



Disaster Resilience & Recovery Framework

Supporting Presbyteries and Congregations





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Summary

In recent years, Queensland has encountered a series of significant natural disasters, such as bushfires, cyclones, flooding, and severe storms, which have tested the state's infrastructure and emergency response systems. The government has responded by implementing a comprehensive disaster management framework that shapes Queensland's response during disaster events.

Leveraging off the extensive government planning, the Synod office is establishing a compatible Disaster Resilience and Recovery Framework to aid our Presbyteries, Congregations, and their communities in dealing with both natural and human-made disasters. This alignment with government standards and best practices, delivers several advantages, such as enhanced credibility, reduced legal risk, and improved trust within the community.

The UCAQ Disaster Resilience and Recovery Framework - Supporting Presbyteries and Congregations (framework) lays the foundations for a complete UCAQ approach. It consists of a range of policies, systems, processes, and additional resources. It lays out critical planning and response requirements for Synod office, Presbyteries and Congregations to follow, corresponding to the four stages of the *Emergency Management Cycle*.

Whilst the framework covers a broad range of topics, four key focus areas are given context and clarified throughout. These areas are:

- Targeted Presbytery / Congregational Local Disaster Management Planning
- Donations and Grants
- Peer Ministry Support
- Queensland Disaster Chaplaincy Network (QDCN)

Figure A: UCAQ Disaster Resilience & Recovery Framework – Four Key Focus Areas



1) Aim

The ultimate goal of disaster resilience and recovery planning is to build community resilience, develop plans and undertake actions that can minimise the impact of disaster events. A well-designed disaster resilience and recovery framework assists us to be ready to respond as needs arise.

This framework outlines how UCAQ Synod, Presbyteries and Congregations can play a key role working alongside the overarching federal, state, local and district disaster management arrangements.

These arrangements guide how best we can work together within our communities and with government and non-government organisations in the event of a natural or human-action disaster.



2) Defining Disaster Events

Disaster Events can be defined as a “*serious disruption to a community, caused by the impact of an event, that requires a significant coordinated response by the state and other entities to help the community recover from the disruption*”.¹

A disaster is a serious problem that causes widespread social, material (built), economic or natural environmental loss which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.

Figure B: Recovery Environments²

Disasters can be caused by natural, man-made and technological hazards, as well as various factors that influence the exposure and vulnerability of a community.



Figure 1: In Australia, the work of recovery management is generally divided into four environments. Source: Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook (AIDR 2018)

See also [Disasters | Queensland Government](https://www.disaster.qld.gov.au) (www.disaster.qld.gov.au)

¹ [Disaster Management Act 2003 - Queensland Legislation - Queensland Government](#) S.13

² [ADRF Framework Final October 2022.PDF](#) p.6

3) Scope & Application

This framework applies to Ministry Agents, employees and volunteers of UCAQ Synod, Presbyteries and Congregations involved in, preparing for, and involvement in Queensland disaster events. The framework outlines -

- legislated government frameworks and arrangements
- Queensland's key management arrangements and disaster response activities
- UCAQ's Resilience and Recovery Arrangements – Supporting Presbyteries and Congregations

4) Key Objectives

This framework identifies planned measures and actions that can assist in minimising the impact of disaster on Presbyteries and Congregational communities by:

- building community connections and relationships that promote a sense of mutual care, collaboration and resilience, and
- enhancing our ability to be prepared and respond to needs before, during and after disruptive events.

5) Key Associated Roles / Groups

- UCAQ Moderator
- UCAQ General Secretary
- UCAQ Associate General Secretary
- UCAQ Disaster Recovery Specialist
- UCAQ Presbyteries and Congregations
- UnitingCare
- Queensland Disaster Chaplaincy Network (QDCN)

6) About Government Disaster Management Arrangements (QDMA)

In Queensland, the [Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements \(QDMA\)](#) outline the framework for effective disaster management, detailing the roles and responsibilities of government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community volunteer groups.

The QDMA is based upon partnership arrangements between local and state governments. These partnership arrangements recognize that each level of the disaster management arrangements must not only work collaboratively but in unison to ensure the effective coordination of planning, information, and resources necessary for comprehensive disaster management.

The QDMA operates on the three distinct levels of:

- Local Government
- Disaster District
- State Government



A fourth level, the Australian Government, is also included in the QDMA recognizing that Queensland may need to seek Australian Government support in times of disaster.

Through these arrangements disaster recovery is coordinated at local, district and state levels, with priority given to impacted communities and the lead role of Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) and Local Recovery Groups (LRGs).

Figure C: Depicts the four levels of the QDMA



Queensland's Key Management and Coordination Structures

The QDMA arrangements comprise several **key management and coordination structures** for achieving effective disaster management in Queensland. These arrangements are responsive and scalable. They are:

- **Disaster Management Groups** - that operate at local, district and state levels and are responsible for the planning, organisation, coordination, and implementation of measures to mitigate/prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster events.
- **Disaster Coordination Centres** - at local, district and state levels that support disaster management groups in coordinating information, resources, and services necessary for disaster operations.
- **Disaster Management Plans** - developed to ensure appropriate disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery at local, district and state levels.
- **Hazard Specific Primary Agencies** - responsible for the management relating to specific hazards.
- **Specific-purpose Committees** - either permanent or temporary, established under the authority of disaster management groups for specific purposes relating to disaster management.

