



Delegate Handbook

Lessons Management Forum 2025

📅 20 - 22 May 2025 📍 Wharewaka Function Centre, Wellington, New Zealand



Gold sponsor

Silver sponsor

The organisers of the Lessons Management Forum acknowledge that we are meeting on the land of the Te Āti Awa tribe and pay respect to Elders past and present.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Te Āti Awa descendants living today.

Contents

Program	4
Workshops	7
Knowledge cafés	10
2025 Lessons Management Award winner and finalists.....	12
Keynote speaker	13
Abstracts and speakers.....	14
General information.....	31

Tuesday 20 May 2025

Program | Day one

Time NZST	Presentation	AEST	ACST	AWST
8:00am	Registrations open			
8:30am	Workshop 1 OILL workshop <i>Lessons Management Program Committee</i>			
9:00am	Morning knowledge café session 1 Lessons implementation. Getting from identified to learned <i>Available to in-person delegates who are not attending workshop 1</i>	Not available to online delegates		
10:00am	Morning tea			
10:30am	Return to workshop			
12:00pm	Workshop concludes			
11:30am	Lunch on arrival - registrations reopen	9.30am	9.00am	7.30am
1:00pm	Welcome and opening - Mihi Whakatau - Housekeeping - Opening remarks	11.00am	10.30am	9.00am
1:30pm	Keynote: Lessons from leading on the UK Resilience Lessons Digest <i>Lianna Roast (Head of Thought Leadership, United Kingdom Resilience Academy)</i>	11.30am	11.00am	9.30am
2:15pm	Break (15 minutes)	12.15pm	11.45am	10.15am
2:30pm	Introducing the lessons management framework <i>Melanie Guthrie (Hato Hone St John)</i>	12.30pm	12.00pm	10.30am
3:00pm	Exercising resilience: TfNSW's lessons management in motion <i>Sanna Verhoef and Chris Jacobson (Transport for NSW)</i>	1.00pm	12.30pm	11.00am
3:30pm	Afternoon break (Afternoon tea offered to in-person delegates)	1.30pm	1.00pm	11.30am
4:00pm	Focusing on our people: lessons management culture and capability building <i>Sandra Alesiani and Loretta Wingfield (Triple Zero Victoria)</i>	2.00pm	1.30pm	12.00pm
4:30pm	How changing the focus of the After-Action Review process is reaping benefits for international deployment management <i>Emma Conway (AFAC)</i>	3.00pm	2.30pm	1.00pm
5:00pm	Te Ara Ahi: embedding a continuous improvement approach at Fire and Emergency New Zealand <i>Darryl Papesch and Cullum Peni-Wesche (Fire and Emergency New Zealand)</i>	3.00pm	2.30pm	1.00pm
5:30pm	Day one close	3.30pm	3.00pm	1.30pm
5.30pm-7.00pm	Networking session	Not available to online delegates		

Wednesday 21 May 2025

Program | Day two

Time NZST	Presentation	AEST	ACST	AWST
8:00am	Registrations open			
8:30am	Workshop 2 Leadership challenges: influencing decision-makers for continuous improvement in emergency management <i>Bronwyn White, Jo Guard and Stefan Weir (New Zealand National Emergency Management Agency)</i>			
9:00am	Morning knowledge café session 2 Lessons management – how do you get started? <i>Available to in-person delegates who are not attending workshop 2</i>	Not available to online delegates		
10:00am	Morning tea			
10:30am	Return to workshop			
12:00pm	Workshop concludes			
11:30am	Lunch on arrival - registrations reopen	9.30am	9.00am	7.30am
1:00pm	Welcome day two	11.00am	10.30am	9.00am
1:15pm	Lessons management award winner: application of AIDR lessons management approach to the DFES Cultural Fire Program <i>Peter Galvin (Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA)</i>	11.15am	10.45am	9.15am
2:00pm	Break (15 minutes)	12.00pm	11.30am	10.00am
2:15pm	Lessons management myths and legends <i>Mark Cuthbert</i>	12.15pm	11.45am	10.15am
2:45pm	What's required to move from insights to lessons? Exploring the elements of organisational change <i>Dr Christine Owen, Dr Tracy Hatton, Jon Mitchell and David Parsons (RRANZ)</i>	12.45pm	12.15pm	10.45am
3:15pm	Demonstrating continuous improvement using real time learning <i>Lee Dalglish (Emergency Management Victoria)</i>	1.15pm	12.45pm	11.15am
3:45pm	Afternoon break (Afternoon tea offered to in-person delegates)	1.45pm	1.15pm	11.45am
4:15pm	Lessons from 2022 and 2023 NSW flooding – improving service delivery and community preparedness <i>Heather Stuart ESM (NSW State Emergency Service)</i>	2.15pm	1.45pm	12.15pm
4:45pm	Organisational learning and operational responses in policing: understanding how review processes lead to genuine change <i>Superintendent Mark Langhorn (Victoria Police)</i>	2.45pm	2.15pm	12.45pm
5:15pm	Flood lessons adoption <i>James Thompson (Canterbury CDEM Group)</i>	3.15pm	2.45pm	1.15pm
5:45pm	Day two close	3.45pm	3.15pm	1.45pm

Thursday 22 May 2025

Program | Day three

Time NZST	Presentation	AEST	ACST	AWST
8:00am	Registrations open			
8.30am	Workshop 3 'Don't tell us what we need': an interactive workshop on how to engage communities to identify lessons from disasters <i>Dr Zoë D'Arcy and Dr Adriana Keating (Monash University)</i>			
9:00am	Morning knowledge café session 3 Lessons capability development <i>Available to in-person delegates who are not attending workshop 3</i>	Not available to online delegates		
10.00am	Morning tea			
10.30am	Return to workshop			
12.00pm	Workshop concludes			
11.30am	Lunch on arrival - registrations reopen	9.30am	9.00am	7.30am
1.00pm	Welcome day three	11.00am	10.30am	9.00am
1.05pm	The journey from uncertainty to opportunity: lessons management and positive risk <i>Alistair Dawson APM (Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management, Queensland)</i>	11.05am	10.35am	9.05am
1.35pm	How Victoria's Inspector-General for Emergency Management is applying a strategic lens to tailor its assurance and continuous improvement methods <i>Dr Lauren Banting (Office of the Inspector-General for Emergency Management, Victoria)</i>	11.35am	11.05am	9.35am
2.05pm	Break (10 minutes)	12.05pm	11.35am	10.05am
2.15pm	Beyond after-action reviews: the application of lessons management methodology to agency-wide operational improvement success <i>Andy McQuie (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service)</i>	12.15pm	11.45am	10.15am
2.45pm	Shaping lessons learned with artificial intelligence <i>Inspector Bruce Budge (Queensland Fire Department)</i>	12.45pm	12.15pm	10.45am
3.15pm	Afternoon tea	1.15pm	12.45pm	11.15am
3.45pm	Leadership challenges: influencing decision-makers for continuous improvement in emergency management <i>Stefan Weir (National Emergency Management Agency, New Zealand)</i>	1.45pm	1.15pm	11.45am
4.15pm	Building and leading a culture from learning lessons – a real world case study <i>Daniel Austin (NSW State Emergency Service)</i>	2.15pm	1.45pm	12.15pm
4.45pm	Closing remarks	2.45pm	2.15pm	12.45pm
5.15pm	Forum concludes	3.15pm	2.45pm	1.15pm

Workshop 1

OILL - Observations, insights, lessons identified, lessons learned

8.30am – 12.00pm | Tuesday 20 May | Room: Matiu

Facilitated by: *Lessons Management Program Committee*

Workshop overview:

Are you collecting observations and lessons from multiple events? How do you manage those in a consistent way? How do you make sense of those from one event or across multiple events? How do we share lessons in a consistent format? The Observations, Insights, Lessons Identified, Lessons Learned (OILL) model is a consistent way to think about your lessons process, help you make sense of the data you have, and enable us to analyse and share lessons across agencies.

The OILL workshop will provide participants with the tools and procedures for processing information to support a lessons management process. The workshop will introduce participants to the collection and analysis steps of the lessons cycle.

