 and 2013.
 - c. Charlemagne versions were issued on 16 November 2009 (AOC), 21 December 2012 (CONPLAN) and 5 November 2013 (OPLAN).

Relationship management

3.14 During emergency responses, Defence provides assistance in combination with other professional, volunteer and community organisations. Table 3.3 shows organisations potentially involved in administration or

provision of an emergency response. Sound professional relationships and effective liaison arrangements between participating organisations are essential for the successful management of emergencies.

Table 3.3: Organisations involved in emergency DACC responses

Local and regional government and emergency management authorities	
Local councils, community representatives, local business	
State government emergency management authorities	
Emergency management authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management New South Wales • Victorian Department of Justice • Queensland Department of Emergency Services • Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services Authority • South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission • Tasmanian Department of Police and Emergency Management • Australian Capital Territory Emergency Services Agency • Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State police, fire brigades, ambulance service
Australian Government authorities and groups	
Attorney-General's Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMA • Crisis Coordination Branch
Department of Defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HQJOC • MSC • DOTAM • JOSS • Chief Finance Officer Group • Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation (AGO)
Other agencies	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Government agencies • Rural Fire Services • Red Cross • State Emergency Services • Other community organisations

Source: ANAO analysis.

Note: This table is intended to provide an indication of the general extent of organisational complexity in emergency management when emergency DACC is delivered. It is not exhaustive.

3.15 Each regional JOSS office has appointed a Defence liaison officer to engage with emergency management authorities in the area. The ANAO noted evidence of regular contact between relevant Defence personnel and state and

regional emergency management authorities, with regional JOSS representatives participating in various state emergency management planning activities. State emergency management authorities informed the ANAO that this has resulted in greater awareness of Defence's capability and more effects-based requests from state and regional groups.⁶⁶ However, these authorities also informed the ANAO that the level of understanding of Defence's role and capability to respond is more limited among local government groups and the general public.

3.16 In a similar vein, before the start of the 'disaster season' (roughly November to March), Defence has also recorded an assessment of weather-related threats and reviewed the availability of its personnel and assets to assist with possible requests for emergency assistance. Since 2011, Defence has reported this information to the Minister for Defence. This assessment assists to inform government of Defence's ability to contribute to disaster assistance. There would be merit in formally recognising the assessment as an ongoing activity in the DACC Manual and emergency DACC regional plans.

3.17 In addition to the planning and preparatory liaison conducted by JOSS in each state, Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and JOSS coordinate the provision of Australian Government assistance during an emergency through liaison officers embedded with the state emergency services authority coordinating the response (see also paragraph 3.5). These liaison officers help communicate and coordinate requests for Defence assistance so that the affected jurisdiction is aware of the available capabilities, limitations and expected timeframes for the provision of emergency DACC. They can also provide feedback to Defence about a jurisdiction's capabilities, and the likely need for Defence assistance, which assists Defence to respond to requests for assistance.⁶⁷

3.18 Staff from several state, local and volunteer emergency management organisations in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria demonstrated

66 According to COMDISPLAN 2013, the most effective method of seeking assistance from Defence is to define or outline the outcome or result required (the effect to be achieved) rather than to seek provision of a specific capability. Defence is then able to consider the usefulness of a broader range of its available capabilities to achieve the required effect.

67 Where there is a high risk of a significant emergency event, CJOPS, through HQJOC, may commence response planning. In addition, under COMDISPLAN 2013, EMA may, if required, request the pre-positioning of Australian Government resources.

awareness of Defence's emergency DACC procedures and how to request Defence assistance. Of particular note, the staff from the state emergency management authorities demonstrated a high-level of knowledge of emergency DACC procedures.

3.19 DOTAM staff, including JOSS, also demonstrated good knowledge of relevant emergency management authority operations, and the organisations involved in emergency management in their area. These staff indicated that they maintained effective and ongoing liaison with emergency management authorities.

Joint Task Forces and situational awareness

3.20 The coordination of emergency DACC administration and delivery also depends on effective relationship management information within Defence. The ANAO considered aspects of Defence's relationship management during (Joint Task Force) JTF and other emergency DACC activities.

3.21 When the level or expected duration of emergency DACC support is anticipated to be extensive, the CDF can decide to form a JTF. As discussed at paragraph 2.16, a JTF is composed of assigned or attached elements of two or more Services, established for the purpose of carrying out a specific task or mission.

3.22 EMA, DOTAM and JOSS noted that during a JTF response, established chains of reporting can be disrupted or replaced. This can result in a lack of situational awareness or understanding of the emergency response.⁶⁸ For example, Post Operation Reports for the Defence response to the 2013 Queensland floods noted that when the JTF was established, there were instances when Emergency Management Queensland liaised directly with the JTF liaison officer, instead of the established liaison officers from EMA or JOSS. This caused confusion as to who was the primary point of contact for assistance requests and resulted in a lack of situational awareness in both EMA and the South Queensland JOSS office, whose established liaison officers were not always aware of communication between state emergency management authorities and the JTF. When a JTF is in operation, care needs to be exercised to maintain established communication and coordination arrangements.

68 The DACC Manual specifies that HQJOC will coordinate activity with EMA in consultation with the regional JOSS manager, SADFO, Unit Commander, Service Headquarters/Groups, MSC and if appointed, the Commander JTF or the DACC Commander.

3.23 Defence informed the ANAO that it intends to document liaison officer roles and responsibilities during JTF operations in the next version of the DACC Manual, which is scheduled for release in mid-2014.

3.24 The DACC Manual requires that situation reports be provided to HQJOC, MSC, Service Headquarters and the relevant JOSS manager during all DACC tasks, including those undertaken by JTFs. For category 1 tasks, these reports are to be provided as required or requested. For category 2 and 3 tasks, the reports are to be provided every 24 hours or as stipulated by either HQJOC or MSC. These reports are intended to support awareness of the emergency and oversight of the work being undertaken. The DACC Manual states that MSC will use the category 2 and 3 situation reports to provide advice to the CDF and Minister for Defence as required. Defence provided evidence of situation reports for several specific emergency DACC tasks. The ANAO found the reports to be detailed and informative. They included frequent updates of weather conditions and predictions, significant incidents, major tasks planned or completed, resources used, personnel allocated and relevant contact details of key personnel.

3.25 Case study 2 provides an overview of the support provided by a JTF as part of the 2013 Queensland flood response. The case study focuses on the provision of a temporary fixed modular bridge in Bundaberg as a category 3 task, and the issues of coordination, stakeholder management, prioritisation and cost recovery which can arise in the emergency DACC context.

Case Study 2: 2013 Bundaberg floods and temporary bridge construction

3.26 Tropical Cyclone Oswald reached the coast of Queensland on 21 January 2013 and caused heavy flooding along the east coast from Rockhampton to the New South Wales border. On 27 January 2013, the Queensland Government requested Australian Government assistance in responding to the flooding created by the cyclone. On 28 January 2013, the CDF established JTF 637⁶⁹, codenamed Operation QUEENSLAND FLOOD ASSIST II, to command and execute Defence's emergency response. Manned primarily by Brisbane's 7th Brigade, JTF 637's mission was to:

69 Prior to the establishment of JTF 637, elements of 16 Aviation Brigade had been deployed to assist in evacuation activities in Bundaberg, Queensland.