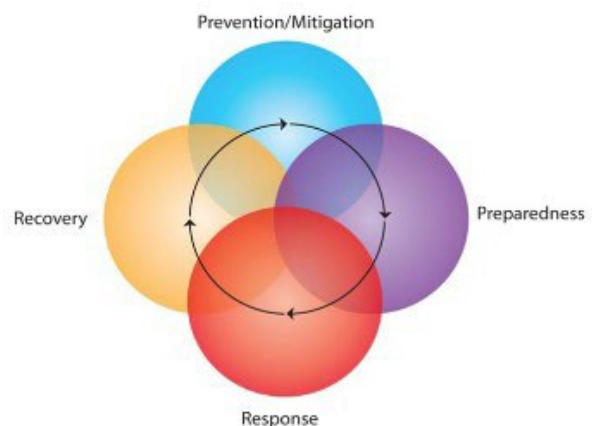
Queensland Disaster Management Plans

[Interim State Disaster Management Plan 2024-2025](#) establishes the framework, arrangements and practices that enable current and future disaster management in Queensland. It outlines the functions, roles and responsibilities for all agencies involved in disaster management in Queensland, and guides, contributes to and supports the resilience of local communities across *prevention, preparedness, response and recovery*.

Figure D: Emergency Management Cycle

The Queensland government's [DM Guideline | Disasters | Queensland Government](#) provides information to guide the partnerships between community and groups at the local, district, state and federal levels to deliver coordinated, cooperative, and integrated outcomes.

A range of associated plans (see [Queensland Disaster Management Plans](#)) have also been developed and include District and Local Disaster Management Plans and Business Continuity Plans (BCP).



7) When Disasters Happen in Queensland

Declaration of Disaster Event³

A district disaster coordinator or the Minister and the Premier may declare a disaster to prevent or minimise any of the following—

- (i) loss of human life
- (ii) illness or injury to humans
- (iii) property loss or damage
- (iv) damage to the environment



Ingham Floods 2025

Queensland's System of Control

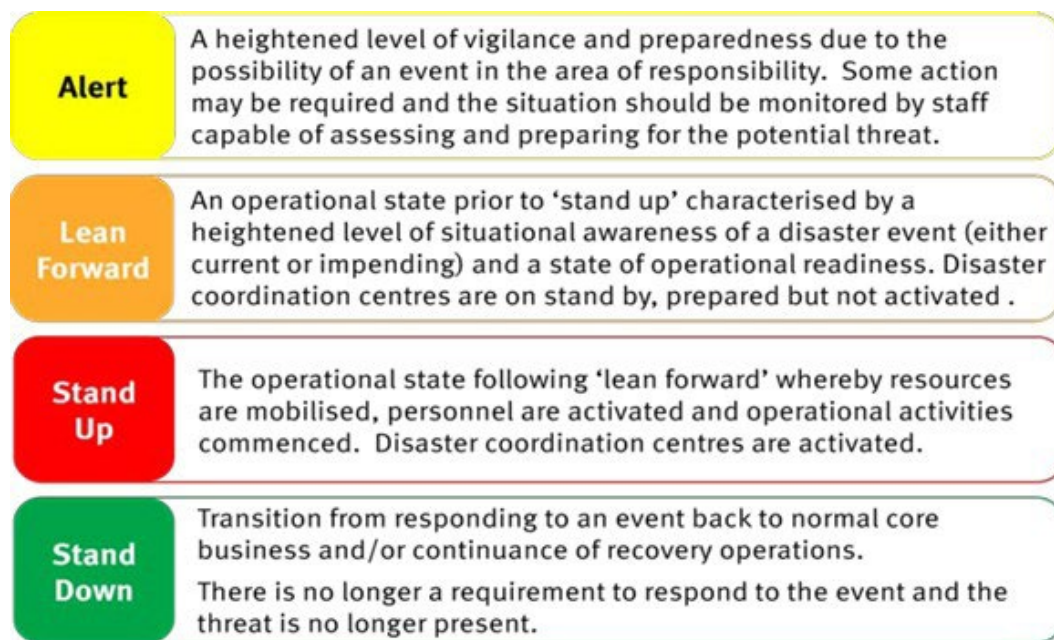
Disaster response involves taking appropriate measures to respond to an event, which includes actions taken and measures planned before, during and immediately after an event, to ensure that its effects are minimised and persons affected by the event are given immediate relief and support.

These response measures will often involve multiple organisations simultaneously engaging in response functions.

Queensland's response activity is underpinned by a **system of control** that includes commonly understood **levels of activation⁴** ie when responses and resources are mobilised.

The four (4) levels of activation for disaster management are **Alert, Lean Forward, Stand-Up** and **Stand-Down**.