Workshop 2

Leadership challenges: influencing decision-makers for continuous improvement in emergency management

8.30am – 12.00pm | Wednesday 21 May | Room: Matiu

Facilitated by: *Bronwyn White, Jo Guard and Stefan Weir* (New Zealand National Emergency Management Agency)

Workshop overview:

What needs to happen at every level for decisions on lessons identified to break through the storm of strategic, political and risk-related forces impacting our decision-makers? The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA NZ) has taken roles and responsibilities in lessons management at every layer to heart.

This workshop will take participants through the following components of influencing decision makers:

- Understanding of the factors affecting decision-makers (“the noise”)
- Creating impactful products that preserve the integrity of the analysis
- Mastering the narrative and key messages

The workshop employs an experiential learning approach, combining both theoretical and practical elements. Attendees will engage in a variety of activities and delve into relevant case studies.



Bronwyn White is a Principal Advisor, Continuous Improvement for Te Rākau Whakamarumaru, the New Zealand National Emergency Management Agency. The main purpose of her role is to establish a National Lessons Management Programme and deliver reports for publishing as required. Her talent and enthusiasm for this work draws from her eclectic professional background in improvement science, social science and performance music. Her qualifications and experience range across public health research and practice, emergency management, health sciences, psychology, business improvement, and injury prevention. Bronwyn’s work undertaking child

and youth mortality reviews and collating lessons from the Canterbury Earthquakes, in particular, fire Bronwyn’s focus on lessons management to improve outcomes for people impacted.



Jo Guard leads the team that implements and champions lessons management and business process improvement internally and externally at Te Rākau Whakamarumaru, the New Zealand National Emergency Management Agency. For 20 years, Jo has led teams in fast-paced and challenging environments to prepare for, respond to, and learn from emergencies. Prior to her current role, she led teams across varied portfolios including New Zealand’s National Warning System and Emergency Mobile Alerting platform, geospatial capability, National Crisis Management Centre and National Civil Defence Emergency Management Exercise

Programme. She has also held international roles as part of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team, New Zealand Rapid Response Team, and was Co-Chair for Pacific Wave exercises as part of the Pacific Tsunami Warning System.



Stefan Weir is the Chief of Staff at Te Rākau Whakamarumaru, the New Zealand National Emergency Management Agency, a role he’s held since 2022. Before this, Stefan was based in the Beehive (NZ Parliament) as Private Secretary to the Minister for Emergency Management (2015-22) and Minister for Youth (2013-15). For the last ten years Stefan has been in the “inner circle” alongside Ministers, Prime Ministers and senior leaders during emergencies including Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle, the Kaikoura earthquake, Port Hills Fires, Christchurch terror attack, Whakaari White Island eruption, COVID and many other severe weather related events.

Workshop 3

‘Don’t tell us what we need’: an interactive workshop on how to engage communities to identify lessons from disasters

8.30am – 12.00pm | Thursday 22 May | Room: Matiu

Facilitated by: *Dr Zoë D’Arcy and Dr Adriana Keating* (Monash University)

Workshop overview:

This workshop will provide an immersive hands-on learning experience, to learn how to effectively engage communities to identify lessons from disaster events and support them to take on their shared responsibilities for prevention and preparedness.

Community members and stakeholders, and the interactions they have with each other and agencies, are often invisible in lessons management because they lack a more formal integration into the emergency management system. Yet we know that both community action and learning after disasters are cornerstones of resilience. That’s why researchers from the award-winning Fire to Flourish program (Monash University) have developed a community-based after-action review methodology.

We will share our approach, which is available and accessible to anyone wanting to genuinely and effectively

engage with disaster-affected communities to collaboratively identify and learn lessons. The approach centres community voices and experiences while facilitating collaboration between communities and agencies. It enables a ‘no blame’, systemic exploration of what worked well before, during and after a disaster (in terms of community safety, not suppression operations). We will show how this approach can be a springboard for improved relationships, collaboration and resilience.

This process has recently been applied in Tenterfield, NSW after major bushfires in 2023. Through it, the community has come together to identify lessons from the event and implement practical measures to reduce risk and prepare for the next event. They demonstrated how community decision-making is crucial to improving how their town experiences disasters.



Dr Adriana Keating is a Research Fellow within the Fire to Flourish Program within the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI). An expert in community disaster resilience, she is passionate about transforming systems to better support communities to lead action to reduce risk and enhance wellbeing. Adriana is a systems thinker whose research has, for over 15 years, focused on the human dimensions of disasters at the science-policy-practice interface. Her work utilises systems analysis, resilience measurement, disaster forensics and participatory community processes to conceptualise and effect change in disaster resilience both in

Australia and internationally. Adriana holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science from Monash University, a Master of International and Development Economics from the Australian National University, and a Doctorate in Socioeconomics from the Vienna University of Business and Economics.



Dr Zoë D’Arcy is a Research Fellow with the Fire to Flourish Program at the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI). Her current research work with the Fire to Flourish program takes an action research approach to assess and strengthen community disaster resilience.

Zoë’s doctoral research at RMIT University examined the concept of fire-adaptive communities. She used a systemic design approach to explore how adaptive approaches might be applied- and are already being applied by Australian communities- in an Australian context to strengthen the resilience of both people and ecosystems to bushfires.

Knowledge cafés

Morning knowledge café session 1:

Lessons implementation. Getting from identified to learned

9.00am – 12.00pm | Tuesday 20 May

Facilitated by: *Lessons Management Program Committee*

Room: Makaro

Session overview:

Delegates not wishing to attend the morning workshop are invited to join other like-minded delegates in the main plenary room for facilitated knowledge café discussions on lessons management topics.

Come and benefit from discussions with other Lessons Managers on how they are moving from lessons identified to lesson learned.

Morning knowledge café session 2:

How do you get started?

9.00am – 12.00pm | Wednesday 21 May

Facilitated by: *Lessons Management Program Committee*

Room: Makaro

Session overview:

Come and benefit from discussions with other Lessons Managers. If you are new to lessons or establishing lessons management in a new organisation, how do you get started? What do you need to think about and develop? Where can you find what you need? How do you scale up?

Morning knowledge café session 3:

Lessons capability development

9.00am – 12.00pm | Thursday 22 May

Facilitated by: *Lessons Management Program Committee*

Room: Makaro

Session overview:

Come and benefit from discussions with other Lessons Managers on developing lessons management capability. What capabilities do you need? How do you develop those capabilities? Where can you find material and assistance?



OUR MISSION

To strengthen Australian and regional civil-military-police capacity and capability to respond more effectively to crises and contingencies.

OUR VISION

To be recognised as Australia's centre of excellence for enhancing civil-military-police capability, knowledge and collaboration.

WHO WE ARE

- Australian Government initiative
- Defence administered; cross-agency governed
- Unique capability, supporting whole-of-government and civil society



WHAT WE DO

ADVICE

Promoting good practice; encouraging coordination

TEACHING

Facilitating collaboration; delivering new thinking

LESSONS

Identifying learnings; recommending improvement

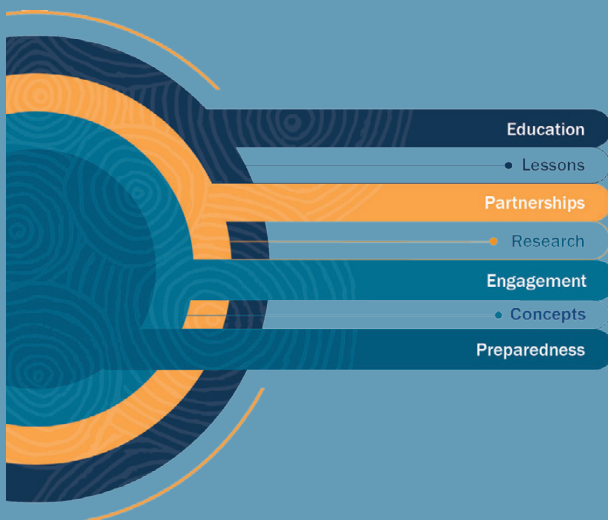
ADVOCACY

Championing innovation; engaging stakeholders

SUPPORT

Influencing exercises; enabling change

HOW WE DO IT



ACMC



2025 Lessons Management Award winner and finalists

Congratulations to the winner of the 2025 Lessons Management Award as well as all our finalists. The Lessons Management Award recognises significant leadership and commitment to leading practice in lessons management.