Support disaster relief efforts in SE QLD and N NSW from [8am 28 January 2013] until task complete [in order to] assist the local government and community as required.⁷⁰

3.27 During the operational peak, JTF 637 comprised 363 Defence personnel from command, emergency support, aviation and combat engineer sections. Support provided by JTF 637 included:

- supply of water, food, medical supplies, generators, portable toilets and cooking equipment to remote flood-affected areas;
- two Royal Australian Air Force fuel tankers and personnel to refuel aircraft supporting the flood relief effort in Bundaberg (3520 litres of fuel were provided);
- four Blackhawk helicopters to provide evacuation assistance, damage assessment and support for recovery efforts;
- four Kiowa helicopters to supply food in isolated rural locations and undertake reconnaissance missions to assess road conditions;
- Royal Australian Air Force C-130J, KA350 and C-17A aircraft to transport emergency stores and equipment, and undertake aero medical evacuations;
- engineering equipment to support road clearance tasks and rubbish removal;
- engineering inspection of levees, weirs and roads;
- engineering support to assist Bundaberg council with electrical and plumbing tasks; and
- engineering material and support to construct a temporary bridge.

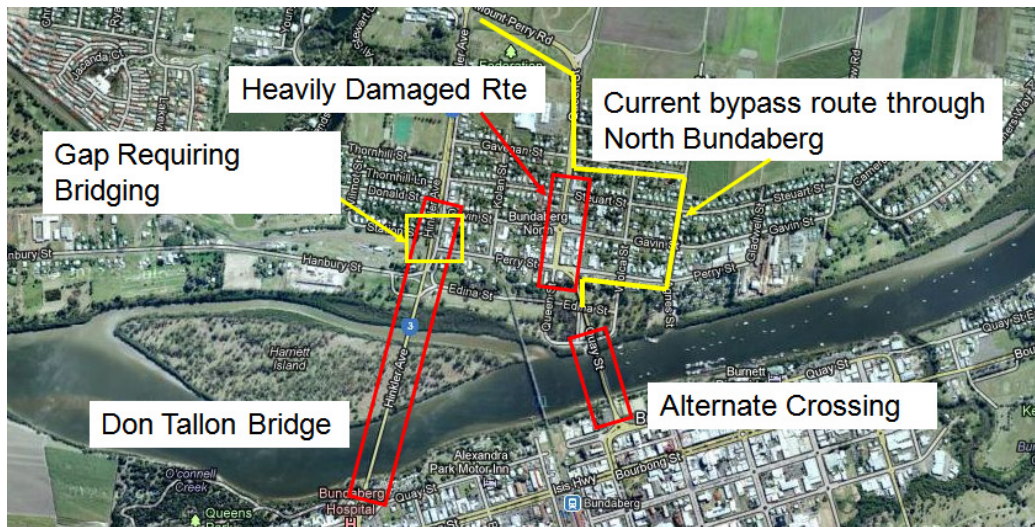
Temporary bridge repair in Bundaberg

3.28 One of the major assistance tasks provided by Defence in Operation QUEENSLAND FLOOD ASSIST II was the engineering material and support for the temporary repair of the Don Tallon Bridge in Bundaberg. The bridge was severely damaged by flooding, which washed away the bridge abutment wall, leaving a nine metre gap in the road. The bridge forms part of

70 Department of Defence, *JTF 637 — QUEENSLAND FLOOD ASSIST II Post Operation Report*, 2 April 2013, p. 4.

one of the roads that connect North and South Bundaberg (see Figure 3.2 below), and was described as a ‘vital route for community and heavy vehicle movement’ in a Defence briefing to the Minister.

Figure 3.2: Defence operational schematic for the Bundaberg bridges



Source: Department of Defence.

3.29 On 30 and 31 January 2013, Emergency Management Queensland made two official requests for Defence assistance in: assessing the Don Tallon bridge; and constructing a temporary bridge, pending permanent repair work. Army engineers determined that a fixed modular bridge would be suitable for the task, and construction began on 6 February 2013, with the bridge open to the public on 7 February 2013.

Figure 3.3: Construction of the fixed modular bridge by 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment



Source: Australian Army, Operation QUEENSLAND FLOOD ASSIST II, [Internet], Defence, available from <<http://www.army.gov.au/Our-work/Community-engagement/Disaster-relief-at-home/Operation-QUEENSLAND-FLOOD-ASSIST-II>> [accessed 5 July 2013].

3.30 The fixed modular bridge consisted of a large temporary steel girder that spanned 21 meters over the gap, which allowed light vehicles, such as cars and four wheel drives, to safely use the bridge.⁷¹ In total, 53 full-time Army personnel were involved in erecting the temporary bridge. In addition, the actual materials for the fixed modular bridge were transported 1020 kilometres at a cost of \$34 135.

3.31 The bridge was deconstructed six days later, on 13 February, to allow permanent repair work by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads. This work was completed and the bridge was reopened to the public on 14 February 2013.⁷²

71 News Mail, 8 February 2013, *Northbound Lane on Tallon Bridge opened to light traffic* [Internet], available from <<http://www.news-mail.com.au/news/northbound-lane-tallon-bridge-opened-light-traffic/1747361/>> [accessed 29 August 2013].

72 News Mail, 29 July 2013, *Tallon Bridge works finish early* [Internet], available from <<http://www.news-mail.com.au/news/tallon-bridge-works-finish-early/1961945/>> [accessed 29 August 2013].

3.32 Defence estimated the cost (excluding GST) of the task in its cost summary sheet as follows:

- Army personnel: \$110 394;
- transport and miscellaneous cost: \$77 129; and
- total: \$187 523.

3.33 Defence reported in a Ministerial submission that the final cost to install and dismantle the temporary bridge was \$265 335.

3.34 The activity was classified as DACC category 3, which, according to the DACC Manual, is subject to cost recovery. As previously discussed in paragraph 2.24, the DACC Manual states that waivers should only be sought where there are 'special circumstances'. However, Defence's cost waiver submission drafted on 7 February 2013 did not explain why Defence pursued a waiver, instead of seeking to recover costs from the Queensland Government. The cost waiver was approved by the Minister for Defence on 12 February. Defence informed the ANAO that the costs were waived because the bridge construction was considered a 'Government directed task'.⁷³

Managing stakeholder expectations

3.35 In two situation reports dated 30 January 2013, the Commander of the JTF highlighted challenges relating to stakeholder expectations. The issues raised related to state government requests for Defence to undertake a diverse and at times 'vague' range of tasks, and the need to advise the state government that 'resources have been committed to structured tasks that are consistent with DACC [policy]'. Among the large number of tasks requested by local authorities and the state government was the request to provide temporary repairs to the Don Tallon bridge in Bundaberg, which senior state government representatives were 'particularly keen' for Defence to undertake.

3.36 Defence informed the ANAO that:

Queensland Government authorities were originally advised that Defence was not best placed to support this request. While Defence had the capability to provide this support, the temporary repair of the Don Tallon Bridge could be undertaken by civil authorities in Queensland and any solution provided by

73 'Special circumstances' may include tasks with significant public affairs, recruiting or training value to Defence, or a task of a one-off nature involving only a minor cost.' Defence, *DACC Manual*, 19 December 2012, paragraph 6.25.

Defence would be very short-term and could delay a more permanent solution. Further, a second bridge between North and South Bundaberg was open and able to take traffic in close proximity (less than 700 metres) to the Don Tallon Bridge.

3.37 Defence further informed the ANAO that following a discussion between the then Minister for Defence and the CDF on 2 February 2013, the CDF approved Defence support to build the temporary bridge. The decision to provide Defence assistance highlighted the challenges inherent in prioritising the use of scarce resources in an emergency context and managing stakeholder expectations.

Conclusion

3.38 A set of operational plans provides Defence with guidance on its emergency responses. They include an overarching national plan (Charlemagne), which provides standardised guidance, supported by regional DACC plans. The most significant feature of these plans is that they move beyond the mainly administrative guidance in the DACC Manual to operational considerations, such as execution arrangements and phases, and the roles and responsibilities of various emergency management organisations across Australia. While most of these plans had recently been updated, many still contained references to out-of-date material, such as old versions of COMDISPLAN and Defence's overarching national plan (Charlemagne). This highlights scope for better communication within, and between, the different areas of Defence involved in emergency DACC about agreed policies, procedures and delivery approaches. The ANAO suggests that Defence centrally review the content of regional DACC plans on an annual basis. This would promote more current plans, and the identification and dissemination of better planning practices.