Figure E: Four Activation Levels



³ [Disaster Management Act 2003](#) Sections 64 & 69

⁴ [Interim State Disaster Management Plan 2024-2025](#) p.34

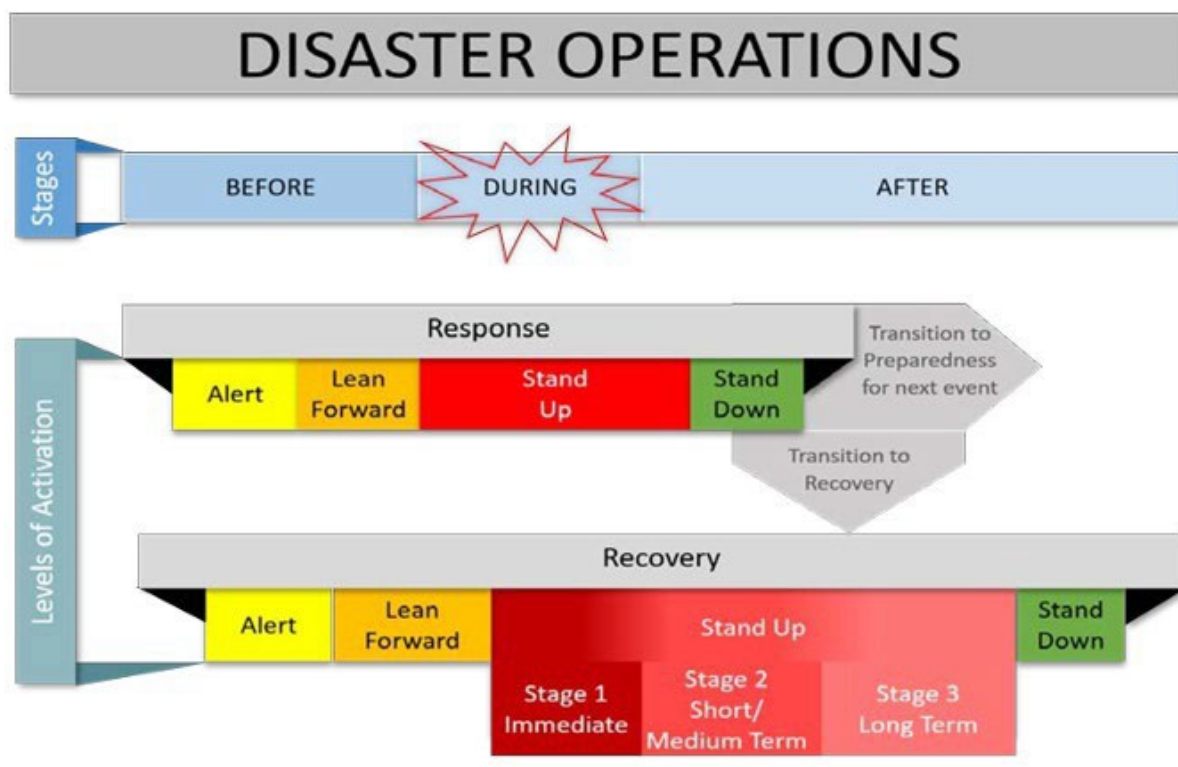
Queensland's Disaster Response and Disaster Recovery Activities

Disaster operations respond to the changing characteristics of the location and event. This includes activities that are considered **disaster response** and **disaster recovery** activities. The transition between these activities is *not linear*.

Activation of response and recovery arrangements should occur in accordance with the activation processes detailed in the relevant local government area's plan. Figure 4 below demonstrates the correlation between the response and recovery phases, levels of activation and stages of operations during a disaster operation.

For more information see [Local government disaster dashboards](#) | [Community support](#) | [Queensland Government](#) and [Queensland Disaster Management Plans](#))

Figure F: Correlation between disaster response and recovery phases



8) UCAQ Arrangements - Supporting Presbyteries and Congregations

There are clear advantages for us in developing our disaster resilience and recovery arrangements.

It aims to provide a coordinated approach, supporting a whole of church shared responsibility of preparing for, responding to and recovering from disaster events.

This is accomplished by providing support, guidance, and resources to effectively assist UCAQ Synod, Presbyteries, and Congregations in their preparation for and response to disaster situations.



By developing our arrangements in this way, we can:

- leverage off well-established research and practices that cover all that might reasonably be foreseen in terms of disaster recovery,
- identify potential risks and vulnerabilities as we evaluate our reliance on critical services and/or resources, and
- assess our own disaster management solutions to ensure they support our ongoing service needs.

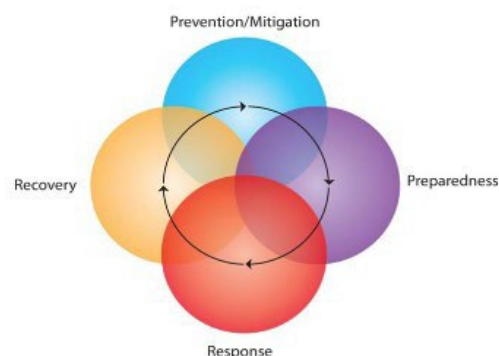
Resources for UCAQ Synod, Presbyteries and Congregations (including links to disaster specific updates) are available via [The Hub - Uniting Church Australia \(go to Disaster Management link- right side\)](#) – or access on your phone via this QR Code -



Planning Our Disaster Resilience & Recovery Arrangements

Our planning is underpinned by the well-established Emergency Management Cycle of ***prevention, preparedness, response and recovery***. For each of the elements, the potential impacts upon our Presbytery and Congregational Communities will vary and be different for each church community. In brief, these elements consider:

- ① **Prevention / Mitigation** – advance actions or preventative measures
- ② **Preparedness** – making arrangements and creating our Local Disaster Management Action Plans (template on [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#))
- ③ **Response** – providing assistance and intervention
- ④ **Recovery** – coordinated process of long-term support



A **broader outline** of the characteristics and activities for each of the Emergency Management Cycle elements and what these may look like in practice follows.

Notably, the four Key focus areas of the UCAQ Disaster Resilience and Recovery Framework are given context and clarified throughout. These are:

- 1) Targeted Presbytery / Congregational Local Disaster Management Planning
- 2) Donations and Grants
- 3) Peer Ministry Support
- 4) Queensland Disaster Chaplaincy Network (QDCN)



Figure A (repeated): UCAQ Disaster Resilience & Recovery Framework – Four Key Focus Areas

① *Prevention / Mitigation* - activities should be happening all the time

Typically characterised by **preventative measures and actions undertaken in advance** – sometimes referred to as mitigation. Examples include having alternative sources of electricity or alternative communication systems in place or check fire breaks are clear of fuel and appropriately wide.

Following is an outline of some key points for Presbyteries and Congregations during this phase -

- Connect / meet with key people in your communities eg local Councillors
- and MPs, community leaders, faith leaders, government and non-government organisations involved in disaster related activities and gather information, feedback and reflections about community processes and resources.
- Note and discuss new discoveries and shortcomings which could provide insights into your disaster-related planning.
- Consider further planning and/or adapt planning accordingly.
- Seek out information and be aware of other government or non-government agency and/or ecumenical partnership potentials.
- Communicate changes in process or approaches to Presbytery and Congregational members where needed.
- Establish Archive wisdom well - information needs to be easily found before and during the next crisis. Each Presbytery and Congregation will need to determine the most appropriate means of archiving and retrieving wisdom, keeping in mind that during a disaster there may not be electrical service.
- Practice and conduct training/information sessions so all parts of the church know what to do to be prepared.



