



# Emergency Management Framework

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NORTH WESTERN  
MELBOURNE

An Australian Government Initiative

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### Image credits

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## Acknowledgements

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We also recognise, respect and affirm the central role played in our work by people with lived experience, their families and/or carers.



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# Introduction

Emergencies that require a health response are part of our scope as a primary health network. These include global pandemics, bushfires, flooding, incidents with very local impacts, and everything in between.

## Climate change

The evidence is clear, and well understood, that climate change is a major driver of more severe weather events, which inevitably generate disasters and emergencies. The World Health Organisation notes significant impacts on the social determinants of health and on health outcomes, particularly for those who are already at risk, such as children, the elderly and people with chronic health conditions. The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in August 2021, assesses the most up-to-date physical understanding of our planet's climate system and climate change. It includes multiple references to negative health impacts, particularly caused by deteriorating air quality as a result of polluting emissions, and the effects of extreme heat as global temperatures rise.

## Long-term impacts

Health emergencies require resources to be diverted, creating pressure points and immediate impacts on service and system access. These and subsequent responses may continue for extended periods as the community experiences, for example, an increase in acute illness and presentations, mental health presentations, family violence, substance use, and chronic health conditions where diagnosis and treatment may be affected or delayed.

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) plays a key role in delivering and supporting a health response to emergencies in its region. This plan sets out the drivers of this role, and our approach to preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies that may have an impact on the health of our community, whatever their scale and impact.

# Purpose of the Emergency Management Framework

The Emergency Management Framework (EMF) outlines the role of NWMPHN in emergencies that have a health impact on communities in our region.

The framework responds to the role the NWMPHN plays as a funded entity of the Commonwealth, and its partnership role in working with the Victorian Department of Health to activate a local emergency response.



# About NWMPHN

## Population and growth

NWMPHN encompasses the central, north and western regions of Melbourne. The area is large and diverse and rapidly growing. More than 1.9 million people live in the NWMPHN catchment. The population is expected to grow by almost 28 per cent by 2030 and account for almost one third of Victoria's population by 2036. Several areas experience greater than average levels of disadvantage.

## Services and support

The region covers 13 local government areas and contains some of the largest health and hospital services in the state. These include:

- 561 general practice clinics
- 12 public hospitals
- 15 private overnight hospitals
- 22 mental health inpatient service providers
- 1327 mental health outpatient service providers
- 375 pharmacies
- 1437 allied health services
- 11 community health centres
- 126 residential aged care homes

## Priority populations

Within the region are several population groups at risk of poor health outcomes - including exacerbated negative health and wellbeing impacts in the event of an emergency. They may benefit from more tailored emergency responses, including care delivered in appropriate cultural and social contexts. At-risk populations include:

- people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ)
- people experiencing homelessness
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- refugees and asylum-seekers, and
- people who have been incarcerated.

## Vision

NNWMPHN's vision of healthy people and a healthy community is delivered through five strategic objectives:

- health system innovation and reform
- person-centred health care
- high performing primary health care services
- population health needs and outcomes
- organisational excellence and sustainability.





## Emergencies

Emergencies that could bring health impacts in the NWMPHN region include:

- extreme heat, thunderstorms, hail, cyclones
- fire, flood, drought
- thunderstorm asthma
- major transport accidents
- epidemics and pandemics
- hazardous material accidents such as chemical spills
- chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN)
- service disruption to utilities lasting for more than 12 hours
- acts of war or terrorism.

Local emergencies to which NWMPHN has responded in recent years include:




- Maribyrnong river flood (2022)
- COVID-19 pandemic (2021-2023)
- a fire in an apartment block in Southbank (2017)
- a fire at a tyre storage depot in Broadmeadows (2016)
- the thunderstorm asthma event of 2016.

In each of these, NWMPHN partnered with general practice, pharmacy, community health, community mental health providers and hospitals.

# NWMPHN's roles

We aim to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of health services for our community – particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes,. We also aim to improve the coordination of care to ensure the right care in the right place, at the right time.

## NWMPHNs core roles

 Capacity builder	 Commissioner	 Coordinator
We enable primary health care providers to be ready for and respond to emergencies that have a health impact on our communities.	We commission a range of services to meet local needs, monitor emergency planning and co-design innovative responses to maintain continuity of care for people across the region.	We create linkages between primary, acute, specialist services, State and Federal Governments and community groups to optimise network capability and ensure continuity of patient care before, during and after emergencies.



# Context

The scope of NWMPHN's emergency management is framed by federal and state emergency management plans and directives.

NWMPHN has a partnership role in emergency management planning for our region.

NWMPHN is a funded entity of the Australian Government and also funded by the Victorian Government to respond to emergencies. We work with both levels of government to activate a local response.

There are two streams within the emergency management system that frame NWMPHN's Emergency Management Framework and its scope.