3.39 Each regional Joint Operations Support Staff (JOSS) office has appointed Defence liaison officers to engage with emergency management authorities in the area. The ANAO noted evidence of regular contact between relevant Defence personnel and state and regional emergency management authorities, with regional JOSS representatives participating in various state emergency management planning activities. State emergency management authorities informed the ANAO that this resulted in greater awareness of Defence's capability and more effects-based requests for Defence assistance from state and regional groups.

3.40 In addition to the planning and preparatory liaison conducted by JOSS in each state, JOSS coordinate the provision of Defence assistance during an emergency, through liaison officers embedded with the state emergency services authority coordinating the response. These liaison officers help communicate and coordinate requests for Defence assistance so that the affected jurisdiction is aware of the available capabilities, limitations and expected timeframes for the provision of emergency DACC. They can also provide feedback to Defence about a jurisdiction's capabilities, and the likely need for Defence assistance, which assists Defence to prepare for and respond to requests for assistance. Nevertheless, EMA, DOTAM and JOSS noted that during an emergency DACC operation led by a JTF, established chains of reporting can be disrupted or replaced. This can result in a lack of situational awareness or understanding of the emergency response. Defence informed the ANAO that it intends to document liaison officer roles and responsibilities during JTF operations in the next version of the DACC Manual, which is scheduled for release in mid-2014.

4. Recording and Reporting Emergency Assistance

This chapter examines Defence's records of emergency assistance tasks, external reporting on emergency assistance, and operational evaluation and lessons learned.

Introduction

4.1 Defence has established mandatory reporting for emergency DACC tasks intended to capture details of the work undertaken, including resources utilised and costs. Accurate records of emergency DACC tasks provide a basis for reporting on the overall resource impact, cost and effectiveness of the support provided by Defence.

4.2 As indicated in Table 3.1, a range of Defence office holders, Groups and Services have responsibilities in the areas of DACC policy, strategy, procedures and delivery. The identification and dissemination of lessons learned from emergency DACC activities provides for a strong feedback loop so that on-the-ground practice and experience informs the development of DACC policy, strategy and procedures.

4.3 In this chapter, the ANAO examines:

- the emergency DACC task information recorded by Defence;
- emergency DACC tasks for the period 2009–10 to 2012–13;
- the funding and cost of emergency DACC activities;
- reporting on DACC in the Defence Annual Report;
- operational evaluation and lessons learned; and
- a case study on assistance provided by Defence as part of the 2009 Victorian bushfires known as 'Black Saturday', focusing on reporting and the identification of lessons learned.

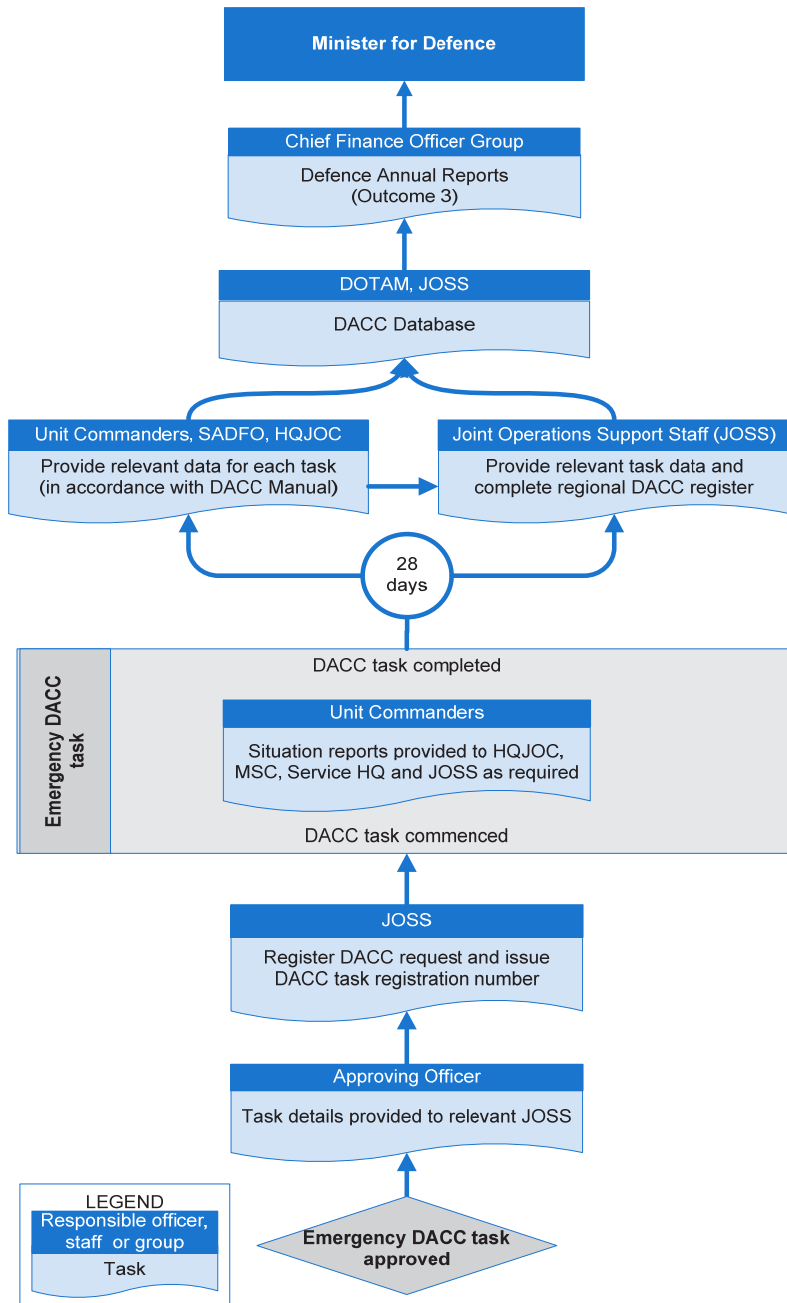
Recording details of emergency DACC

4.4 *Defence Instructions (General) OPS 05–1: Defence Assistance to the Civil Community — policy and procedures* (the Instruction) set out mandatory reporting requirements for emergency DACC tasks, which applied until 19 December 2012. Under the Instruction, a Post Task Report was required to be completed and supplied to the relevant Defence Groups and Emergency

Management Australia (EMA) within two weeks after the completion of the task. The Instruction identified 17 information fields that a Post Task Report must contain. These ranged from the task's registration number and delivery dates, to more detailed information including a task description, the Defence unit(s) and number of personnel involved, and resources utilised. The information captured in Post Task Reports was intended to be used by Defence to quantify total resources utilised and expenditure made in providing emergency DACC.

4.5 The December 2012 *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual* (DACC Manual) introduced revised reporting arrangements, with Post Task Reports no longer mandatory. The DACC Manual specifies 21 information fields to be completed for each DACC task, which are similar to those previously required by the Instruction. Under the Manual, this information is to be mainly supplied by the Defence unit(s) undertaking the task, the unit(s) supplying assets and Joint Operational Support Staff (JOSS). Unit Commanders are to ensure that their input is provided to the relevant JOSS within 28 days of the end of the task. Drawing on this information, DOTAM is responsible for maintaining a database containing DACC task information through its regional JOSS offices.

4.6 Figure 4.1 shows Defence's current procedures for reporting details of emergency DACC tasks, from the initial registration of a task through to reporting on emergency DACC in Defence's Annual Reports.

Figure 4.1: Emergency DACC reporting structure

Source: ANAO summary of data in the DACC Manual, Chapter 7.

Note: Although DOTAM is required to maintain DACC data for annual and periodic reporting, in practice DOTAM has not been asked to provide DACC data for inclusion in the Defence Annual Report. This is discussed further at paragraph 4.33.