See also [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#)

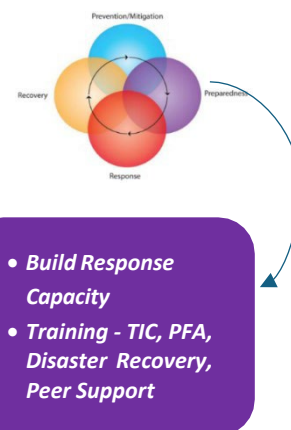


② *Preparedness - activities can also be happening all the time*

Typically characterised by building the response capacity of the Presbyteries and Congregations by **making arrangements, creating and testing plans, training, educating and sharing information** to prepare communities should an emergency eventuate.

Key points for Presbyteries and Congregations during this phase include -

- Research your local/district [Government Disaster Management Plans](#) as they will have important local information for each Congregation.
- Connect with Local Government Disaster Management / Recovery Committee members.
- Check in that essential training preparations for Congregational Leaders is current – training which incorporates the core principles of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC). For example:
 - (i) Psychological First Aid Training
 - (ii) Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Training
 - (iii) Disaster Recovery Peer Support Training
- Ensure your Congregational contacts details ie Minister, Church Office, Church Council Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer – are kept up to date with the Synod Office and with the Presbytery.
- Each Congregation to establish an Emergency Contact Person and an alternate and maintain current Pastoral Lists including vulnerable people in your community.
- Create your Congregation's Local Disaster Management Plan, assessing needs surrounding:
 - (i) general facilities requirements, technology and other systems including sensitive data that are essential for normal operations, and
 - (ii) the identification of individuals who are responsible for disaster management tasks and what resources are required to support them.
- Review arrangements and keep Synod Office informed Synod where Congregations have property / assets officially identified as critical assets by government for disaster management arrangements.
 - i. Arrangements include government Evacuation or Recovery Centres being established for the purposes of government Disaster Management Team deployments.
 - ii. Synod Office will maintain an inventory of critical church property and assets identified for government disaster management responses. Physical Assets include such things as private and open spaces, kitchens, toilets and shower facilities.



See also [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#)



③ *Response- activities are usually measured in hours, days or week*

Typically characterised by **providing assistance and intervention just before, during or immediately after an emergency**. Here the focus is on saving lives, helping people and protecting church assets (buildings, infrastructure).

There are three (3) distinct elements of this phase. They are:

- a) Warning of a Potential Extreme Weather or Other Disaster Event
- b) Declaration of a Disaster Event
- c) After Impact of Disaster Event

Key points that can assist for each are outlined below.



a) Warning of Potential for an Extreme Weather or Other Disaster Event

The **relevant Presbyteries and Congregations** can commence preparations for a potential disaster by:

- refamiliarising themselves with the Local Government Disaster Management Action Plan and their Congregation's Local Disaster Management Plans and practices,
- take preparatory actions, and
- continue to remain informed and updated via government updates (disaster specific updates made available on [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management.](#))



The **DR Specialist or delegate** shall:

- inform the Moderator / General Secretary / Associate General Secretary and ensure that regular disaster specific updates are provided to each,
- initiate communication with Presbytery contacts in potentially impacted areas to discuss plans and procedures, while verifying currency of information and identifying any potential additional needs,
- initiate and/or verify DR Specialist or delegate's involvement in Synod Office disaster management arrangements including updates to and involvement within the Synod Office Crisis Management Team,
- working together with Communications and Fundraising, prepare to activate the Moderator's Disaster Relief Appeal within the Uniting News and confirm [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#) page provides donation and grant information, and
- working together with Communications, ensure that [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#) page provides links to this disaster's specific updates (when made available).

b) Declaration of a Disaster Event

Upon **Government Declaration of a Disaster** (see *Declaration of a Disaster Event*), the Synod Office arrangements and relevant *Presbytery and Congregation Local Disaster Management Plans* are activated.

The relevant Presbyteries and Congregations shall:

- activate their Local Disaster Management Plans and practices,
- take preparatory actions, and
- continue to remain informed and updated via government updates (disaster specific updates as made available on [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management.](#))



During this stage, the **DR Specialist or delegate** shall:

- maintain contact with key people involved with the disaster event as well as disaster responders in order to provide updates if needed, gather information on immediate needs that may be required, and facilitate access to disaster recovery trained peer supporter conversations as required,
- ensure ongoing regular disaster specific updates to the Moderator / General Secretary / Associate General Secretary,
- maintain contacts in Presbyteries and Congregations impacted by disaster events and provide procedural information and advice (as required) as they activate their Local Disaster Management Plans,
- maintain active involvement in Synod Office disaster management arrangements including updates to and involvement within the Synod Office Crisis Management Team,
- working together with Communications and Fundraising, activate the Moderator's Disaster Relief Appeal within the Uniting News, ensuring the current disaster's name is identified and reconfirm that [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#) page provides donation and grant information,
- working together with Communications, verify that [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#) page's resourcing maintains currency as the Emergency Management Cycle phases progress.
- reconfirm disaster specific updates remain available and are maintained on [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#) page.