## Federal and state framing for NWMPHN emergency management

NWMPHN's role in emergency management is informed by Australian and Victorian governments.

### Australian Government

PHNs are funded for three main roles.

- Commissioning health services.
- Building primary health care capacity.
- Collaborating to better integrate health care services and the system.

### Victorian Government

NWMPHN's role is to:

- ✓ Participate in local, regional and health service emergency planning.
- ✓ Facilitate access to primary health care providers in emergencies.
- ✓ Establish and facilitate communications with the primary health care sector.
- ✓ Share information with Department of Health on local factors affecting primary health care.

This is governed by cascading levels of emergency plans:

- State Emergency Response Plan (SERP).  
The highest level of plan with a whole-of-government approach
  - State Health Emergency Response Plan (SERP sub-plan).  
Management of health emergencies to effectively coordinate the health system during emergencies.
- Service Plan between Department of Health and NWMPHN.

## NWMPHN internal and external roles in emergency management

The Emergency Management Framework is one in a suite of guidance documents that set out roles and responsibilities for responding to emergencies that affect NWMPHN business operations. These are outlined below.

### Internal role

NWMPHN mitigates, prepares for, responds to and recovers from emergencies affecting, or likely to affect, its operations.

### Business response



#### Documents

- **Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework** identifies potential threats, their impacts, and provides guidance for an effective operational response.
- **Critical Incident Management Plan** describes the way NWMPHN will respond to disasters and critical incidents, both onsite and offsite, that involve employees and others.
- **Business Continuity Plan** establishes procedures to ensure emergency response, resumption, restoration, and recovery of NWMPHN's operations and business activities during a business interruption event. This ensures transparent oversight at all governance levels of the organisation.
- **Workplace Health and Safety Policy** outlines workplace health and safety for staff and visitors, NWMPHN staff responsibilities and incident reporting requirements, onsite and offsite.
- **737 Bourke Street Emergency Plan** outlines emergency planning, response and procedures for all tenants of 737 Bourke Street Docklands, the offices of NWMPHN.

### External role

NWMPHN mitigates, prepares for, responds to and supports recovery from emergencies as part of a significant and coordinated effort to ensure the health system and minimises adverse health consequences for communities.

### Health response



#### Document

- **Emergency Management Framework** supports the role of NWMPHN to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies that have a health impact on communities in our region.
- **External Emergency Response Plan** including the emergency response protocol (in development) outlines the steps required to support the implementation of activities for NWMPHN to mitigate, plan, prepare and respond, and support recovery from emergencies and other local incidents.





# Emergency Management Plan: model and implementation

NWMPHN uses the phases of the Victorian State Emergency Management Framework to guide its emergency response. These are:

Phase	Definition
<b>Mitigation</b>	The elimination or reduction of the incidence or severity of emergencies and the minimisation of their effect.
<b>Planning</b>	The identification of potential emergencies and ensuring plans are in place to respond directly or facilitate a response.
<b>Preparedness</b>	The activities to prepare for and reduce the effects of emergencies by having plans, capability and capacity for response and recovery.
<b>Response</b>	The action taken during and in the first period after an emergency to reduce the effects and consequences on people, their livelihoods, wellbeing and property; on the environment; and to meet basic human needs.
<b>Recovery</b>	Assisting of persons and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.

The main sectors and providers that would be supported and coordinated in an emergency situation are:

Audience	Primary care providers	Commissioned providers	Residential aged care	Community members
<b>Definition</b>	Primary care providers in the region including general practice, allied health, pharmacy, nursing, mental health and AOD providers.	Providers that are commissioned by NWMPHN to deliver a service.	Residents, staff and those who provide care to residential aged care homes in the region.	People who live, work or study in the NWMPHN region.

## **Internal staff**

While an internal emergency will be managed through the Business Continuity Plan, if there is an external emergency or other local incident that will impact staff who live in the region the BCP team will be involved to assist in coordinating the response.

**Our different business units and team functions reinforce our approach to emergency management.**

## **Primary Health Care Improvement and Support**

The primary care sector in our region is a key partner with NWMPHN in mitigating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies as part of our role in building workforce capacity in the sector and supporting provision of integrated, effective health care to the community. HealthPathways Melbourne, resources and education for primary care are important components of this.

## **Commissioners**

NWMPHN ensures that providers of services commissioned by us mitigate, are prepared for, responsive to, and supportive of recovery when there is an emergency. This is central to due diligence and effective contract management.

## **Communications**

NWMPHN is uniquely positioned to develop and deliver clear, timely and accessible communication for the community, including priority populations and health care professionals before, during and after an emergency. The role of communications in informing and supporting NWMPHN staff is also critical.

## **Business systems and information technology**

NWMPHN has a Critical Incident Management Plan and Business Continuity Plan in place that supports NWMPHN communication and business systems to revert to backup procedures for us to undertake our role in emergency management.