You can learn more about each project on our website:

www.aidr.org.au/resources/2025-lessons-management-award-finalists

Winner:

Application of AIDR Lessons Management Approach to the DFES Cultural Fire Program

Cultural Fire Program, Bushfire Centre of Excellence, Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)

Finalists:

SASES Lessons Management Framework and Lessons Management Board

South Australian State Emergency Service (SASES)

Gold Coast Disaster and Emergency Management Lessons Program

City of Gold Coast

Fire and Emergency New Zealand's Lessons Management Policy, Framework, and supporting initiatives

Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)

Western Australia Lessons Management Community of Practitioners

Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)

Community-centred Tenterfield Post-Bushfire Learning Review

Fire to Flourish, Monash University

Keynote speaker

Lessons from leading on the UK Resilience Lessons Digest

Lianna Roast (Head of Thought Leadership, United Kingdom Resilience Academy¹)

1.30pm | Tuesday 20 May

The UK Resilience Lessons Digest is the United Kingdom Resilience Academy's leading, open-source publication*. Launched in 2022, the Digest was a direct response to challenges identified in parliamentary reports, citing the need for the improved national to local sharing of lessons from exercises and emergencies. It now reaches more than 40,000 readers in the UK alone, having gone on to become a leading, good practice publication in domestic and international contexts. Most recently the work has informed the UK's Lessons Management Best Practice Guidance (2024), with the accompanying fifth edition of the Digest 'Learning to Manage Lessons', becoming the most popular in the series to date.

This keynote session offers professional insights from Lianna's experience of pioneering the Digest publication

and its accompanying webinar cycles. Recounting the requirement to deliver on a top down, national level commitment while simultaneously building a product from the ground up, the session highlights: the vital importance of setting its shared vision and values; fostering collaboration; understanding impact; and continually evolving the publication to ensure it remains relevant for the resilience community. It will also outline some of the challenges encountered when analysing, and then synthesising, thousands of lessons from multiple sources in a way that maintains academic integrity, delivers applied value for local practitioners, and meets policy timelines.

The session concludes with reflections on the lessons identified from Digest delivery to date, and an indication of where the UK Resilience Academy may take the work next.



Lianna Roast is passionate about learning at every level, in theory and practice. Her primary expertise focuses on concepts, policy and practice relating to the management of lessons from emergency exercises, major incidents, and crises events. In her role as Head of Thought Leadership at the UK Resilience Academy (formally known as the Emergency Planning College), Lianna helps to connect innovative, strategic, big picture thinking with the practical, operational delivery of professional resilience education, training and exercising. She also leads on a programme of public-facing work commissioned by UK Government Cabinet Office to synthesise

lessons from exercises and emergencies. This includes production and publication of the UK Resilience Lessons Digest. She is currently exploring how to extend this work, while also examining how Artificial Intelligence can be used strategically to add value and advance practice in the lessons space.

Before her role at the Emergency Planning College, Lianna spent 17 years in the education and not-for-profit sectors designing, delivering and directing a range of inclusive community learning initiatives. She then went on to achieve a BSc Hons in Psychology (First Class) and MSc in Disaster Management (Distinction), winning the Vice Chancellor's Award for Academic Achievement at Bournemouth University. Her respective theses involved an innovative neuroimaging study, followed by a qualitative exploration of the role that parliamentary narratives play in the development of national preparedness. In 2021 she authored a report for the UK's National Preparedness Commission, titled 'Learning that can save lives: Psychological perspectives on learning from major incidents and disasters'. <https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/learning-that-can-save-lives>

¹ In line with the UK's Resilience Framework, Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College is currently in the process of transitioning to the UK Resilience Academy.

Abstracts and speakers

Lessons Management Forum 2025 MC

Des Hosie (National Operations Advisor at Fire and Emergency NZ)



Des Hosie is a career firefighter and 42-year veteran of Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ).

Currently serving in the Operational Assurance Directorate, he is National Advisor for Safety, Continuous Improvement and Lessons Management based in the FENZ National Headquarters- Des has extensive operational firefighting and rescue experience.

Through the AFAC partnership, Des has contributed as a lessons management practitioner on a number of major reviews in both New Zealand and Australia. He is the Chair of

the AFAC Knowledge Innovation Research Utilisation Network and Deputy Chair of the Work Health and Safety Technical Group. He is a committee member of the AFAC Research Group and The AFAC Lessons Management Forum.

He leads a Lessons Management Community of Practice in New Zealand called LessonNZ. Its function is to share lessons from incidents and exercises across the All of Government, Emergency Services, Defence and key infrastructure sectors.

Introducing the lessons management framework

Melanie Guthrie (Hato Hone St John)

2.30pm | Tuesday 20 May

This presentation outlines the implementation of a Lessons Management Framework in an emergency service, aiming to share practical insights with those new to lessons management and simplify its perceived complexity.

The presentation explores the identification of the need for a structured framework, details its design process, and discusses the implementation strategies used to integrate it effectively into practice. It highlights the methods used for embedding change and emphasises how observations are collected

and analysed from an emergency services perspective. Additionally, it explains the prioritisation of actions within resource constraints to ensure meaningful impact.

Finally, the presentation offers an honest reflection of the benefits and challenges encountered during the introduction of the framework, providing a comprehensive understanding of its value in driving continuous improvement and enhancing organisational resilience.



Melanie Guthrie has been with Hato Hone St John for the past 15 years, as both an Emergency Management Advisor and Ambulance officer. Throughout her career, she has developed a strong interest in emergency management, particularly in how evidence-based planning can be used to improve outcomes for both responders and the communities they serve. She is passionate about continuously improving systems and processes to support more effective, efficient, and resilient emergency responses.

Exercising resilience: TfNSW's lessons management in motion

Sanna Verhoef and **Chris Jacobson** (Transport for NSW)

3.00pm | Tuesday 20 May

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) has significantly enhanced its crisis management capabilities while developing a lessons management framework, informed by real-time application, continuous refinement, and industry best practices. This journey began with an initial Executive Crisis Management Team (ECMT) exercise, which brought together Transport's executives to improve preparedness and response capability for managing crisis-level scenarios. To capitalise on this opportunity, a structured approach to lessons reporting, implementation, and tracking was adopted, maturing TfNSW's lessons management concepts and approaches.

Ultimately, a series of three ECMT exercises were conducted, with the continual development of the lessons management framework alongside these exercises enabling processes to be grounded in practice as well as benefiting from substantial senior-level buy-in and support. Engagement with state and national lessons management communities was also highly valuable, with TfNSW adapting industry best practices to the complex requirements of transport, ensuring enterprise-wide applicability.

The simultaneous development of the lessons management framework and the ECMT exercises created a symbiotic relationship, allowing the application of the framework to directly inform its principles and structure while lessons identified led to significant improvements. Key items implemented as a result include an updated systematic approach to ensure effective crisis management, the creation of an Enterprise Incident Management Team function, and a new multilevel Enterprise Incident and Crisis Management Framework. These measures, along with the exercises, enhanced TfNSW's ability to navigate its large and complex organisation to streamline emergency and crisis management coordination. Developments were shared across the organisation, supported by necessary development activities, and integrated into subsequent exercises.

TfNSW's experience demonstrates the successful development, application, implementation, and monitoring of a robust Lessons Management process, as well as a commitment to the ongoing improvement of organisational resilience. It also highlights the value of combining strategic planning with operational practice and maintaining inter-agency collaboration for informed practices.



Sanna Verhoef is a lessons management enthusiast dedicated to streamlining lesson management practices, making them accessible and effective for deliberate and consistent continuous improvement. With over a decade of experience in learning and development, and a background in adult education and instructional design, she pivoted into lessons management while designing emergency management exercises to capitalise on exercise learnings. She is currently committed to developing the enterprise lessons management function at Transport for NSW.



Chris Jacobson is the Manager of Security, Crisis and Emergency Management Capability at TfNSW. He leads enterprise-wide training, exercises, and lessons management processes to improve readiness across the Transport Services Functional Area. He also serves as the national Chair of Lifesaving for Surf Life Saving Australia, supporting volunteers in emergency response. With over two decades of experience in both professional and volunteer emergency management roles, Chris is passionate about creating safe, informed, and adaptable emergency environments through collaboration, innovation, and evidence-based practice.