Importantly: When considering community support, please be aware that *only* Queensland Disaster Recovery Chaplains who are specifically authorised by government deployment via the [Queensland Disaster Chaplaincy Network \(QDCN\)](#) are able to enter and support people in shelters, evacuation centres and recovery centres.

c) After Impact of a Disaster Event

After impact –

- the Presbytery Minister connects with Congregations and Leaders of areas impacted.
- the Presbytery Ministers share with DR Specialist and/or Wellbeing Chaplain the name and contact details of people who may need follow up pastoral support.
- Of note: UnitingCare will connect with congregations connected with Connect100+.
- the DR Specialist or delegate maintains continual communications with Presbyteries impacted.
- the Moderator may also follow up with pastoral contact at any time.
- The Moderator's Disaster Relief Appeal procedures are activated as outlined within the *Moderator's Disaster Relief Appeal – Donations & Grants Policy* identifying the current disaster event's name.
- Disaster Recovery Peer Supporter support activated as required – focusing on providing care, support and connection to resources for Ministry Agents.

See also [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#)



④ *Recovery - is usually measured in months and/or years*

Typically characterised as a coordinated process of supporting emergency-affected communities in reconstruction of physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing.

Following is an outline of some key points and other information that can assist during this phase.

- Ministry Agents are encouraged to not overlook their regular meetings with their Professional Supervisor.
- Continued disaster recovery peer support as required under the guidance of the Presbytery Ministers.
- Local Congregations encouraged to connect with local disaster recovery agencies in order to create cooperative local initiatives.
- Where relevant, local congregations to connect with UnitingCare through Connect 100+.
- Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy may be deployed by QDCN. (Only QDCN Chaplains authorised for shelters, evacuation and recovery centers)
- Congregations to provide reports to Presbytery (in oral or written form - as agreed with Presbytery Minister) specific outcomes of initiatives and use of Moderator's Disaster Relief Grants if received.
- Presbyteries gather Congregation reports and populate template as provided on [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#) to send through to the Disaster Recovery email address - disaster.management@ucaqld.com.au.
- As reports received, Presbytery Ministers, DR Specialist or delegate and other key associated roles / groups to reflect on reports and review policy and processes where necessary.
- Report damage to church owned property to Group Insurance via the [Protecht Register Report](#) link or scan the QR at right on your phone
- Consideration given to potential for supply ministry as provided within the *Moderator's Disaster Relief Appeal – Donations & Grants Policy*.



See also [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#)



9) Peer Support and Special Ministry Supply – Disaster Recovery Trained

Disaster Recovery Peer Supporters

In response to a disaster event, UCAQ Ministry Agents are often called upon as pastoral care givers to people within their communities. In some such situations, Disaster Recovery Peer Supporters from throughout UCAQ may be initiated by the DR Specialist or delegate.

Disaster Recovery Peer Support is about equipping “carers to bring care to other carers” thereby better enable them to support Ministry Agents. They have undergone specialist training and, through formalised processes, come alongside others with similar work or life experiences (Peers) to support their colleagues.

Disaster Recovery Special Ministry Supply

In some circumstances, arrangements may be made for Special Ministry Supply to allow a Ministry Agent to take leave away. The Peer Supporter would be best able to discuss possibilities with the Ministry Agent. Typically, this would be for a period of no longer than one month.

It is not intended that funding for normal Presbytery and/or Congregation expenses will be considered for Special Ministry Supply eg paying stipend for a ministerial supply in a Congregation unless the supply is related to the Minister in placement being called to community focused outreach/ assistance.

Specialised ministry arrangements shall be considered on a case-by-case basis and subject to Presbytery and General Secretary approval. These arrangements include the initiation of Disaster Recovery Peer Support and Special Ministry Supply. Ongoing lengthy Special Ministry Supply would only be available in extraordinary circumstances. Following is an initiation timeline guide for Peer Support and Special Ministry Supply.

Table 1: Peer Support & Special Ministry Supply Initiation Timeline

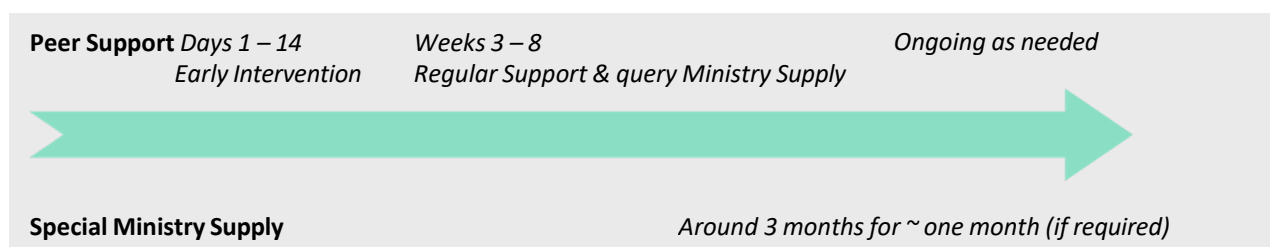


Table 2: Peer Support & Special Ministry Supply Initiation Guide

Timeline	Support Arrangement	Principles
Day 1 - 14	Early Intervention	Supported Ministry Agent Led (<i>drawing from trauma-informed care principles by enabling the person being supported to shape how they receive care</i>) - checking on welfare, providing pastoral care, identifying gaps in immediate resource needs, identifying what is needed most, and connecting Ministry Agents with resources. Potential here to assist with triaging calls and offers coming in to assist to allow Ministry Agent to concentrate of assessing community needs and organising the best way forward.
Weeks 3 – 8 (situation dependent)	Regular catch ups and support	Peer Supporters offer a calm and trusted voice beside the supported Ministry Agent – prioritising conversations that are led and shaped by the supported Ministry Agent’s needs and priorities, seeking out what is required and working through any cultural issues that may inadvertently create an environment where Ministry Agents feel they need to keep going. In conversation with the supported Ministry Agent, sensitively discern (at around four weeks) whether short-term relief may be helpful, including brief periods away from regular responsibilities - with Presbytery support for the Ministry Agent to have brief periods of rest, such as a few days or a weekend away – with worship, services or other commitments covered by the Presbytery (eg retired Minister or Lay Preacher).
~8 weeks from end of event	Special Ministry Supply option	In practical terms, Special Ministry Supply begins no sooner than approximately three months after the event concludes, with a particular emphasis on enabling the Ministry Agent to take time off.
~3 months to first anniversary of event	Special Ministry Supply option	Needs local ownership ie cooperation between Ministry Agent, Peer Supporter, local congregation. The earliest anticipated is approximately three months after the event concludes. This typically may involve a short time-limited duration of around one month.
Ongoing	Check-ins	Peer Supporter regularly checks-in on supported Ministry Agent