Completeness of emergency DACC task information

4.7 Post Task Reports were not available for the majority of emergency DACC tasks undertaken by Defence between July 2009 and December 2012.⁷⁴ Defence did provide the ANAO with a number of reports completed by the commanding officer following an emergency DACC operation led by a Joint Task Force (JTF).⁷⁵ However, very few of these reports contained any details of stores utilised or other costs, and none detailed the full range of data required by the Instruction or the DACC Manual.

4.8 Each JOSS office maintains an annual DACC register for the region, which is to contain the information fields required by the DACC Manual (and previously the Instruction) for each DACC task. The ANAO requested the annual DACC registers compiled by the regional JOSS offices for the period 2005–06 to 2012–13. Most of the DACC registers prior to 2009–10 were incomplete, or the regional JOSS office no longer held the register. JOSS did provide emergency DACC registers from 2009–10 to 2012–13.

4.9 The ANAO's analysis of the available annual DACC registers showed that the task information contained in them varied between states; did not meet the requirements of the Instruction or the DACC Manual; and was often incomplete.⁷⁶ Key information frequently missing from the registers included the duration of assistance, the Defence unit(s) and number of personnel involved, and the costs associated with the task.

4.10 During discussions with the ANAO, Defence personnel noted that many DACC category 1 tasks authorised by the relevant Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO) or Unit Commander⁷⁷ may not be reported to JOSS, contrary to the extant DACC guidance. Further, JOSS informed the ANAO that when a JTF is established for large-scale emergency DACC operations, JOSS must pursue required task information through Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) and sometimes does not receive complete information related to all tasks undertaken. Based on these findings,

74 As discussed in paragraph 4.4, Post Task Reports were mandatory until 19 December 2012.

75 These reports were often referred to as Post Operation Reports. They provided a detailed account of the operation, including mission statements, command and control structures and key events.

76 DOTAM reached a similar conclusion following an internal review in mid-2012 of the accuracy of the DACC registers.

77 The Instruction and the extant DACC Manual allow authorisation of category 1 tasks by a SADFO or Unit Commander.

there has been a systemic level of under recording of emergency DACC tasks, contrary to Defence requirements.

4.11 The 2004 Instruction assigned responsibility for maintenance of a DACC activity database to the then Corporate Services and Infrastructure Group. The 2012 DACC Manual has retained the database requirement and assigned the responsibility for its maintenance to DOTAM through its regional JOSS offices. However, in May 2013, DOTAM informed the ANAO that this database did not exist and had not been funded.⁷⁸ Since that time a database has been developed by DOTAM and it was activated on 16 December 2013, in the course of the audit. It will take some time to determine whether the implementation of the database results in improved DACC recordkeeping.

4.12 The shortcomings in Defence's DACC recordkeeping mean that it has incomplete records of the tasks undertaken, resources allocated and expenditure incurred on emergency DACC activity between 2005–06 and 2012–13. This detracts from Defence's ability to accurately recall the details of work undertaken should this be necessary for the purposes of advising government, accounting to the Parliament, evaluating activity or subsequent scrutiny of Defence activities.⁷⁹ It also does not support Defence's planning for future emergency assistance.

Causes of incomplete emergency DACC task information

4.13 Staff from several JOSS offices informed the ANAO that they did not routinely receive DACC task information as mandated by the DACC Manual, and that they often used other avenues to acquire the information from responsible areas of Defence. For example, JOSS may receive information regarding the completion of emergency DACC tasks through JOSS liaison officers, follow-up phone calls, emails and other means. While the DACC Manual assigns clear responsibilities for the provision of DACC task information, DOTAM noted that it does not have the authority to insist that responsible areas of Defence submit the required information.

4.14 Emergency DACC has largely been focused on response, with a lesser priority given to records management and reporting. Discussions with JOSS

78 On 1 July 2013, DOTAM implemented an interim spreadsheet to collect the required data sets.

79 Scrutiny can include legal proceedings, work health and safety and compensation claims, audits and public inquiries.

indicate that the underlying reasons for the low rate of accurate recording include:

- that the main focus of Defence units is to complete the task. Follow-up of administrative tasks after the event is sometimes overtaken by other activities or is not pursued;
- that JOSS is not part of the Service chain of command, and reporting outside this regime is not seen as a priority;
- limited knowledge, in some areas of Defence, of the requirements of the DACC Manual;
- past inadequacies in records management in JOSS offices; and
- loss of records during the migration from individual recordkeeping systems to Defence's mandated electronic filing system.

4.15 For many years Defence has had detailed reporting requirements for DACC tasks, and for many years these requirements have not been met on a consistent basis. This raises questions for Defence about the balance between the benefits for DACC planning and public accountability of capturing more comprehensive information, and the risks in not capturing certain task information. Against this background, Defence should review reporting requirements to ensure they represent the minimum information necessary to: identify the nature and cost of emergency DACC tasks, undertake any cost recovery, discharge accountability obligations, maintain reasonable records for future use and learn from emergency DACC activities. Defence should also take steps to strengthen the priority afforded by Defence commanders and personnel to meeting those reporting requirements.

4.16 Defence's development of a national DACC database is a positive development (see paragraph 4.11). However, if Defence does not also take steps to strengthen the priority afforded by Defence commanders and personnel to meeting the reporting requirements that are determined to be appropriate, there will continue to be shortcomings in Defence records relating to emergency DACC.

Recommendation No.1

4.17 To promote the efficient and effective use of Australian Government resources in the administration of emergency assistance to the civil community, the ANAO recommends that Defence:

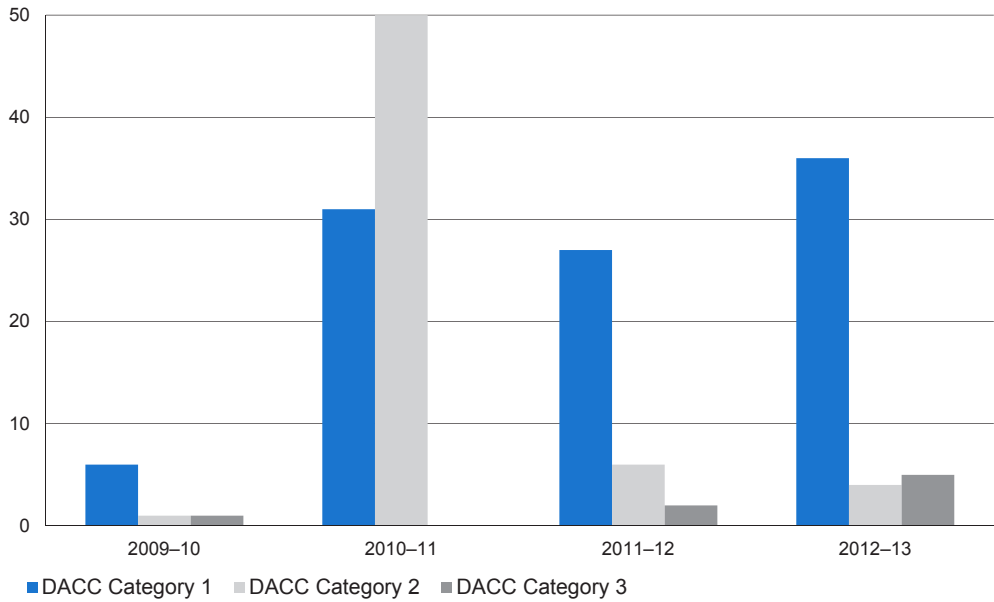
- review the minimum information necessary to be reported for each emergency DACC task to discharge accountability obligations, identify costs, undertake cost recovery where appropriate, maintain records for future use and learn from emergency DACC activities; and
- take steps to strengthen the priority afforded by Defence units to meeting these reporting requirements.