Focusing on our people: lessons management culture and capability building

Sandra Alesiani and **Loretta Wingfield** (Triple Zero Victoria)

4.00pm | Tuesday 20 May

Triple Zero Victoria (TZV) (previously called Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority; ESTA) provides the critical link between the Victorian community and the state's emergency services agencies. We provide Victoria's 24-hour emergency call-taking and dispatch (CTD) services for police, fire, ambulance and Victoria SES.

Unprecedented demand for 000 services through 2021-22 significantly impacted all aspects of ESTA's business. Like other frontline services across the world at this time, capacity pressures stretched the organisation to its limits and community service delivery suffered as a result. What followed, has been a period of significant organisational reform, driven by the ESTA Capability and Service Review. As part of this reform, TZV committed to delivering an enterprise-wide Lessons Management Framework.

The Lessons Management Framework is enabled by building the critical elements of capability and culture. Key features of the Capability and Culture Uplift include:

- Establishing the Lessons Management Network – leaders from across the organisation who will champion lessons management within their teams
- Delivering a program of training and engagement activities leveraging existing resources, tools and knowledge of our sector partners. This includes Lessons Management Debrief Training, and culture workshops co-facilitated with Emergency Management Victoria
- Building trust by demonstrating alignment with National and State frameworks (the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Lessons Management Handbook and Emergency Management Victoria's EM-LEARN Framework)
- Drawing on the extensive experience of our sector partners to identify good practice (with a commitment to learning their lessons and striving to only make new 'mistakes')

This presentation will provide an overview of TZV's Lessons Management journey and how a focus on our people capability and culture is building lessons management maturity.



Sandra Alesiani is a policy and evaluation specialist working in (and with) the Victorian public and community sectors for over twenty years.

Sandra's passion for evaluation and continuous improvement commenced in 2013 while working at Australian Red Cross where she established the Real-Time Evaluation Program for Emergency Relief Coordination. This initiative enabled the recruitment, training, and rapid deployment of multi-agency evaluation teams during emergency events to assess the effectiveness of relief coordination and enable real-time improvements to be made.

Sandra's current role is Senior Manager Outcomes and Evaluation at TZV. In this role, Sandra has led the TZV Lessons Management Project to establish the inaugural TZV Lessons Management Framework, establish the TZV Lessons Management Network and build workforce capability to support lessons management implementation.



Loretta Wingfield has worked at TZV since 2017. Her career at TZV has seen her fulfil roles across most of the organisation's key functions and developed a deep understanding of TZV's emergency call-taking and dispatch capability and operations.

Her professional life started in call-taking and dispatch for Ambulance services, both in emergency and non-emergency streams. Loretta was in this role during the devastating Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20, which saw her awarded a National Emergency Medal.

In taking up leadership roles within the operations division of TZV, Loretta grew a passion for continuous improvement. She applied these lessons in transitioning to a service design role where she designed and implemented critical service initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. From here, Loretta moved to the Outcomes and Evaluation Team, ultimately leading to Loretta taking on responsibility for the development and implementation of TZV's inaugural Lessons Management Framework.

Loretta works closely with her team to grow TZV's Lessons Management capability through ongoing delivery of debrief training and culture workshops and the continuing adaptation, improvement, and development of the Lessons Management Framework itself.

How changing the focus of the After-Action Review process is reaping benefits for international deployment management

Emma Conway (AFAC)

4.30pm | Tuesday 20 May

The National Resource Sharing Centre (NRSC) is an instrumental part of coordinating international deployments of Australian and New Zealand firefighters. To ensure improvement opportunities are identified, an After-Action Review (AAR) is conducted at the conclusion of every deployment. AAR's originated in the US Army to critique training and operational activities (Darling et. al. 2005). The traditional components of a military AAR are focused on assessing the outcome of the activity against what was planned (TMD, 2013).

Over the years, organisations have sought to utilise the AAR to improve business practices and gain competitive advantage (Crowe, et al., 2023). However, research suggests that in many cases, the full potential of the AAR process is not realised (Fletcher, et al., 2023).

From 14th July 2024 to 11th September 2024, Australia and New Zealand deployed 383 personnel to Canada and the US. An extensive AAR process was conducted at the conclusion of the deployment with seven separate reviews occurring with the different groups involved.

The AARs focused on:

- What did you expect?
- What was your experience?
- What worked well?
- What could be improved and how?

When the facilitator held participants at the first element of the AAR, 'what did you expect?', before moving to the more popular phase, 'what can be improved', important insights were identified and dangerous assumptions uncovered that were previously missed or glossed over.

With members moving quickly through management positions within emergency service organisations, assumed knowledge is becoming more of a risk (Suril, 2013). By maintain the focus on individual expectations of their roles and responsibilities through the AAR process, knowledge gaps, operating procedure improvements and training and development opportunities were identified, which may not have been possible without the change of focus during the AAR process.



Emma Conway is the Deputy Director of Operations at AFAC. In the 12 months since joining AFAC, Emma has overseen the 2024 international deployments to Canada and the US, and managed resource-sharing across Australia and New Zealand in support of the 2024-25 summer season, where 10 significant or complex incidents required interstate support. Emma is also leading the development of the Australian Government funded, 'Respond to Electric Vehicle Incident – Foundation Training' online course.

Emma has a service background, joining Country Fire Authority (CFA) Victoria in 2007 as a career firefighter on station, and leaving as the Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer for CFA District 9. Prior to that, Emma served in the Royal Australian Navy, seeing active service in 2001 and 2002-03.

Emma is passionate about lifelong learning, completing a Bachelor of Further Education and Training at the University of Southern Queensland, and a Graduate Certificate in Applied Management and Graduate Diploma of Executive Leadership at the Australian Institute of Police Management in Manly. She has most recently completed a Master of Business Administration at RMIT.

Te Ara Ahi: embedding a continuous improvement approach at Fire and Emergency New Zealand

Darryl Papesch and **Cullum Peni-Wesche** (Fire and Emergency New Zealand)

5.00pm | Tuesday 20 May

Whāia te mātauranga hei oranga mō koutou- Seek after learning for the sake of your wellbeing. This Māori proverb highlights the importance of continuous learning in maintaining and enhancing the welfare of our people. This presentation explores Fire and Emergency New Zealand's (FENZ's) journey in developing and embedding a comprehensive Lessons Management Framework (LMF) across our organisation.

Formed in 2017, FENZ unified over 40 entities into a single fire and emergency services organisation. Creating and implementing a framework that meets the needs of this diverse audience, while fostering organisation-wide buy-in to drive cultural change, posed significant challenges. Our success stems from the framework's core purpose: sharing knowledge to enhance the safety and wellbeing of our personnel.

In this presentation, we highlight the importance of ensuring the framework and our continuous improvement initiatives

remain visible at the executive and governance levels, as reflected in FENZ's Statement of Performance Expectations. This visibility ensures that our commitment to learning and improvement is recognised and supported at the highest levels. Additionally, we highlight the collaborative efforts involved in developing the framework, including sharing insights and lessons learned with AFAC partner agencies in NSW, Victoria and SA. This collaboration has been crucial in refining our approach and ensuring its effectiveness.

Attendees will gain insights from FENZ's experience in creating, embedding, and right sizing a framework and approach that meets our unique needs. This session will also provide a deeper understanding of the practical benefits of interagency collaboration within the AFAC network. It will be particularly beneficial for those interested in how continuous improvement is being integrated and driven within a New Zealand context to enhance the welfare of our people.



Darryl Papesch is the Manager of Operational Assurance at FENZ, ensuring independent, objective oversight to drive continuous improvement across 14,500 career and volunteer staff. He is also part of the Commander group response roster in the Bay of Plenty District and resides in Taupō.

Darryl began his fire service journey in 1981, joining the Te Puke Volunteer Fire Brigade, before becoming a career firefighter with the Auckland Brigade in 1986. Over the years, he has worked across multiple districts and roles, including District Commander secondments.

His contributions extend beyond his primary role, including involvement in the career Senior Station Officer Assessment program and participation in the Paearu Mahi pilot program for operational Commanders. He has also been a team member in two AFAC Independent Operational Reviews.