10) About Queensland Disaster Chaplaincy Network (QDCN) Chaplaincy

In the wake of disasters, the impact on individuals and communities can be profound. While the physical damage may be visible - homes destroyed, landscapes altered - the emotional and spiritual toll often runs deep, manifesting in grief, anxiety, and a sense of loss.

This is where the [Queensland Disaster Chaplaincy Network \(QDCN\)](#) Chaplain’s presence can be a valuable source of support. The QDCN is an ecumenical body and UCAQ is a founding member. It is responsible for facilitating all **government deployments** of Queensland Disaster Recovery Chaplains, providing significant support in response to natural and human-made disasters. In times of distress, when the world seems chaotic, Disaster Recovery Chaplains can help restore a sense of hope, purpose, and community.



Becoming a QDCN Chaplain

The [UCAQ QDCN Chaplaincy Policy](#) provides details on accreditation and certification requirements. You can find out more by emailing disaster.management@ucaqlld.com.au or complete an Expression of Interest by scanning the QR Code and we will contact you.





11) Communications and Notifications

Uniting Church Synod Crisis Management Team Stood Up

- As per the UCAQ Synod Crisis Management Team plan
- Disaster Recovery Specialist or delegate involvement as needed

Disaster Notification Contacts

Role / Department	Phone	Email
Synod Office – Standard Business Hours	07 3377 9777	reception@ucaqld.com.au
Synod Office – Urgent Out of Hours	07 3377 9706	
Disaster Recovery Specialist	0487 205 764	disaster.management@ucaqld.com.au
GM Communications (<i>Media only</i>)*	0410 483 430	communications@ucaqld.com.au
Insurance – Claims**	07 3377 9754 / 0475 706 507	ucinsuranceclaims@ucaqld.com.au
Insurance – General**	07 3377 9804 / 0408 157 792	ucinsurance@ucaqld.com.au
Fundraising	0409 592 369 / 0438 277 011	fundraising@ucaqld.com.au

***Media:** Refer all enquiries to Communications. Only the Moderator may speak publicly on behalf of UCAQ.

****Insurance** – See S.12) Insurance below

Media

All media enquiries are required to be referred to Communications.

Importantly: **Only the Moderator** is authorised to speak to the media on behalf of UCAQ.

We need to be especially careful not to give personal opinions or any other information regarding the disaster event. It is also imperative that we do not speak negatively in public about issues or other disaster recovery workers or agencies. Any concerns should be raised with your Presbytery Minister.

12) Insurance

Seeking out assistance with insurance matters or logging a claim is often one of our first practical steps taken when a disaster event has impacted on our people and property. The Insurance Team can be contacted by email or telephone as follows.

When lodging a new claim or following up on a previous claim -

Email: ucinsuranceclaims@ucaqld.com.au Phone: 07 3377 9754 or 0475 706 507

For all other insurance queries -

Email: ucinsurance@ucaqld.com.au Phone: 07 3377 9804 or 0408 157 792

Claim forms and other information is also available on the Synod Hub webpage here – [Insurance - Uniting Church Australia](#). Of note: For all property damage, injuries, hazards and health & safety incidents should be reported using the QR Code.



13) Safety, Self-Care and Care for Others

Taking care of people is a very important task and should receive the highest priority immediately following the disaster. Similarly, for Ministry Agents, being mindful of safety and care for themselves is equally important.

General Safety Issues

In almost any disaster situation, hazards and dangers can abound. While survival of the disaster itself can be a harrowing experience, further injury or death following the disaster stemming from carelessness or negligence is senseless.

Everyone must exercise extreme caution to ensure that physical injury or death is avoided while working in and around the disaster site/s.

Workplace Health & Safety laws still apply in a disaster or crisis event. Tasks must be approved and can only be completed by approved persons. It is imperative that no one performs any tasks unless capable of safely doing so in accordance with the UCAQ WHS Policy Framework.

- See also The Hub [Workplace Health and Safety - Uniting Church Australia](#) for further information

Stress Avoidance

Recovery from a disaster will be a very stressful time for everyone involved. Leaders should be careful to monitor the working hours of Ministry Agents, employees and volunteers to avoid over-exertion and exhaustion that can occur under these conditions.

A good approach is to divide your team members into shifts and rotate on a regular basis. This will keep team members fresh and provide for needed time with family or friends.

Post-traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI)

While the widely recognised term is PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, describing a psychiatric condition arising from exposure to trauma, there's a growing shift in terminology. PTS, or post-traumatic stress, becomes PTSI, signifying post-traumatic stress injury. Both terms encompass the same array of symptoms associated with PTSD. However, the distinction lies in the conceptualisation – where PTSD denotes a psychiatric disorder, PTSI frames the condition as a biological injury.

