

Central NSW Joint Organisation Submission on the Draft Disaster Adaptation Plan Guidelines



**CENTRAL NSW
JOINT ORGANISATION**

Bathurst
Blayney
Cabonne
Cowra
Forbes
Lachlan
Lithgow
Oberon
Orange
Parkes
Weddin

19 August 2024

Reference: jb:08 240819
Enquiries: Ms J Bennett: 0428 690 935

To: NSW Reconstruction Authority
Email: dap@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au

Dear Disaster Adaptation Planning Team,

Re: Draft Disaster Adaptation Plan Guidelines

Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO) speaks with a unified voice for its collective priorities. This region has a proud history of working collaboratively, representing over 180,000 people covering an area of more than 53,000sq kms comprising the local government areas of its membership - Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Weddin.

Tasked with intergovernmental cooperation, leadership and prioritisation, CNSWJO has consulted with its stakeholders to identify key strategic regional priorities. The CNSWJO Strategic Plan can be found here - www.centraljo.nsw.gov.au.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Disaster Adaptation Plan (DAP) Guidelines. The CNSWJO is supportive of the guidelines' intent and the regional approach to disaster adaptation planning; however, we would like to raise some concerns specific to our smaller member councils, particularly regarding the proposed regionalisation of DAPs and the coordination of the five stages without dedicated funding for a regional position to assist in this process.

Support for the Guidelines

The regional approach outlined in the DAP Guidelines is a logical step forward, recognising that disasters are not contained within local government boundaries. The collaborative model proposed is aligned with the existing efforts of CNSWJO and our member councils, which have been co-designed through disaster resilience initiatives. We appreciate the flexibility and adaptability that the guidelines offer, allowing councils to tailor the DAPs to the unique needs of their communities.

Key Concerns

1. Impact on Smaller Councils

While the regional approach is commendable, the reality is that our smaller councils, with limited resources and capacity, may struggle to meet the requirements set out in the guidelines. The comprehensive nature of the DAP process, from data collection to stakeholder engagement, poses significant challenges for councils with constrained budgets and staffing levels. Without additional support, there is a risk that these councils will be left behind, unable to fully participate in or benefit from the DAP process.

2. Need for Funded Regional Coordination

The Central NSW JO speaks for over 180,000 people covering an area of more than 53,000sq kms comprising of Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, and Weddin.

The coordination of the five stages of the DAP process is critical to its success; however, without a funded regional position the burden of this coordination falls on the already overstretched staff within our member councils. CNSWJO, with its established relationships and regional knowledge, is well-positioned to support this process. We recently delivered a region-wide Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF) project that was highly successful, demonstrating our capacity and the strength of our existing networks. Notably, the Joint Organisation (JO) network that took on this work now spans 64 councils, which the NSW Reconstruction Authority could leverage to enhance the effectiveness and reach of the DAPs across the state. We recommend considering the establishment of a funded regional coordination role that can be hosted within an appropriate organisation, which could provide consistency and continuity across the region.

3. Regional Boundaries and Alignment

Discrepancies between boundaries of planning regions, Joint Organisation regions, and other combat agency regions could lead to confusion and inefficiencies for stakeholders and importantly, communities. It is important that boundaries are carefully considered and aligned where possible to avoid overlaps or gaps in responsibility and ensure a cohesive approach to disaster adaptation.

4. Access to Up-to-Date Spatial Data

Findings from the recent [Disaster Risk Reduction Spatial Data Scoping Study](#) highlight the critical need for councils to have access to comprehensive, current, and climate-informed spatial datasets. This data is essential for evidence-based land use planning, community preparedness activities, disaster adaptation and mitigation, and emergency management; however, there are significant gaps in the availability, accessibility, and quality of this data, particularly for smaller councils.

The study identified that councils often struggle to access high-resolution, up-to-date spatial data that is easy to understand and use. The cost and complexity of accessing this data, along with the lack of a centralised, user-friendly platform, are major barriers. We recommend that the NSW Reconstruction Authority prioritise the development of a centralised portal for disaster-related spatial data, with clear guidelines on data usage and easy access for all relevant users. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that this data is available in formats that are accessible to non-technical users, enabling broader participation in disaster planning and response activities.

Recommendations

To address these concerns, we recommend the following:

1. Ensure that the processes associated with the DAPs are simplified, particularly for smaller councils, to reduce the administrative burden and ensure that resources are focused on implementation rather than bureaucracy.
2. Leverage the already established JO network by establishing and funding a regional coordination role to manage the DAP process, ensuring that all councils, regardless of size, can contribute to and benefit from the DAPs.
3. Discrepancies between the boundaries for planning regions, Joint Organisation regions, and other combat agency regions could lead to confusion and inefficiencies. It is important that boundaries are carefully considered and aligned where possible to avoid overlaps or gaps in responsibility and ensure a cohesive approach to disaster adaptation.
4. Develop a centralised, user-friendly portal for disaster-related spatial data, ensuring it is accessible, up-to-date, and available in formats that cater to the varying technical capabilities of council staff. This portal should include guidelines on data usage and encourage data sharing across agencies.

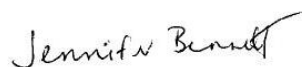
Conclusion

CNSWJO remains committed to improving disaster resilience across our region. We believe that with the right support, the DAP Guidelines can be a powerful tool in achieving this goal; however, without the necessary funding and resources, particularly for our smaller councils, the success of the DAP process may be compromised. Further, JOs are a powerful and efficient vehicle that can be leveraged to benefit all stakeholders by providing consistency, efficiency and better buy-in by councils.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and to work collaboratively with the NSW Reconstruction Authority to ensure the effective implementation of the DAPs in our region.

Should you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at 0428 690 935.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Bennett
Executive Officer
Central NSW Joint Organisation