Cullum Peni-Wesche is the National Advisor for Operational Assurance (Data & Reports) at FENZ – Te Ratonga Ahi me ngā Ohotata i Aotearoa. He is also a Volunteer Station Officer with the Wellington Operational Support Unit, where his brigade provides incident support at emergencies across greater Wellington.

He serves as a Board Member of Hāpai Public (Institute of Public Professional Aotearoa New Zealand), where he leverages his background in risk management, safety, health and wellbeing, and compliance to drive strategic initiatives for the organisation. Cullum is also a member of the Institute of Internal Auditors, an alumnus of the Young Pacific Leaders program operated by the U.S. Department of State, and holds a Bachelor of Business (Management) from Massey University.

Cullum is a passionate advocate for driving continuous improvement through partnerships and collaboration at all levels of an organisation. This is demonstrated through his work as a volunteer on the incident ground, and at the national level through Fire and Emergency's Operational Assurance team.

Lessons management award winner: application of AIDR lessons management approach to the DFES Cultural Fire Program

Peter Galvin (Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA)

1.15pm | Wednesday 21 May

The WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) Cultural Fire Program (CFP) is based within the Karla Katitjin Bushfire Centre of Excellence on Bindjareb Boodja in Western Australia. Over the past three years, our team has had the privilege of being invited onto Country by Elders to support cultural burns. These burns often signified a 'return to Country,' where, due to the multigenerational impacts of colonisation and resulting injustices, Elders and Traditional Custodians had been unable to conduct cultural burning on their ancestral lands for many decades.

In an Australian-first, the CFP has applied a formal Lessons Management (LM) approach to identify key factors influencing the success of cross-cultural collaborations on cultural burning in Western Australia. Over two years, 547 observations were collected, leading to the development of 91 insights and 23 lessons.

Applying LM principles to cultural burning required adaptations to the AIDR best practice methodology, particularly in:

- **Coding of observations:** The unique nature of cultural burning observations necessitated a tailored coding framework, as existing national themes were insufficient.
- **Structure of lessons:** Sharing the knowledge base underpinning the lessons, rather than developing actions, is crucial to enable meaningful improvements in practice.
- **Validation of lessons:** Findings needed to respect the intellectual property of First Nations Australians and be presented in a culturally safe and respectful manner.

While collaboration between government agencies and First Nations people in Australia is growing, there remain many barriers. Our identified lessons offer valuable guidance for individuals and agencies seeking to foster culturally safe, respectful, and equitable approaches to cross-cultural collaboration.



Peter Galvin is a seasoned leader in bushfire management, with 16 years of experience across Forest Fire Management Victoria and DFES.

In February 2022, he joined DFES as the Bushfire Knowledge and Practice Manager, relocating with his family from Victoria to WA. In his current role, Peter leads the bushfire lessons management portfolio and oversees the CFP within the Knowledge Management team at the Karla Katitjin Bushfire Centre of Excellence.

Peter's expertise spans fuel management strategy development, the planning and execution of operational programs aimed at reducing bushfire risk, and the facilitation of cultural fire initiatives. Additionally, Peter brings extensive experience in both operational roles and Incident Management Team positions within emergency response.

Lessons management myths and legends

Mark Cuthbert

2.15pm | Wednesday 21 May

Many of the recurring issues that we are seeing at the strategic, multi-agency/multi-jurisdictional level are not lessons and are not likely to ever be 'learned'. Many are 'wicked problems' and are unlikely to ever be solved. Issues such as multi-agency interoperability, communication, coordination and warnings, in times of crisis, will remain challenging and during a catastrophe will never be perfect, particularly in hindsight.

One of the key challenges is to change the perceptions and expectations that all issues identified from operations and exercises are lessons and can be or even should be, learned. Identifying problems is easy. Learning lessons is much more difficult. We need to change the way we think about and deal with learning from experience.

Whilst there are many lessons that can be and are identified and learned, these are mostly at the tactical and operational

level. There is a need to continue to focus on the recurring issues at the strategic level but with a view of mitigating the associated risks rather than finalising a perfect solution. For some issues the best that may be achieved is to continue to strive for incremental improvements to what is often already equal to world's best practice.

Effective management and mobilisation of knowledge are essential to share lessons and support learning. A key challenge identified in this area is the capture and retention of operational knowledge.

Significant effort has been invested in recent years to develop lessons management capability and improve learning from experience but there is an ongoing need to maintain the focus on and momentum of lessons management at all levels of government.



Mark Cuthbert has had over 45 years working across crisis and emergency management in Australia at local, regional, state, and national levels. He joined the Counter-Terrorism Branch at Attorney-General's Department in early 2001, where he worked on a range of counter-terrorism capabilities, national security exercises and major event security planning.

For the last 15 years Mark has been working on developing national lessons management thinking, approaches and capability. He has also been leading and or assisting with the planning and conduct of lessons process for significant events. For the last five years he has worked with a range of state and Commonwealth agencies on the development of lessons management capability and/or the conduct of large lessons processes. This included working with NSW State Emergency Service for six months to assist with a large lessons process on the 2022 NSW floods and most recently with the Australian Civil-Military Centre in the Department of Defence.

What's required to move from insights to lessons?

Exploring the elements of organisational change

Dr Christine Owen, Dr Tracy Hatton, Jon Mitchell and David Parsons (RRANZ)

2.45pm | Wednesday 21 May

A frequent critique made in lessons management is that lessons that are derived from insights are only 'learnt' when they instigate sustainable change. One of the biggest challenges facing emergency services organisations today is how to ensure that observations and insights from the lessons management processes make it all the way through to either endorse existing practice or transform into improvements through organisational change.

This presentation will draw off previous research into elements found in successful research utilisation and discuss their implications for closing the loop in lessons management practices. Evidence demonstrates that for change to succeed there are several individual, group and organisational factors that need to come together for success. Organisational factors such as the capability to mobilise resources and orchestrate actions is an important determinant of effective change.

However, success in implementing insights so lessons are learned is as much about social processes as structural ones, that is ones that connect individuals by collective knowledge building through culture. The relational aspects of knowledge as something developed through social engagement has implications for what will be accepted or rejected by practitioners and the groups to which they belong.

For example, in some cases' insights are contested on ideological grounds because they do not align with the beliefs of a particular group or organisation. This means that insights will be filtered by what the target audience values (or not), thinks is important (or not), believes is achievable (or not). In this respect change valence becomes important. That is, when communities of practice believe change is something they 'ought' to do (obligation), 'have' to do (little choice), 'need' to do (pressure from others), or 'want' to do (value the change). The implications for lessons management practitioners will be discussed.



Tracy Hatton is joint managing director of Resilient Organisations Ltd (resorgs.org.nz), a niche research and consulting group based in Christchurch, New Zealand. Tracy helps public and private sector organisations build their continuity and crisis management capabilities and has co-created the content for a free disaster resilience app for small and medium enterprises internationally. Tracy has an MBA and PhD in Disaster Recovery and teaches Organisational Resilience on the UC Executive Development Programme.



Jon Mitchell has 20 years of experience in emergency management in New Zealand, United Kingdom, Southeast Asia, and North America. He specialises in local, regional, state/provincial, and national level multi-agency emergency management leadership, planning, intelligence recovery management and capability development. Jon was a Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group planner, manager, and alternate CDEM Group Controller, Canterbury CDEM Group from 2002-12 and a Programme Manager for the CDEM Controller Development Programme from 2013-18. Later, Jon was the Programme Manager for Project AF8, the South Island Alpine Fault Earthquake Response Planning Project and was an international emergency management consultant from 2012-18.



David Parsons brings to the programme over 40 years' experience in emergency management. His career spans emergency services, lifeline agencies, national policy and extensive emergency management training experience. David has comprehensive experience working in Incident Management Teams at local government, lead agency and corporate sectors. David has qualifications in emergency management and education. One of the more challenging adventures David has been involved in was deploying a task force of hundreds of Australian water industry staff to support Christchurch in 2009.