Defence response: *Agreed*

Emergency DACC tasks from 2009–10 to 2012–13

4.18 Using the available data, the ANAO analysed the number and type of emergency DACC tasks recorded from 2009–10 to 2012–13 (Figure 4.2). In total, 169 tasks were recorded during the period. Category 1 tasks were the most common type of support, accounting for 59 per cent of the recorded tasks. Category 2 tasks peak when a JTF is established (for example, for Cyclone Yasi and the Queensland Flood during 2010–11), and accounted for 36 per cent of recorded tasks. Category 3 tasks are undertaken less often, accounting for eight of 169 (five per cent) emergency DACC tasks recorded.

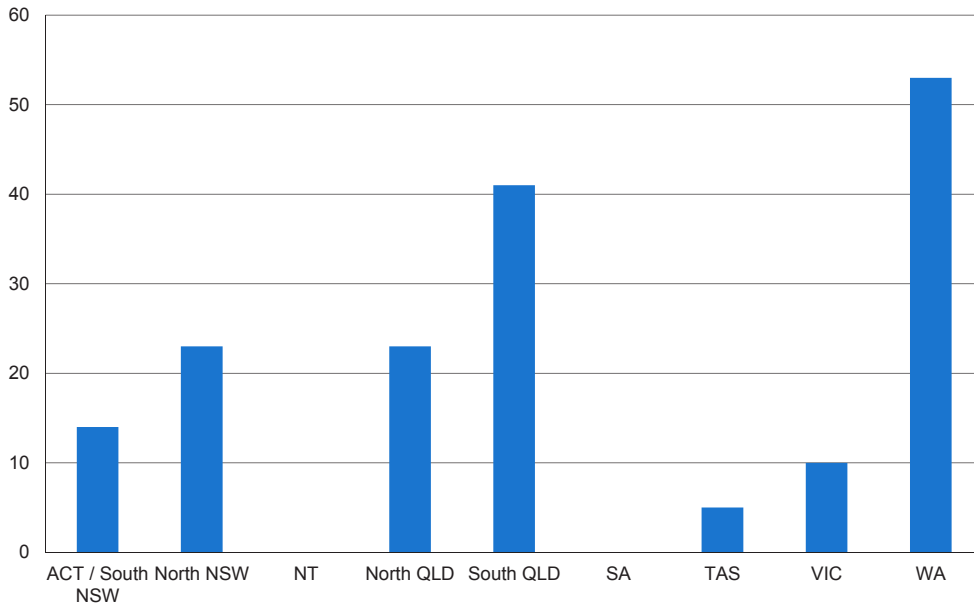
Figure 4.2: Number of emergency DACC tasks recorded by JOSS, by category, 2009–10 to 2012–13



Source: ANAO analysis of JOSS annual registers.

4.19 Figure 4.3 shows that the majority of reported emergency DACC tasks have been undertaken in Queensland, followed by Western Australia and New South Wales (including the Australian Capital Territory). The high number of emergency DACC tasks undertaken in Queensland is an indication of the severity of natural disasters that have occurred in that state since 2009–10. Queensland is also home to a large contingent of Defence personnel and equipment located at 12 bases, and Defence can provide considerable support when state resources become stretched.

Figure 4.3: Number of emergency DACC tasks recorded by JOSS, by region, 2009–10 to 2012–13



Source: ANAO analysis of JOSS annual registers.

Note: Records of emergency DACC tasks in Northern Territory and South Australia were not available (see paragraph 4.21).

4.20 Figure 4.3 shows that the Western Australia JOSS office recorded the highest number of emergency DACC tasks during the period (per region). From 2009–10 to 2012–13, Western Australia accounted for 51 per cent of the category 1 tasks recorded across Australia. One possible explanation for this statistic is that the administrative processes associated with emergency DACC tasks were more stringently adhered to in Western Australia, resulting in the full range of DACC tasks being recorded, whereas other state records were not so rigorously maintained.

4.21 No emergency DACC tasks were recorded for the Northern Territory and South Australia from 2009–10 to 2012–13. In the Northern Territory and the northern part of Western Australia, the responsibility for emergency DACC lies with Headquarters Northern Command, rather than JOSS. In September 2013, Northern Command informed the ANAO that it did not maintain an annual DACC register, and that it was unable to confirm the number of emergency DACC tasks it has undertaken. Other documentation provided by

Northern Command indicates that emergency DACC was provided on at least two occasions⁸⁰, and EMA reported three instances of requests for assistance sent to Northern Command. As discussed in paragraph 4.12, the absence of accurate records means that Defence does not have a clear understanding of the nature of emergency DACC provided or the cost of that assistance.

Funding and cost of emergency DACC

4.22 Portfolio Budget Statements inform the Parliament and the public about the resources available and the planned performance of each Australian Government agency against specified outcomes. The Defence Portfolio Budget Statement for 2013–14 includes the provision of DACC as part of its third outcome, which is ‘support to the Australian community and civilian authorities as requested by government.’ Outcome 3 includes search and rescue, emergency disaster response and recovery, surveillance, security, reconstruction and development.

4.23 While the total appropriation for Defence’s Outcome 3 is \$16.933 million for 2013–14⁸¹, this amount does not relate to emergency DACC. DACC activities are generally funded from within Defence’s overall budget allocation:

There is no additional funding or a central fund for DACC tasks and activities. All costs incurred in support of all DACC tasks are to be funded along Service and Group lines.⁸²

4.24 An exception to the guidance provided in the DACC Manual was outlined at the June 2013 Senate Estimates hearings by the Secretary of the Department of Defence:

As a general rule, if [Defence] provide assistance in Australia in [an] operation or in the region in an operation, and it is under \$10 million,

80 Northern Command provided two documents regarding past DACC assistance. These were a Post Activity Report for category 1 support to a bushfire in Howard Springs (September 2010), and a Ministerial Submission detailing the upgrade of DACC activity from category 1 to category 2 during Tropical Cyclone Carlos (2011). It was not possible to count the number of DACC tasks undertaken on these occasions, and therefore a number has not been included in Figure 4.3.

81 Department of Defence, *Portfolio Budget Statements 2013-14, Agency Resources and Planned Performance*, [Internet] p. 89, Defence, available from: <http://www.defence.gov.au/budget/13-14/pbs/2013-2014_Defence_PBS_03_Defence.pdf>, [accessed 11 October 2013].

82 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Manual*, 2012, paragraph 6.3.

[Defence] absorb it. If it is over \$10 million, it is funded by the government on a no win, no loss basis.^{83, 84}

4.25 The Instruction and the DACC Manual have mandated reporting of the full cost, net additional costs and cost recovery aspects of each DACC event, according to specified definitions of these terms. Responsibility for recording cost details rests with Defence commanders and personnel undertaking tasks and supplying assets. However, as discussed at paragraphs 4.7 to 4.12, Defence does not maintain complete records of DACC tasks, including cost details.⁸⁵

4.26 Defence has described the impact of DACC on its budget as marginal because it largely involves the provision of personnel, which does not constitute additional expenditure.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Defence does not have an understanding of the overall costs of its DACC activities because it has not recorded costs for many DACC tasks. Defence should also keep in view the opportunity cost associated with the time spent by Defence commanders and personnel preparing for and undertaking emergency DACC tasks. Large emergency DACC operations can involve hundreds of Defence personnel over a period of weeks.

4.27 The history of Defence not accurately recording the cost of DACC dates back many years. In 1999–2000 the ANAO completed a performance audit which examined Defence's costing of its emergency responses. The audit found that:

Defence does not collect and quantify the cost of all DACC assistance as operational commanders do not always provide the required reports to HQAST [Headquarters Australian Theatre] on task completion ...