It is crucial to note that many individuals grappling with post-traumatic stress might not receive a PTSD diagnosis and may overlook their signs and symptoms.⁵

Symptoms usually manifest themselves as:

- **Intrusions** - The individual experiences flashbacks or nightmares where the traumatic event is re-experienced.
 - **Avoidance** - The individual tries to reduce exposure to people or things that might bring on their intrusive symptoms.
 - **Hyper-arousal** - The individual exhibits physiological signs of increased arousal, such as hyper vigilance or increased startle response.
-

⁵ [PTSI: Breaking Down PTSD Stigma | Stella Centre](#)

The Practice of Trauma-Informed Care

Presbyteries and Congregations can establish a nurturing environment that:

- recognises the impact of trauma on individuals, and
- facilitates a safe and supportive space for healing and recovery,

by understanding and applying Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) practices for relating to and helping people who have experienced negative consequences after exposure to disasters events.⁶

TIC practices recognise that people's traumatic experiences can profoundly impact their lives, which may be reactivated. It shifts the focus from *"What's wrong with you?"* to *"What happened to you?"*

Core Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

1. **Safety** - when people feel safe, they can begin to heal
2. **Trustworthiness** - transparency and clarity help build a sense of trust
3. **Choice (Control)** - Giving people choice, let's them decide what feels right
4. **Empowerment** - Focusing on strengths and recovery (Believing in someone's resilience helps them believe in themselves)
5. **Connection and Collaboration** - Working together with honesty and respect helps pave the way for healing and recovery
6. **Culturally Responsive** - equitable care is achieved by responding to people's unique experiences

Employee Assistance Program

UCAQ offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to support eligible people who may encounter person or work-related challenges that could affect their performance, health, or well-being. EAPs offer a confidential and safe space for individuals to access counselling and wellbeing support.

UCAQ's EAP provider, TELUS Health, is covered by Synod for eligible individuals, ensuring that these services can be utilized at no out-of-pocket cost. [TELUS Health](#) -

- is available to **Ministry Agents** and **Lay Leaders** of the church
- for **congregational members**, the EAP may be offered by **General Manager People & Culture** pre-approval
- **Contact Details** - TELUS 1300 360 354 or 1800 816 152 if a Ministry Agent or Lay Leader identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- When accessing [TELUS Health](#), the UCA Identifier is [UCQLDS] and Token [UCQLDS01] for first login. Once logged in, click **"Connect with Us"** and then the **Chat** option in the pop-up.

See also [Lifeline Support Services](#) and [Services and support | UnitingCare](#) for a range of services that may be of value depending upon each unique situation. These services are available to **volunteers** and **members of the public** as well.

Professional Supervision

Professional Supervision is a proactive approach that can assist people to critically reflect on their work, problem-solve and develop skills and knowledge to grow your professional competence, confidence, personal resilience and wellbeing. During the aftermath of a disaster, it is crucial to ensure adequate professional supervision is in place for our Ministry Agents, employees and volunteers.

⁶ [The 6 Principles of TIC - Kristi Heffernan, Senior Clinical Specialist, Phoenix Australia Disaster Mental Health Hub](#)

14) Donations & Financial Assistance – Moderator’s Disaster Relief Appeals

Queensland has a strong tradition of generosity and community support during natural disasters and crises. Although prompt contributions of money and goods are valued, uncoordinated aid can sometimes cause unanticipated complications, especially with logistics.

To ensure efficient and effective assistance, monetary donations are preferred as they allow response teams to address urgent needs quickly, avoid logistical challenges, can support the local business community and prevent burdening recipients with unsuitable items.

Financial contributions and support for communities impacted by disaster events are most efficiently managed through the Moderator’s Disaster Relief Appeal. Once a disaster event has been deemed eligible, the Moderator’s Disaster Relief Appeal can be activated to receive monetary donations. These contributions will be designated exclusively for alleviating the suffering caused by disaster events.

Grants that are specifically aimed at addressing local needs can subsequently be applied for.

Grant opportunities are best established at a Presbytery level and are specifically directed towards the relief of suffering caused by disaster events. Presbyteries have a close understanding of the needs, challenges, and resources of their local communities and, because of their direct connection and ongoing relationships with these communities, they are well positioned to assess and decide what type of assistance or support would be most effective and appropriate.

Donating to the Moderator’s Disaster Relief Appeal

Donations can be made directly to [Disaster Relief - Uniting Church in Queensland Synod](#). Although these donations are not tax-deductible, this does allow us the flexibility of broader use of the funds – see *also Moderator’s Disaster Relief Appeal – Donations & Grants Policy* for more detail.

Applying to the Moderator’s Disaster Relief Fund

Applications from Presbyteries for Grants to directly assist in local disaster recovery activities can be made via the [Disaster Relief Appeal Community Project Application Form](#) and forwarded to disaster.management@ucaqld.com.au for consideration.

15) Training & Testing

Localised and other authorised training sessions are recommended to further support our Ministry Agents, employees and volunteers by familiarising them with their roles and responsibilities, including detailed instructions for involvement requirements.

Regular testing of this framework and its associated training can help to ensure its effectiveness and identify any potential gaps or weaknesses.

16) Regular Framework Review and Maintenance

Having a framework for disaster resilience and recovery is critical. However, this framework will rapidly become obsolete if a workable procedure for maintaining the framework is not also developed and implemented.



Periodic reviews and updates to this framework, associated resources and Presbytery/Congregational plans are required to ensure relevant and up to date changes are incorporated. Changes may be relevant to such areas as role, services and facilities, general operations, potential risk, contact information and other details.

In addition, the framework will be tested on a regular basis, and any faults will be corrected.