Christine Owen is an organisational behaviour and learning researcher with over 25 years' experience in investigating decision-making, teamwork, coordination, organisational culture and change in safety-critical environments. She has been engaged by the industry in a number of practitioner reviews and evaluations of major emergency events. Christine conducts research into high consequence decision-making, leadership, teamwork, and collaboration in domains including aviation, medicine, emergency management, and public safety.

Demonstrating continuous improvement using real time learning

Lee Dalgleish (Emergency Management Victoria)

3.15pm | Wednesday 21 May

Real Time Monitoring and Evaluation (RTM&E) has been in place in its current form since 2017. The purpose of RTM&E is to support and add value to real time learning and improvement of emergency management activities through the deployment of a team of evaluators and subject matter experts. But what if we could use the activity of real time learning to capture and demonstrate continuous improvement activity, providing real-time feedback to inform decision-making and operational adjustments, over the course of the 2024-25 High Risk Weather Season?

This approach emerged from a learning identified during an Evaluation of Lessons Management understanding and practices at the Victorian State Control Centre (SCC). The State Lessons and Evaluation (SLE) Functional Unit based at the SCC, recognised the need to develop a structured approach to capture and integrate continuous improvement activities across the SCC functional units utilising real time learning methodology during active operations.

This presentation will highlight and explore the service offering to capture continuous improvement activities, the process of integrating feedback into the SCC

operations in real-time, and the mechanism for tracking and communicating outcomes. Attendees will also gain insights into the challenges that were experienced during implementation phase, including stakeholder buy-in, managing data in dynamic and evolving environments and measuring outcomes.

By showcasing a live case study from the Victorian SCC, this session will demonstrate how RTM&E can bridge the gap between learnings identified and continuous improvements, fostering a culture of learning and adaptability. Attendees will gain practical strategies for embedding lessons management into their operational and strategic plans and processes, enhancing both organisational resilience and preparedness.

This presentation is suitable for both new and experienced lessons management practitioners and will help them to consider an alternative approach to real-time learning that can be adapted across different organisations and emergency management contexts.



Lee Dalgleish has over 14 years of experience in emergency management, and has been with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) since 2016, undertaking key roles within State Operations, Planning, and, for the last five years, Lessons and Improvement.

Throughout her career, Lee has made numerous contributions to the emergency management sector, including developing the State Emergency Management Plan Roles and Responsibilities, identifying 93 multi-agency lessons in relation to the Victorian June 2021 Extreme Weather Event and October 2022 State-wide Flooding Event, and

undertaking multiple operational roles within the Victorian State Control Centre- being formally recognised with two Emergency Services Medals for Tropical Cyclone Debbie (2017) and the Black Summer bushfires (2019–2020).

Drawing on her extensive operational experience, Lee has found her professional focus in Lessons Management- ensuring that learnings identified from emergencies are effectively integrated into how Victoria prepares for, responds to, and recovers from significant events.

Advocating for a consistent, sector-wide approach to lessons management in Victoria, Lee works to continually enhance the implementation and transferability of learnings, to ultimately inform continuous improvement initiatives for the emergency management sector and broader Victorian community.

Lessons from 2022 and 2023 NSW flooding – improving service delivery and community preparedness

Heather Stuart ESM (NSW State Emergency Service)

4.15pm | Wednesday 21 May

Much of NSW experienced significant flooding between February 2022 and March 2023. This included the catastrophic flooding in the Northern Rivers, flooding along the eastern seaboard, and campaign flooding in the south and west of the state. To learn from these significant events NSW SES undertook a program of After Action Reviews (AARs). These were in addition to the Parliamentary Inquiry, Senate Select Committee Review and State Rescue Board Audit undertaken after the February 2022 flooding.

Two internal AAR reports were developed from the flood events. Together the reports identified 61 lessons with 77 associated recommendations, all at an operational

to strategic level. The lessons included areas of positive performance, as well as areas for improvement. The reports also identified evidence that lessons identified through previous AARs had been learned.

This presentation will provide an overview of the lessons from the internal AARs, their alignment with the external reviews, and how they are being implemented. It will also discuss how the implementation, and learning, of lessons is assisting NSW SES to improve planning for and response to events, meeting changing community expectations and contributing to increased community resilience.



Heather Stuart ESM is the Manager of Operational Improvement and Lessons for NSW SES. She has been involved in lessons management since 2011 and is one of the most experienced lessons management practitioners in Australia. Heather established the lessons capability for NSW SES. This includes the development of a robust lessons management framework, well-established data gathering and analysis processes as well as an approach to implementing lessons.

Heather has led numerous large-scale review programs for NSW SES and has contributed to reviews in other jurisdictions, including Victoria and South Australia.

Heather has been involved in lessons training and lessons analysis at a state and national level. She has contributed to both editions of the AIDR Lessons Management Handbook and she is a driving force behind the annual AFAC Lessons Management Forum.

Heather received an Emergency Services Medal in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours in recognition of her contribution to lessons management in the emergency services sector.

Organisational learning and operational responses in policing: understanding how review processes lead to genuine change

Superintendent Mark Langhorn (Victoria Police)

4.45pm | Wednesday 21 May

Using evidence and research, I am developing a new paradigm for organisational learning in policing that is transferable across all emergency response organisations.

The presentation will outline an innovative project being undertaken in Victoria Police that has seen the development of an organisational learning framework based on research and evidence. The basis of the project is a central question of: Will the development of a framework for undertaking reviews, identifying learnings and embedding genuine change lead to sustainable change?

To be able to address this question, the project also explores:

- a. What the barriers are to effective organisational learning in law enforcement.
- b. What factors exist in law enforcement agencies when organisational learning is achieved.

The findings of the research phases of the project identified core characteristics required to transform policing and emergency services agencies into learning organisations; as well as the essential characteristics of effective review and lessons management processes.

The research identified what barriers and challenges exist that impedes organisational learning.

Innovations that would support identifying lessons and enhancing organisational learning were also identified.

Importantly, the research identified the essential elements of a learning culture, both in policing and emergency services organisations. It was also identified that organisational learning is rated as a priority for leaders when considered amongst other essential activities.

This presentation will detail the outcome of the project with a focus on how the research and evidence has informed the development of an organisational learning framework that can be used in policing and across emergency services. I will also share how agencies can develop an evidence-based framework which places organisational learning as the central tenet of why we have lessons management processes and why reviews are undertaken.



Mark Langhorn is an accomplished executive leader with over 30 years of experience in Victoria Police. Currently pursuing a PhD in Innovation at the University of New England, Mark's research focuses on organisational learning in policing, aiming to enhance the effectiveness and adaptability of law enforcement agencies. His current role entails coordinating critical incident reviews, and capturing and implementing the lessons from these.

Throughout his distinguished career, Mark has held several key leadership positions in various regions. His strategic leadership and innovative approaches have led to significant improvements in community safety and operational efficiency. Mark has been instrumental in driving organisational change, fostering inter-agency collaboration, and promoting evidence-based practices within Victoria Police.

Mark's commitment to lifelong learning and professional development is evident through his extensive educational background, including a Master in Research (Honours) from Charles Sturt University and a Graduate Diploma of Executive Leadership from the Australian Institute of Police Management. He has also completed specialised training in policing serious violence at Cambridge University and the Williamson Community Leadership Program at Leadership Victoria.

In addition to his professional achievements, Mark is actively involved in several advisory boards and committees, including the Australian and New Zealand Society of Evidence Based Policing and the University of New England Criminology Advisory Board. His contributions to the field have been recognised with numerous awards, including the Victorian Multicultural Award of Excellence and the Winston Churchill Fellowship.

Mark is dedicated to enhancing policing practices through research and innovation. His insights on organisational learning in policing are sure to inspire and inform attendees, contributing to the ongoing development of effective and responsive law enforcement strategies.

Flood lessons adoption

James Thompson (Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management Group)

5.15pm | Wednesday 21 May

From 28 May to 11 June 2021, Canterbury had heavy rain and flooding over much of the region. The Ashburton district was particularly impacted with significant river breakouts on its stopbanks. Multiple district emergency operations centres and the regional emergency control centre were activated, and a local state of emergency was declared for the region. Three councils declared transitions to recovery at the end of the response.