The inadequacies of the DACC information base have implications for the management of this function including the support for effective policy generation as well as the ability of Defence to charge for services provided, and to plan and manage the allocation of resources to DACC tasks. The ANAO considers that Defence should enforce ... required DACC reports and monitor the costs associated with the provision of DACC. Enhanced management

83 Commonwealth, *Senate Estimates*, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, 4 June 2013, D Richardson, Secretary for Defence, p. 48.

84 For example, in 2007–08, Defence received \$12.3 million in supplementary funding for Operation OUTREACH, which was conducted in support of the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

85 The 2012 DOTAM internal review of DACC records found that none of the regional JOSS offices was accurately reporting details of costs and cost recovery for emergency DACC tasks.

86 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Review of the Defence Annual Report 2011–12*, June 2013, p. 26.

information should facilitate decision making relating to DACC, in particular in relation to the cost effectiveness of DACC provision and in determining the impact of DACC activities on operations and training.⁸⁷

4.28 The 1999–2000 ANAO performance audit recommended that to improve the cost effectiveness of emergency DACC, Defence should regularly monitor the costs associated with the provision of DACC and enforce the requirement for operational commanders to provide DACC reports to Headquarters Australian Theatre.⁸⁸ Defence agreed with the recommendation, noting that service officers were aware of the requirements regarding costing, and would reinforce it through Headquarters Australian Theatre.⁸⁹

4.29 Further, in 2009 Defence conducted an internal audit of DACC policy, approvals and processes, which listed one of the deficiencies as ‘the absence of a single corporate database for the identification and reporting of the actual cost to Defence of each DACC activity.’⁹⁰ The lack of a single corporate database has restrained Defence’s ability to maintain accurate records of emergency DACC. In July 2013, DOTAM issued a spreadsheet to regional JOSS offices to assist with the collection of standardised DACC data, and in December 2013 activated a DACC database, which is intended to enable more accurate DACC reporting (see also paragraph 4.11).

4.30 In summary, some 14 years after shortcomings in Defence’s quantification of DACC costs were identified by the ANAO, there remains limited cost data. While the amounts involved are low relative to the overall Defence budget, in a resource constrained environment, a better understanding of the cost drivers and complete costs of emergency DACC over time would assist Defence to pursue efficiencies in delivery approaches.

4.31 As noted in the ANAO’s 2012–13 performance audit, *Defence’s Implementation of Audit Recommendations*, by not implementing agreed audit recommendations, ‘Defence is forgoing opportunities to enhance its performance’.⁹¹

87 ANAO Audit Report No.41, 1999–2000, *Commonwealth Emergency Management Arrangements*, pp. 59–60.

88 *ibid.*, p. 60.

89 Headquarters Australian Theatre is now known as Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC).

90 Department of Defence, *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community — Policy, Approvals, processes — Audit Task 09/006, Final Audit Report*, p. 6.

91 ANAO Audit Report No. 25, 2012–13, *Defence’s Implementation of Audit Recommendations*, p. 15.

Reporting on emergency DACC in Defence's Annual Report

4.32 The Defence Annual Report is the primary reporting mechanism to inform the Parliament and the public about DACC activities. In the past, the Instruction required information contained in the DACC database to be provided to Command Headquarters for review. Command Headquarters was then responsible for completing an annual register of DACC tasks, and forwarding it to Headquarters Australian Theatre for inclusion in the Annual Report. However, as discussed in paragraph 4.11, a DACC database was not implemented until December 2013.

4.33 The 2012 DACC Manual states that DOTAM is to be prepared to provide the data on all DACC activities undertaken by Defence to inform the Annual Report and other reports as required. Notwithstanding this requirement, DOTAM informed the ANAO that it had not been asked to provide information on DACC activity for such purposes. Instead, the Chief Finance Officer Group is responsible for the compilation of Outcome 3 information for inclusion in the Annual Report.

4.34 In Annual Reports prior to 2008–09, Defence recorded the number of DACC tasks internally reported⁹², but not the costs of providing the assistance. In 2008–09 Defence introduced a new structure for its Annual Report, which included reporting against Outcomes in accordance with government policy. The 2007–08 Annual Report stated that the new structure would 'increase the Government's and the community's visibility of what Defence delivers'.⁹³ As previously discussed in paragraph 4.22, Defence's Outcome 3 includes search and rescue, emergency disaster response and recovery, surveillance, security, reconstruction and development.

4.35 Commencing in 2008–09, Defence has reported the total cost of Outcome 3 in its Annual Report, including amounts which are not related to emergency DACC such as border control. The Annual Report shows the budget estimate, the revised budget estimate and the reported cost of Outcome 3. The Chief Finance Officer Group calculates costs for inclusion in the Annual

92 As discussed in paragraphs 4.9, 4.10 and 4.21, shortcomings in internal reporting mean that Defence cannot confirm the actual number of emergency DACC tasks undertaken.

93 Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2007–08*, Appendix 13, p. 259, [Internet], Defence, available from <http://www.defence.gov.au/budget/07-08/dar/2007-2008_Defence_DAR_13_v1_full.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2013].

Report drawing on the cost of DACC operations led by a JTF. Costs are attributed to these operations using specific codes called fund numbers and internal orders.⁹⁴ Table 4.1 shows Annual Report entries relating to DACC tasks and costs since 2006–07. The Defence Annual Report also includes some qualitative information on significant emergency DACC tasks. For example, the 2012–13 Annual Report described the assistance provided by Defence in January 2013 to communities threatened by bushfires in Tasmania and New South Wales.

Table 4.1: DACC and Outcome 3 information in the Defence Annual Report

Reporting Period	Description	Number of DACC tasks	Net cost ^b
2006–07	DACC category 1	11	Not reported
	DACC category 2	2	
2007–08	DACC category 1	27	Not reported
	DACC category 2	2	
2008–09	• Operations Resolute, Solania, Outreach ^a , Vic Fire Assist	Not reported	\$14 557 000
2009–10	• Operation Resolute	Not reported	\$10 620 000
2010–11	• Operations Resolute, Queensland Flood Assist, Yasi Assist • Assistance to Vic floods	Not recorded	\$10 762 000
2011–12	• Flood relief in NSW, QLD and Vic • Support to CHOGM • Support to US President visit	Not recorded	\$18 461 000
2012–13	• Operation Resolute • Flood/fire relief in NSW, QLD, WA and Vic	Not recorded	\$15 182 000

Source: ANAO analysis of DACC related entries in Defence Annual Reports.

Note a: Operations Resolute and Solania, and support to CHOGM and the US President visit, are included in Outcome 3, but are not DACC activities.

Note b: Net cost does not include the cost of personnel.

94 When a Joint Task Force is established, a specific fund number is allocated to which all costs attributable to the tasks performed by that particular task force are billed, providing a record of funds expended.

4.36 The approach adopted by Defence in its reporting of details of DACC tasks in the Annual Report means that:

- emergency DACC costs are not separately reported. The reported costs include all DACC tasks allocated specific codes, and also include border control and security operations; and
- DACC costs included in Outcome 3 do not include emergency DACC conducted without allocation of a specific fund number.

4.37 Defence could better inform the Parliament and the public about emergency DACC by capturing more complete data on work undertaken and drawing on this information for the Annual Report. Future Defence Annual Reports could usefully contain additional detail on the number and cost of Defence activity for each of the main forms of assistance provided under Outcome 3, including emergency disaster response and recovery.

Operational evaluation and lessons learned

4.38 Defence has long recognised the benefits of evaluating and learning from its operations:

Operations provide special opportunities to gather knowledge because they are not constrained, structured or scripted in the manner of most collective training activities. [Evaluation] of operations is planned as part of the normal operational planning process, and should commence as early as possible in the life of an operation. Operations may need to be [supported] by a rapid learning loop that identifies, analyses and resolves issues rapidly.⁹⁵

4.39 ANAO Audit Report No.1, 2011–12, *The Australian Defence Force's Mechanisms for Learning from Operational Activities*, focused on the systems and processes the ADF uses for identifying and acting on lessons, and for evaluating performance. The audit concluded that:

Defence has structures in place to learn from operations and exercises, and in recent years there have been attempts to improve these as Defence has recognised their importance. However, the application of the ADF's learning framework is patchy and fragmented. ...