Additionally, our response and the functions of coordinate, commission and capacity build are built into the different stages of emergency management.

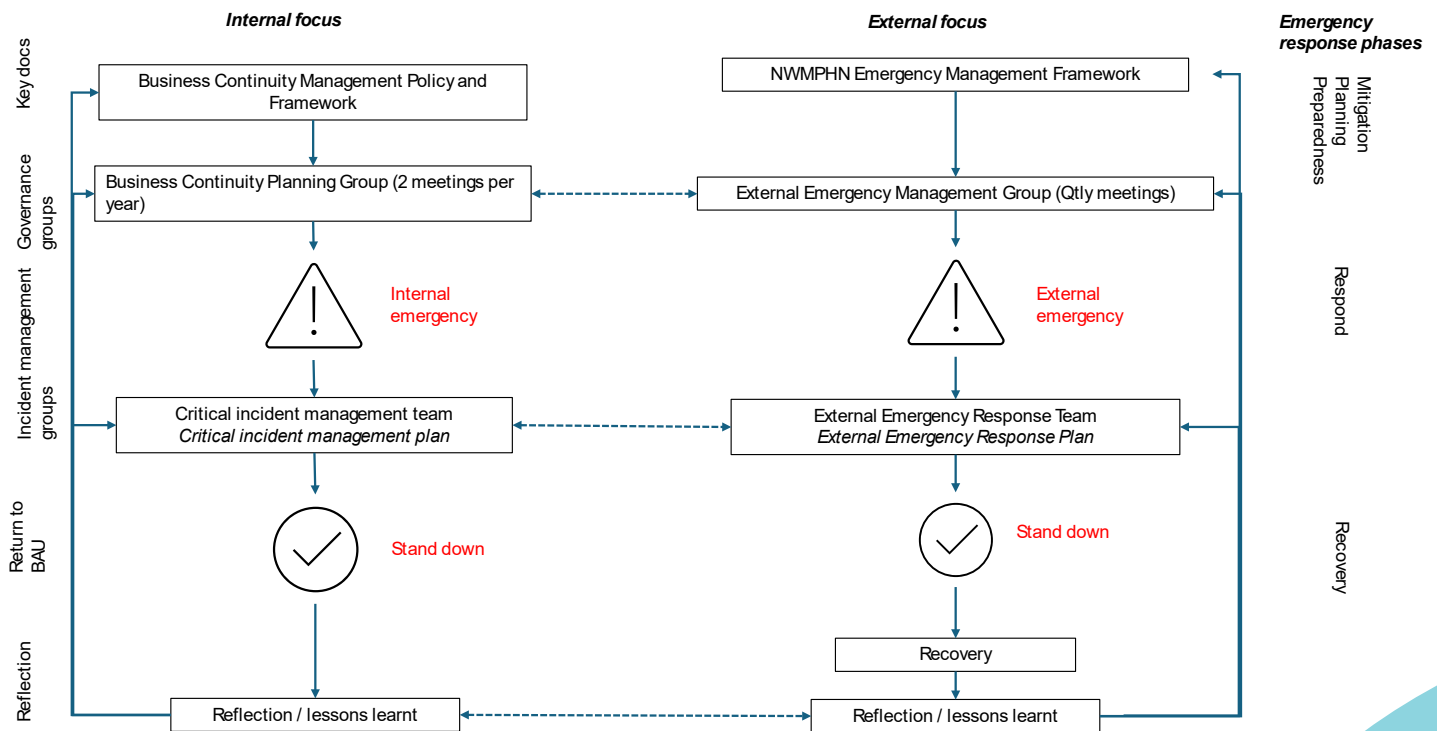
	Coordinate	Commission	Capacity build
Emergency preparedness	Support the primary care and mental health contribution to emergency management processes and support initiatives to identify population health needs and build preparedness and resilience.	Commission capacity building services and tools where required.	Support local primary care provider emergency planning and capacity to respond to emergencies.
Emergency response	Initiate and lead primary care and mental health response, coordinated and integrated with broader emergency response efforts.	Commission primary care and mental health responses to ensure continuity of care.	Work with governments, rural workforce agencies, peak bodies and others to mobilise workforce and material supports for local providers.

Emergency management has governance processes in place to ensure effective, ethical, and accountable management of resources and services administered by NWMPHN.

All positions within the organisation have a role in the phases of emergency management.

To implement the Emergency Management Framework, activities will be undertaken by responsible functional areas to build on or improve current work, or to develop innovative approaches. These activities and associated timeframes, including monitoring and measurement, will be incorporated in business and team planning.

### Emergency management governance diagram



# Conclusion

The Emergency Management Framework sets the direction for NWMPHN to have arrangements in place to reduce health effects and service disruption to our stakeholders. It requires a whole of business approach and is reflected in our everyday business plans as well as in our response to an emergency as well as our emergency responses.

It will be reviewed every two years, and everytime it is used.