Following the response an After-Action Report was commissioned by the Canterbury Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group. A range of topics were explored and series of areas for improvement, what worked well and recommendations were provided. Where appropriate the recommendations were bundled up and assigned to various work groups to address. Other recommendations that were or are being addressed through our other activity are not included in this presentation. The key work groups were:

- Roading Working Group
- Impact and Needs Assessment Working Group
- Rural Working Group
- Capacity and Workload Working Group

The CDEM Coordinating Executive Group and the CDEM Joint Committee both agreed to and supported the recommendations being addressed.

Current project work has achieved the adoption of:

- An integrated welfare needs assessment system
- A wide area impact assessment tool
- A guidance booklet for lifestyle blocks in emergencies
- Mapping of the status of local and national roads in a single and consistent way
- Continued development of a common operating picture tool

Some of these continue to be worked on while others are complete. These projects have been successful through good buy in (all have a Sponsor and a Project Manager) and many hours of collaboration. This presentation will focus on the recommendations that needed multi-agency collaboration and project management to address them and the need for time to realise a change and adoption of lesson learnt recommendations.



James Thompson has been involved in emergency management since 1996, initially as a New Zealand Response Team volunteer and then through various paid positions, all with the Canterbury CDEM. Currently he is the Regional Manager / Group Controller for the region.

In 2020 he was selected to be a member on the National Emergency Management Assistance Team which has since been deployed twice to support other regions with responses.

He has been involved in responding to fires, floods, earthquakes, snow and windstorms, tsunami alerts, and a terrorism event. For many of these he has held a senior role.

Significant achievements have included leading the preparation and delivery of a South Island Alpine Fault exercise that resulted in the establishment of the Alpine Fault AF8 project that is lead by the six South Island CDEM Groups and NEMA.

Currently he is the chair of the National Capability Development Steering Group.

Outside of work he is a keen nature photographer and likes getting outdoors.

The journey from uncertainty to opportunity: lessons management and positive risk

Alistair Dawson APM, EMPA, MBA, GAICD (Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management, Queensland)

1.05pm | Thursday 22 May

Learning from the past and present to inform the future is an on-going journey; one that requires both short-term and long-term learning strategies, quantitative and qualitative data, and multiple stakeholders. The notion of 'set and forget' is not fit for the complex and volatile challenges of disaster management. This presentation will highlight the necessity of revisiting and reassessing lessons over time to ensure they remain relevant and effective in addressing evolving challenges.

Lessons management within the disaster or emergency management sector is an intricate and ongoing process. The Queensland's Inspector-General of Emergency Management will propose a unique perspective on revealing lessons through a process of continuous discovery in uncertain environments. A key focus of the presentation will be on the concept of positive risk. The Inspector-General will explore how embracing positive risk can lead to innovative solutions and improvements in practice. By taking calculated risks, organisations can uncover new opportunities for growth and resilience.

Additionally, the presentation will address the importance of qualitative measures in lessons management. While quantitative data is crucial, qualitative insights provide a deeper understanding of the human and contextual factors that influence disaster response and recovery. The Inspector-General will share observations on how these qualitative measures can be effectively utilised to enhance learning and decision-making processes, embracing positive risk.

Finally, the presentation will touch on the significance of learning from the unseen. In disaster management, not all lessons are immediately visible. The Inspector-General will discuss the value of uncovering hidden lessons and the impact they can have on improving preparedness and response efforts, offering valuable, real-world insights from Australia's most disaster-prone state.



Mr Alistair Dawson is the Inspector-General of Emergency Management (IGEM), he is responsible for leading the Office of the IGEM to provide assurance and advice to enable confidence in Queensland's disaster management arrangements. The functions of the IGEM are prescribed in the Queensland Disaster Management Act 2003 and include working with entities to identify and improve disaster management capabilities and facilitate opportunities for collaboration and knowledge leadership.

Mr Dawson brings over 45 years of policing experience from both the United Kingdom and Queensland to his role as Inspector-General. With his commitment and dedication to police and emergency management in Queensland, he achieved the rank of Assistant Commissioner with the Queensland Police Service. As a former Chair of the State Disaster Coordination Group, Mr Dawson has played a lead role in coordinating the whole of government response to several complex disaster events across the state. In 2010, he was awarded the Australian Police Medal. Mr Dawson has also been awarded the National Emergency Medal for Queensland 2010–11 and a bar for Tropical Cyclone Debbie 2017.

In 2021, Mr Dawson was appointed as an Adjunct Professor within the Centre for Environment and Population Health, School of Medicine and Dentistry at Griffith University. Alistair holds a Master of Business Administration, an Executive Master of Public Administration, a Graduate Diploma of Executive Leadership, and a Diploma of Public Safety (Police Search and Rescue Coordination). He is also a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a Graduate of the Leadership in Counter Terrorism Program.

How Victoria's Inspector-General for Emergency Management is applying a strategic lens to tailor its assurance and continuous improvement methods

Dr Lauren Banting (Office of the Inspector-General for Emergency Management, Victoria)

1.35pm | Thursday 22 May

Victoria's Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) is a core component of the state's lessons management structure. It provides assurance to government and the community about Victoria's emergency management arrangements and fosters their continuous improvement. IGEM has conducted numerous, independent, system-wide reviews to extract learnings from past practice and make appropriate recommendations that support the emergency management sector to prepare for future emergencies.

As the severity, frequency and complexity of emergencies continues to increase and challenge emergency management arrangements across the country, lessons management becomes an increasingly intensive endeavour. There is a risk that decision-makers are overloaded with observations, insights and lessons.

IGEM has adopted a refreshed approach to ensure it applies a strategic lens to its lessons management and assurance activities. It has reviewed previous observations, findings and recommendations, and conducted extensive stakeholder engagement to determine four assurance and continuous improvement priorities for the next five years. The priorities reflect enduring system-wide challenges which continue to effect Victorians before, during and after emergencies.

Recognising that more data does not necessarily mean better outcomes, IGEM is placing greater focus on ensuring its data collection methods produce evidence that allows the development of accurate and compelling observations on priority issues.

IGEM's methods have expanded to include documentary analysis, stakeholder interviews, targeted observations of operational and non-operational activity, surveys, effectiveness studies, inter-jurisdictional comparisons and research translation. This approach allows data to be triangulated and validated, and contextual factors to be more fully explored.

At a time when resources to conduct high-quality learning activities are constrained, it is beneficial to tailor data collection to look at what the organisation believes is most valuable. IGEM is using its assurance and continuous learning priorities to focus its lessons management and ensure that data collection is valuable and can be used to inform robust and timely advice.



Lauren Banting is a Program Lead in the Evaluation and Review team at the IGEM Victoria. She has been with the office for seven years and involved in a range of reviews including the inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian fire season, IGEM's Water Safety Review and its Review of Major Public Health Emergencies.

Her background is in research with a focus on behaviour change, which has proved to be quite helpful in IGEM's evaluation and reviews.

Lauren has been a part of IGEM's recent office-wide work to think about IGEM's role in Victoria's emergency management system and how IGEM Victoria can best provide assurance to the government, community and emergency management sector.

Beyond After-Action Reviews: The application of lessons management methodology to agency-wide operational improvement success

Andy McQuie (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service)

2.15pm | Thursday 22 May

Conducting post-incident reviews has become standard practice for many emergency and response agencies. Real-time evaluations, hot debriefs, staff rides and various levels of intra-and inter-agency After Action Reviews (AAR) are the accepted best practise method of finding out what worked well, and what went wrong, with a goal of making the work safer and improving operational effectiveness.

But too often there's a chasm between lessons identified and lessons learned.

The process of conducting an AAR is well established. It's in the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) handbook, you may have done the training, followed an agency doctrine or procedures. It may even have been communicated to those who need it, via your most appropriate communications channels.

But how do we effectively and efficiently make the leap from identifying an improvement and incorporating that into business as usual so that it results in an outcome that

we want?

I suggest that the process itself is only as effective as the stakeholder engagement that accompanies it. It is our stakeholders who do the doing, but it is also our stakeholders who create the chasm and can be the blockage between a good idea and a practice change where operational improvement is the result.

In this presentation, I'll outline how the Operational Improvement Team at NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has succeeded in getting the right people involved, at the right time, in the right place, with the right resources, and have everybody pointing in the same direction with a clearly defined objective.