The key ADF-wide information system provided in 1999 to support lessons and evaluations [the Australian Defence Force Activity and Analysis Database

95 Australian Defence Headquarters, *Australian Defence Doctrine Publication 00.4—Operational Evaluation*, August 2007, p. 9.

System] (ADFAADS) has fallen into disuse. Army was not a heavy user of ADFAADS and has developed its own lessons systems. ADFAADS has been effectively supplanted by fragmented, Service-specific arrangements and there is now no up-to-date central repository for lessons and operational evaluations that can be used by staff that plan operations. At the time of this audit, HQJOC was considering how it might best coordinate existing Service-level lessons agencies in order to assist in the planning and evaluation of operations and exercises.⁹⁶

4.40 The ANAO Audit Report included five recommendations to consolidate and improve the focus of the ADF's mechanisms for lessons and operational evaluation, including through the application of consistent methods of analysing and sharing lessons (Recommendation No.1)⁹⁷, and the use of knowledge management repositories (Recommendation No.2).⁹⁸

4.41 In the course of this audit, the ANAO sought additional information from Defence on implementation of the recommendations made in the 2011–12 audit into operational evaluation and lessons learned. While Defence informed the ANAO about a range of activities to strengthen the approach it uses to evaluate and learn from operations, this remains work in progress. Of particular note, the initial roll-out of a Defence-wide system for managing lessons learned is planned for July 2014, and Defence evaluation doctrine and procedures are being revised.

Emergency DACC activity review and lessons learned

4.42 The emergent nature of emergency DACC tasks means that it is difficult to develop and apply objective measures of performance. Nevertheless, identifying lessons from emergency DACC activities, including the efficiency and effectiveness of the approaches adopted, remains important. The DACC Manual states that Defence Groups and ADF Services may require individual units providing DACC support to prepare a Post Activity Report at their discretion and for their own use, and that HQJOC may seek a Post

96 ANAO Audit Report No.1 2011–12, *The Australian Defence Force's Mechanisms for Learning from Operational Activities*, p. 19.

97 Recommendation No.1 was that to improve their ability to learn from operations and exercises, the Services put in place consistent methods for identifying, analysing, implementing and validating lessons, and ensure that relevant lessons can be effectively shared across Services.

98 Recommendation No.2 was that to support an ADF-wide approach to learning from operations and exercises, the ADF establish a clear role and scope for future operational knowledge management repositories, and develop a clear plan for capturing and migrating relevant existing information.

Activity Report⁹⁹ for DACC operations. Post Activity Reports (or equivalent) were generally completed following the larger emergency DACC responses. These reports included details of the operation, lessons learned and recommendations.¹⁰⁰

4.43 In addition, HQJOC has run a Lessons Board following the end of the annual disaster season. The Lessons Board considers analysis of key themes arising from Post Activity Reports, and recommends improvements to DACC procedures and activities. The ANAO considers that the Lessons Board process is a potentially valuable mechanism to drive improvement in delivery of emergency DACC, provided there is appropriate follow-up on the matters identified by the Board.

4.44 While lessons recorded in Post Activity Reports are to be reviewed annually at the Lessons Board held by HQJOC, Defence currently has no information system to track and monitor the outcomes. Further, DACC activity lessons previously recorded in ADFAADS are not readily accessible.

4.45 The 2012 Concept Plan Charlemagne directed that lessons learned from emergency DACC operations be recorded in ADFAADS.¹⁰¹ However, this was not possible as ADFAADS was not in use at that time. Operation Plan Charlemagne (2013) has removed the reference to ADFAADS and now directs that lessons learned from emergency DACC operations be documented in the Post Operation Report. HQJOC informed the ANAO that:

During 2013, HQJOC has managed the lessons process for a number of operations and activities, including the ADF's support to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, DACC and Defence humanitarian and disaster relief operations. The manual systems are producing sound results with evidence of lessons learnt in early operations being implemented into current planning. Care is being taken to ensure that information being generated and captured will be transferable to the Joint Lessons Learned Information System [the new information system planned for implementation in July 2014].

4.46 Collection and analysis of lessons learned, and the subsequent identification of improvement actions, have been long-term issues for Defence.

99 Reports reviewed by the ANAO were given a variety of titles, including Post Activity Report, Post Operation Report, Headquarters Joint Operations Lessons Board, After Action Report, and DACC Summative Report.

100 The ANAO reviewed Post Activity Reports for the 2009 Victorian bushfires, Cyclone Yasi in 2011, the Victorian Floods in 2011, the New South Wales bushfires in 2013 and Cyclone Oswald in 2013.

101 Department of Defence, *Concept Plan Charlemagne*, December 2012, p. 15.

The implementation of a Defence-wide management system for lessons learned is an important step in creating an integrated approach to the management of lessons learned from Defence operations. As part of this approach, incorporation of findings from the DACC Lessons Board will potentially lead to improvements in the delivery and administration of emergency DACC.

4.47 The following case study provides a brief account of assistance provided by Defence personnel as part of the 2009 Victorian bushfires known as 'Black Saturday'. It focuses on the extensive level of support provided, reporting and the identification of lessons learned.

Case Study 3: the 2009 Victorian bushfires-'Black Saturday'

4.48 The 2009 Victorian bushfires, known as 'Black Saturday', were one of Australia's worst natural disasters. On 6 February 2009, the State of Victoria was described as 'tinder-dry' after prolonged heatwaves over the summer period created dangerous fire conditions.¹⁰² On 7 February the Black Saturday fires broke out, ultimately claiming the lives of 173 people, injuring a further 822 people, affecting over 78 communities, destroying 2029 houses and burning over 400 000 hectares.

4.49 The State Government of Victoria led a major response to the Black Saturday bushfires, which included firefighters from many government agencies (including from interstate and overseas), police, ambulance and other emergency service workers, volunteers and industry brigades. On 8 February 2009, Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN) was activated by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to provide Australian Government assistance to the State of Victoria.

Defence assistance

4.50 Defence support to the Black Saturday disaster response was codenamed Operation VIC FIRE ASSIST. On 8 February 2009, Defence formed JTF 662 to coordinate Defence's response to requests for assistance. This was the first time a JTF had been established by an Army Reserve Brigade to

102 J Brumby quoted from M Moncrief, 'Worst day in history': *Brumby warns of extreme temperature forecast* [Internet], *The Age*, 6 February 2009, available from <<http://www.theage.com.au/national/worst-day-in-history-brumby-warns-of-fire-danger-20090206-7zf1.html>> [accessed June 2013].

manage an emergency DACC response. The JTF was predominately comprised of 4th Brigade Army Reserve personnel.

4.51 There were approximately 450 Defence personnel operating in nine locations across Victoria within 48 hours of the establishment of the JTF.¹⁰³ Defence's emergency assistance reached a peak operational strength of approximately 800 Defence personnel per day¹⁰⁴, and over 1250 Defence personnel provided assistance over the seven weeks of the operation.

4.52 The Victorian State Emergency Response Centre prepared 20 requests for Australian Government physical assistance. The task requests were assessed by EMA and forwarded to Defence for actioning.¹⁰⁵ Defence personnel provided extensive engineering, logistics and medical support to affected communities.¹⁰⁶ The main activities undertaken by Defence under JTF 662 are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Operational statistics for Joint Task Force 662

Type of activity	Extent of activity
Creation of containment lines	75 kilometres
Buried animal carcasses	150
Buried fish	20 tonnes
Route clearance	35 kilometres
Rapid Impact Assessments	Over 300 sites
Searching facilities/houses	817 locations
Psychological contacts with fire affected civilians	Over 200 civilians
Psychological counselling for fire affected civilians	Over 30 civilians
Psychological assessments of Defence personnel	Over 400 personnel assessed
Reconnaissance and provision of imagery	Two AP-3C Orion aircraft

103 J Fetchik, "Left and right of arc:" the legal position of the Australian Defence Force in domestic disaster response using the 2009 "Black Saturday" Victorian bushfires as a case study', *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, Volume 27, No. 2, 2012, p. 34.

