NSW Reconstruction Authority

Frequently Asked Questions
State Disaster Mitigation Plan 2024-2026

Overview of State Disaster Mitigation Plan (SDMP)

What is the SDMP?

The SDMP is the NSW Government's strategy and action plan for reducing the risk of natural hazards.
The SDMP:

- Identifies NSW's exposure to a range of natural hazards, such as bushfires and floods, and assesses how the associated risk changes over time due to population growth and climate change.

- Identifies a toolkit of options to reduce our exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards.

- Provides a comprehensive plan of 37 short to medium term actions to address policy and program gaps that work to reduce the costs and impacts of disasters.

- Supports local disaster adaptation planning.

Why do we need the SDMP?

Disasters have devastating impacts for our communities. The risks people face from future disasters are growing because of more frequent and extreme weather cycles, climate change and population growth. We need to act now to better prepare NSW for the challenges of the future.

Historically, around 97% of disaster funding is spent on response and recovery with only 3% spent on reducing risks.

With annual losses in NSW tipped to reach $9.1 billion per annum by the year 2060 for the built environment alone, it's essential we turn that around by refocusing government policy and funding into new risk reducing actions. This Plan set out the NSW approach to increasing investment in reducing disaster risk.

How has the SDMP been developed?

The SDMP was developed from technical analysis, research, lessons from previous inquiries, advice from leading experts and broad stakeholder engagement. We held workshops with relevant government agencies, local councils, industry and technical experts, community organisations, members of the community and Aboriginal experts.

What is different about this Plan?

The SDMP is the first plan of its kind in NSW and Australia as it considers both prevention and preparedness in disaster risk management. It outlines ways that we can reduce risk across all types of natural hazards before disasters occur. The Plan considers how climate change will impact risk to communities up to 2060.

We looked at a range of existing plans and policies when developing the SDMP. The SDMP is not an emergency management plan and does not replace any existing emergency or other disaster related plans. The SDMP is not a recovery, community, or resilience plan and is not solely focused on climate change adaptation.

Natural hazard risk

What are natural hazards?

Natural hazards are processes that happen naturally and are important for the regeneration and rejuvenation of the environment. They provide valuable ecosystem functions and are driven by weather (including floods, severe storms, cyclones, coastal hazards, bush fires, heatwaves, landslides, and tornadoes) or geology (for example, earthquakes and tsunamis).

The natural hazard becomes a disaster when it significantly affects people, homes, livelihoods, and things of value, and when the impact of hazards exceeds a community's ability to avoid, cope or recover from them.

What determines natural hazard risk?

Natural events become a natural hazard risk when there is a negative impact such as loss of life or economic, social or environmental damage. Risk is known as the result of the interaction between the severity and frequency of a hazard, the numbers of people and assets exposed to a hazard, and how vulnerable, or susceptible, those people and assets are to damage.

Can risk be reduced?

It is possible to reduce risk by managing the components that determine risk: hazard, exposure and vulnerability.

Risk assessment

Why was a risk assessment needed?

The risk assessment provided information about where the impacts of a range of natural hazards are, primarily on the built environment, and how this risk is likely to change in the future due to climate change and projected population growth. It also allowed us to take a multi-hazard view to show the cumulative impact of multiple hazards.

How has risk been measured?

A Statewide, long-term, multi-hazard approach was used to conduct a technical risk assessment. It compared different natural hazards and their relative risk to the built environment, as well as the social, economic, and natural environments of our communities. A standard metric for the insurance industry and financial markets of average annual loss (AAL) was used. The SDMP includes the results of this risk assessment.

What did the risk assessment show?

The assessment showed that the highest, current natural hazard risks occur from storms and floods, with future risk dominated by coastal hazards including erosion and inundation.

Why was my LGA identified in the top 20 for risk?

We have identified the top 20 LGAs affected by the greatest number of hazards and with the highest number and density of homes and infrastructure.

We have also included LGAs at a higher risk of a single hazard in the plan.

Toolkit and actions

What solutions are proposed?

A risk reduction toolkit with a range of solutions is included in the SDMP, for further consideration in disaster adaptation planning. It identifies ways to reduce our exposure and vulnerability to natural hazard risk. Tools to help us limit exposure include evacuation infrastructure, managed relocation, mitigation infrastructure, strategic planning controls and warning systems. Tools to reduce our vulnerability include building codes and standards, community awareness and preparedness, home modification, infrastructure resilience, nature-based measures and social infrastructure and cohesion.

Why do we need a risk reduction toolkit?

As there is no single or simple solution to reducing disaster risk, we need to look at a range of solutions. The toolkit will also inform local, community-centred disaster adaptation planning to reducing risk.

What are some of the actions in the Plan?

Informed by the risk assessment and extensive consultation, a roadmap of 37 short to medium term actions are proposed. These actions identify gaps in policy and programs to address for disaster risk reduction. Some of these actions include:

- Boosting the State's "Get Ready" preparedness campaigns to ensure communities are better equipped.
- Building a new local government toolkit to guide councils in preparing for disasters and the impacts of climate change.
- Developing local Disaster Adaptation Plans that will help communities become more aware and prepared and inform future planning processes, and rebuilding and reconstruction efforts after a disaster occurs.
- Developing and improving early warning systems so communities are better prepared when disaster strikes.
- Identifying mitigation infrastructure strategies and approaches to funding.
- Reviewing building codes to factor in greater building resilience through materials and design.
- Reviewing insurance levy arrangements and working with the insurance sector to factor in affordability in adaptation planning.
- A further investigation of mitigation infrastructure options like sand management to prepare for coastal erosion of the future.

Engagement

Who did you consult with while developing the SDMP?

Extensive stakeholder engagement took place from mid to late 2023 with Australian, State, and local governments, key industry stakeholders and the community. Aboriginal specialists from across Government were also consulted.

Engagement included a series of workshops, briefings, one on one meetings, technical specialist interviews, surveys, a community reference group, and specialist governance groups.

How many stakeholders did you consult with?

More than 290 participants from over 30 organisations participated in 18 workshops related to the toolkit. In addition, 10 risk assessment workshops and briefings were held with 55 participants. More than 140 councils, joint organisations and region organisation committees were engaged including the Resilient Sydney cohort and the Canberra region. 35 community members from across the state participated in a Community Reference Group with 2 online sessions. There were also more than 4 governance groups from across government involved in the process of developing the Plan.

Supporting local plans

How will local areas be supported?

The SDMP will be supported by place-based, local and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs). DAPs will enable communities to better adapt to their local risks and outline actions that can be taken. The SDMP has been designed to work in parallel with DAPs.

A draft DAP Guideline and Framework will be available for consultation in mid 2024, to help guide these place-based plans.

Next steps

What happens now that the SDMP is published?

We will start to coordinate the delivery of actions outlined in the Plan in partnership with government and industry. Some of the actions will require additional funding.

We will continue to engage with the community and other stakeholders and consider feedback as we implement actions, and develop the next SDMP.

We will deliver the draft Disaster Adaptation Plan Guideline and Framework for consultation in mid 2024 to guide place-based plans.

We will deliver the next State Disaster Mitigation Plan (SDMP) in 2026. This will include progress and outcomes on the actions included in this Plan.

We invite you to take the time to explore the **State Disaster Mitigation Plan** for **2024 – 2026 and discover more.**

Please contact us with any questions or feedback via email:
sdmp@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au