How did we review the largest fire season in modern history, identify lessons, develop recommendations and actions, then get to the point where most of those actions have now been achieved or are part of business as usual?



Andy McQuie is a Senior Project Officer with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service where he leads the Operational Improvement team in the Fire and Incident Operations Branch.

His team collects, analyses and processes data from fire and emergency operations, fire research, and fire-related technology and uses this to produce outputs that deliver operational improvement outcomes.

Andy has been a Park Ranger and Operational Firefighter across Australia; from cultural burning in the Gulf of Carpentaria, to fighting bushfires at the base of Uluru and the spinifex plains of Central Australia, to the tall timber of the Victorian high country for Black Saturday 2009.

He has worked across local, State and Federal governments and in private sector conservation, and specialises in stakeholder engagement for effective environmental outcomes.

Shaping lessons learned with artificial intelligence

Inspector Bruce Budge (Queensland Fire Department)

2.45pm | Thursday 22 May

Lessons management for fire and emergency services has been proven to be an effective approach for enhancing safety, efficiency, and operational readiness for firefighters.

A fire department can learn in three ways: through its own experiences, which often come at a high cost; from the experiences of other fire departments, which may also have been costly; or through Artificial Intelligence (AI) simulations, which involve no cost and allow lessons to be shared across all fire departments.

AI-powered systems provide real-time data analysis, pattern recognition, and predictive insights that streamline the documentation and application of lessons learned. These tools enable firefighters to analyse incident reports, identify recurring trends, and improve training and operational protocols.

This presentation will provide a snapshot of the potential use of AI to review previous incidents for lessons learned and to look forward with novel approaches to future responses such as electric vehicles and new building technologies.

The presentation also examines the lessons management practices adopted by various military organisations as a comparison. Military systems leverage AI to support adaptive learning environments, foster collaboration across units, and deliver actionable insights during and after operations. Comparing these advancements reveals opportunities for the fire service to adopt similar models, such as centralised databases, decision-support tools, and AI-assisted simulations for scenario planning.

Finally, the presentation addresses future trends, including the integration of extended reality for immersive learning and cross-agency AI platforms for shared lessons.

Leadership challenges: influencing decision-makers for continuous improvement in emergency management

Stefan Weir (National Emergency Management Agency, New Zealand)

3.45pm | Thursday 22 May

The success of continuous improvement in emergency management hinges on effectively influencing decision-makers to prioritise and act on lessons identified. At the strategic level, decision-makers play a pivotal role in embedding lessons management into organisational culture, allocating resources, and driving systemic change.

This presentation focuses on strategies to engage and influence decision-makers to maximise the impact of lessons management initiatives.

Decision-makers can disrupt the cycle of recurring lessons by initiating systemic changes that address the root causes of these issues, rather than just treating the symptoms. Leaders can embed a culture of continuous learning and adaptive strategies, that transform short-term fixes into long-term, sustainable progress and break the cycle of recurring lessons.

New Zealand's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) will present case studies which cover:

- What are the ways that everyone involved in lessons management processes can engage and influence decision-makers?
- What can one person do? What can we do?
- What will we gain if we simply acknowledge the problems?
- What is it about our culture, and who we are that will help us build maturity in New Zealand's emergency management system?

The audience will come away with insights on what can help to embed lessons management in strategic decision-making.



Stefan Weir is the Chief of Staff at Te Rākau Whakamarumaru, NEMA, a role he's held since 2022. Before this Stefan was based in the Beehive (NZ Parliament) as Private Secretary to the Minister for Emergency Management (2015-22) and Minister for Youth (2013-15). For the last ten years Stefan has been in the 'inner circle' alongside Ministers, Prime Ministers and senior leaders during emergencies including Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle, the Kaikoura earthquake, Port Hills Fires, Christchurch terror attack, Whakaari White Island eruption, COVID and many other severe weather related events.

Building and leading a culture from learning lessons – a real world case study

Daniel Austin GFireE (NSW State Emergency Service)

4.15pm | Thursday 22 May

Each year, there is discussion about how lessons practitioners feel the struggle to gain traction beyond the initial After-Action Review (AAR) and lessons report, to develop cultural positivity, buy in and support to implement lessons and be able to demonstrate learning.

This presentation is about the journey that NSW State Emergency Service (SES) has been on, the key steps and moments in that journey that heralded change, the leadership required and the tangible examples of learning.

Lessons had been a part of NSW SES just like most organisations for many years, and work had been going on to establish committees, working groups and place lessons on the agendas of high-level committees, but traction was slow.

It's no secret that the NSW SES has been through some seriously significant operational activity over the past few years. It's also no secret that we received substantial funding and capability growth as a result.

But it was the significant flooding in 2021 that proved to be a strategic turning point, and the decision to request an

AFAC Independent Review. There was intense criticism of such a decision.

The review delivered 28 recommendations, all for areas of improvement. Those 28 recommendations were crafted into 73 actions. Today all 28/73 are closed and implemented. AAR's from more recent events have provided evidence that lessons have been learned, and not just implemented. Issues that were previously identified as areas for improvement are now areas of positive performance.

The review led to the first significant funding boost to the NSW SES but was this luck or strategy? And how did this lead to a change in the culture of learning lessons?

This 20-minute presentation will unpack the deliberate actions and decisions behind commissioning the review, the steps taken, the areas of focus, the partnerships built and the resulting cultural change, where now it is not only the operational arm that asks for AAR's, but the whole business.



Daniel Austin has over 35 years in the emergency management sector in both volunteering and career roles across SA, WA and NSW. He has worked across a variety of functional areas including training, prevention, operational planning, as well as broader leadership roles in both regionally-based and headquarters roles.

His career highlights include leading District Emergency Management Committee's planning for the centenary of ANZAC commemorations in WA; supporting the recovery from the 2005 Wangary bushfires; leading an AFAC

Independent Review of the 2018-19 Victorian Bushfire season, leading numerous interstate deployments; as well as leading response to fire, storm, cyclone, and most recently the COVID pandemic and widespread flooding.

As Deputy Commissioner with NSW SES, he was responsible for leading response to three of the worst severe weather years on record in NSW. Daniel has led key organisational projects including Flood Rescue Enhancement, Operational Systems, Fleet, Operational Communications, Training, Organisational Design and a significant review of policy. Today, he is responsible for the leadership of the organisation as well as leading functional areas such as training, capability development, operational improvement, research and operational systems.

Daniel is a Graduate of the Institute of Fire Engineers and the Institute of Company Directors and holds qualifications in Management, Adult and Vocational Education and Emergency Management.

General information

Networking event

All in-person attendees are invited to join us at the end of day one for a networking session. Light refreshments, including beverages and canapés will be served.

AFAC Lessons Management Award

AFAC, along with member agencies, recognise the continued need to develop lessons management capability across the fire and emergency services in Australia. The AFAC Knowledge, Innovation and Research Utilisation Network develops and advocates approaches that support the development and sharing of good practice in knowledge management, lessons management, innovation and cultural practices that support our business at all levels.

The Lessons Management Award winner will be recognised for their efforts to develop lessons management capability within their organisation and across the sector.

Join the conversation

The Lessons Management Forum is being presented to both a virtual and in-person audience and we want to make sure everyone has a chance to participate. The Lessons Management Forum uses an audience interaction platform called Slido. Slido allows you to submit your questions as well as upvote the questions of other participants. Questions with the highest number of votes will stand a better chance to get answered by speakers.

1. Go to [slido.com](https://www.slido.com)
2. Enter **#LMF2025** or **scan the QR code**, which will be displayed on the slideshow of each presentation.
3. Once you are in the Lessons Management Forum Q&A page you can pick which sessions you wish to ask your questions in.

Scan here
to join the
conversation



Sponsors

The Lessons Management Forum is generously supported by event partners and sponsors.



Australian Government
Australian Civil-Military Centre

Gold sponsor

Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC)



National Emergency
Management Agency
Te Rākau Whakamarumaru
Aotearoa New Zealand

Silver sponsor

National Emergency Management Agency,
New Zealand (NEMA)



Australian and New Zealand Council for fire and emergency services

AFAC.COM.AU | **f** AFACnews **in** afac **✕** AFACnews

Supporting partners

Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience



Australian Government
National Emergency
Management Agency