104 Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2008–09*, Volume 1, 2009, p. 137.

105 One request was removed before any action was taken and three requests were subsequently cancelled.

106 The tasks were all undertaken by specialised task groups within JTF 662.

Type of activity	Extent of activity
Water points established	Three
Equipment moved	260 tonnes
Other activities and resources	
Establishment of JTF headquarters, deployment of Defence liaison officers, emergency accommodation, and setting up emergency relief facilities that provided health services, water distribution and sanitation operations.	

Source: JTF 662 Post Operation Report: Operation VIC FIRES ASSIST, pp. 11–15 and 43.

4.53 Figure 4.4 shows an aerial photograph taken from a Defence AP-3C Orion aircraft over one of the fire fronts assessing the speed and size of the fire.

Figure 4.4: AP-3C Orion providing aerial imagery of Black Saturday



Source: Department of Defence, *Operation Vic Fire Assist* [Internet], February 2009, available from <<http://www.defence.gov.au/opex/global/opvicfire/images/20090218a/index.htm>>, [accessed August 2013].

4.54 Defence assistance during the Black Saturday bushfire emergency response was characterised by the rapid mobilisation of a large number of JTF personnel, the provision of extensive engineering, logistics and medical support, and the utilisation of specialist military equipment.

4.55 On 11 February 2009, the then Prime Minister praised the work of Defence in its response to Black Saturday:

I would like to thank the Defence Force personnel and Reserve personnel for their exceptional efforts. Defence teams are providing direct assistance to those who have lost everything in the fires.¹⁰⁷

Reporting and lessons learned

4.56 Notwithstanding the scale of the Defence response and the associated costs, Defence was unable to provide the ANAO with any Post Task Reports¹⁰⁸ for Operation VIC FIRE ASSIST. DACC task information was also not recorded in the Victorian JOSS annual DACC register for 2008–09. JTF 662 was allocated a costing allocation code to which costs were attributed. A total of \$1 027 066 was attributed against this code in 2008–09.

4.57 A Post Operation Report for Operation VIC FIRE ASSIST was finalised on 14 May 2009.¹⁰⁹ The report provided an extensive account and analysis of Defence's activities. However, it did not meet the task information requirements of the Instruction in full.

4.58 The Post Operation Report outlined 29 recommendations in the main body of the report, with further recommendations contained throughout the annexes of the report. The recommendations covered a broad range of issues including command and control, civil-military cooperation and training. The report stated that 'Key lessons have been recorded in ADFAADS'. However, as discussed previously at paragraph 4.44, ADFAADS is no longer in use, and as a consequence the ANAO was not able to access information on progress in implementing the 29 recommendations. The cessation of the use of ADFAADS has resulted in a potential accountability gap emerging in respect to the monitoring and implementation of recommendations and lessons learned from emergency DACC activities.

4.59 As discussed in paragraph 4.41, Defence is currently implementing a new system for managing lessons learned, which is expected to commence a phased roll-out in July 2014. It will be important to ensure that the transfer of

107 Commonwealth of Australia, *House of Representatives Parliamentary Debates*, 11 February 2009, The Hon. K Rudd MP, Prime Minister, p. 944.

108 Post Task Reports were a mandatory requirement of the Instruction, discussed at paragraph 4.4, which was current at the time of Operation VIC FIRE ASSIST.

109 The Post Operation Report differed from a Post Task Report and did not include all of the task information required by the Instruction.

lessons learned and recommendations data from Post Operation Reports to the new system occurs, and that improvement actions are identified and pursued.

Conclusion

4.60 The Instruction of 2004 and the DACC Manual of 2012 imposed extensive reporting requirements for individual DACC tasks. With few exceptions, these requirements have not been met by responsible areas of Defence on a consistent basis. This raises questions for Defence about the balance between the benefits for DACC planning and public accountability of capturing more comprehensive information, and the risks in not capturing certain task information. Against this background, Defence should review reporting requirements to ensure they represent the minimum information necessary to: identify the nature and cost of emergency DACC tasks, undertake any cost recovery, discharge accountability obligations, maintain reasonable records for future use and learn from emergency DACC activities. Defence should also take steps to strengthen the priority afforded by Defence commanders and personnel to meeting the reporting requirements that are determined to be appropriate.

4.61 Defence has described the impact of DACC on its budget as marginal because it largely involves the provision of personnel, which does not constitute additional expenditure. Nevertheless, Defence does not have an understanding of the overall costs of its DACC activities, because it has not captured accurate costing data for DACC activities undertaken. In a resource constrained environment, a better understanding of the cost drivers and complete costs of emergency DACC over time would assist Defence to pursue efficiencies in delivery approaches. Defence should also keep in view the opportunity cost associated with the time spent by Defence commanders and personnel preparing for and undertaking emergency DACC tasks.

4.62 Defence does not have a set of objective performance measures to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency DACC, reflecting the emergent nature of activities. Defence has completed Post Activity Reports for major emergency DACC operations, and HQJOC has run a Lessons Board following the end of the annual disaster season, which considers analysis of key themes arising from the Post Activity Reports, and recommends improvements to DACC procedures and activities. However, the elements of Defence's emergency DACC evaluation and feedback loop are not currently supported by an information system to record and manage key lessons and

recommendations arising from DACC activities. Collection and analysis of lessons learned, and the subsequent identification of improvement actions, have been long-term issues for Defence. The implementation of a Defence-wide management system for lessons learned, due for initial implementation in mid-2014, is an important step in creating an integrated approach to the management of lessons learned from Defence operations.



Ian McPhee

Auditor-General

Canberra ACT

16 April 2014

Appendices

Appendix 1: Agency Response



Australian Government
Department of Defence

GED
27 MAR 2014
2.00

Mr Dennis Richardson
Secretary

General David Hurley, AC, DSC
Chief of the Defence Force

SEC/OUT/2014/100
CDF/OUT/2014/277

Mr Ian McPhee PSM
Auditor-General for Australia
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Ian
Dear Mr McPhee

**PROPOSED ANAO AUDIT REPORT: EMERGENCY DEFENCE ASSISTANCE TO
THE CIVIL COMMUNITY**

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on the subject report, provided to Defence on 4 March 2014. The Defence response is contained at Annexes A to C of this letter.

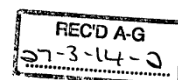
Defence welcomes ANAO's comments regarding Defence's prominent role in responding to natural disasters in Australia, in particular the value of the support provided to the Australian community by Defence during times of crisis and that overall Defence's emergency DACC procedures are generally effective. Defence acknowledges the findings contained in the audit report and welcomes the Recommendation made by ANAO which, once implemented, will allow Defence to more accurately demonstrate its support to the Australian community at times of domestic crisis.

Please find attached in Annex A, clarification of information requested by the ANAO.

For Defence's response to the report, please refer to Annex B. We understand that this response will be included in the audit report.

Annex C outlines our agency response to the audit recommendations.

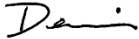
PO Box 7900 Canberra BC ACT 2610 Telephone 02 626 52851 - Facsimile 02 6265 2375



Defending Australia and its National Interests

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Geoffrey Brown, Chief Audit Executive.

Yours sincerely



Dennis Richardson
Secretary



D.J. HURLEY, AC, DSC
General
Chief of the Defence Force

4 MAR 2014

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