17) References

[Australian Council of Social Service \(ACOSS\) - Resilient Community Organisations](#)

[Australian Disaster Recovery Framework - October 2022](#)

[Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience - Disaster Mapper](#)

[Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience - Knowledge Hub Collections](#)

[Disaster Management Act 2003 - Queensland](#)

[Disaster Management Regulation 2014 - Queensland](#)

[Disaster Management | Queensland Government](#)

[Disaster Management - Uniting Church Australia - The Hub](#)

[Local Government Directory](#)

[Local Government Disaster Dashboards | Community Support | Queensland Government](#)

[Queensland Disaster Chaplaincy Network \(QDCN\)](#)

[Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements \(QDMA\)](#)

[Queensland Disaster Management Plans](#)

[Queensland Interim State Disaster Management Plan 2024-2025](#)

[Queensland Interim PPRR Disaster Management Guideline 2024-2025](#)

[Disasters | Queensland Government](#) (www.disaster.qld.gov.au)

[Queensland Recovery Plan - subplan to DM Plan - June 2023](#)

[Stella Centre - PTSI Breaking Down PTSD Stigma](#)

18) Related documents

Resources for UCAQ Synod, Presbyteries and Congregations will be under continual development and available via [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#).

Access to government updates as disasters are happening will be available via links contained within the UCAQ Hub – Disaster Management.

Related documents within the *Disaster Resilience & Recovery Framework – Supporting Presbyteries & Congregations* are:

- Local Disaster Management Action Plan Template (for Congregations)
- About Disaster Recovery Peer Support
- Moderator's Disaster Relief Appeal – Donations & Grants Policy
- QDCN Disaster Chaplaincy Policy

Each of these documents are in various stages of development or review and will be posted to [The Hub - UCA Disaster Management](#) as available.





19) Definitions

Term	Meaning
Activation	The Levels of Disaster Event Activation stages that take place when a disaster happens in Queensland include the following triggers: Alert - The 'Alert' phase signals a Community Recovery operation may be required. Lean forward - The 'Lean forward' phase is a heightened state of awareness and operational readiness. Stand up - The 'Stand up' phase indicates a disaster event activation is in place. This is when resources are mobilised, personnel are activated and operational activities start. Stand down - Transitioning back to core business. What happens during an activation For government Queensland Government
Acts & Regulations	A fundamental premise for preparing and responding to Queensland's disasters is to recognise and work within the legislated frameworks articulated in Disaster Management Act 2003 ("the Act") and Disaster Management Regulation 2014. These frameworks promote collaboration among different levels of government, NGOs and community organisations to achieve common goals.
Disaster	A disaster is a serious disruption in a community, caused by the impact of an event, that requires a significant coordinated response by the State and other entities to help the community recover from the disruption. Disaster Management Act 2003
Disaster Declaration	A district disaster coordinator or the Minister or Premier may declare a disaster. A district disaster coordinator for a disaster district may, with the approval of the Minister, declare a disaster situation for the district, or a part of it, if satisfied— (a) a disaster has happened, is happening or is likely to happen, in the disaster district; and (b) it is necessary, or reasonably likely to be necessary, for the district disaster coordinator or a declared disaster officer to exercise declared disaster powers to prevent or minimise any of the following— (i) loss of human life; (ii) illness or injury to humans; (iii) property loss or damage; (iv) damage to the environment. (2) Before declaring the disaster situation, the district disaster coordinator must take reasonable steps to consult with— (a) the district group for the disaster district; and (b) each local government whose area is in, or partly in, the declared area for the disaster situation. The Minister and the Premier may declare a disaster situation for the State, or a part of the State, if satisfied—



Term	Meaning
	(a) a disaster has happened, is happening or is likely to happen, in the State; and (b) it is necessary, or reasonably likely to be necessary, for a district disaster coordinator or a declared disaster officer to exercise declared disaster powers to prevent or minimise any of the following— (i) loss of human life; (ii) illness or injury to humans; (iii) property loss or damage; (iv) damage to the environment. Disaster Management Act 2003 Sections 64 & 69
Disaster Event	An event means any of the following: • a cyclone, earthquake, flood, storm, storm tide, tornado, tsunami, volcanic eruption or other natural happening • an explosion or fire, a chemical, fuel or oil spill, or a gas leak • an infestation, plague or epidemic • a failure or, or disruption to, an essential service or infrastructure • an attack against the state • another event similar to an event mentioned above • an event may be natural or caused by human acts or omissions. Disaster Management Act 2003
Disaster Management	Disaster management means arrangements about managing the potential adverse effects of an event, including, for example, arrangements for mitigating, preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from a disaster. Disaster Management Act 2003
Disaster Operations	Disaster operations means activities undertaken before, during or after an event happens to help reduce loss of human life, illness or injury to humans, property loss or damage, or damage to the environment, including, for example, activities to mitigate the adverse effects of the event. Disaster Management Act 2003
Disaster Recovery Chaplains	Disaster Recovery Chaplains provide a compassionate presence, offering support that goes beyond traditional crisis response. They listen, comfort, and connect people to resources, but perhaps most importantly, they help individuals make sense of their experiences. Their training allows them to navigate complex emotions surrounding loss, displacement, and trauma. In non-denominational ways, they respect and honour diverse beliefs and practices, offering solace and support to people from all walks of life. In times of distress, when the world seems chaotic, Chaplains can help restore a sense of hope, purpose, and community.



Term	Meaning
Emergency Management Cycle	Prevention / Mitigation – advance actions or preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of an event occurring or, if an event occurs, to reduce the severity of the event. Preparedness – making arrangements and creating Presbytery & Congregational Communities Local Disaster Management Plan. Taking preparatory measures to ensure that, if an event occurs, communities, resources and services are able to cope with the effects of the event. Response – providing assistance and intervention - taking of appropriate measures to respond to an event, including action taken and measures planned in anticipation of, during, and immediately after an event to ensure that its effects are minimised and that persons affected by the event are given immediate relief and support. Recovery – coordinated process of long-term support - taking of appropriate measures to recover from an event, including action taken to support disaster-affected communities in the reconstruction of infrastructure, the restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing, and the restoration of the environment
Evacuation	Evacuation focuses on the movement of people from an unsafe or potentially unsafe location to a safer location and their eventual return home. Queensland Interim PPRR Disaster Management Guideline 2024-2025 p.35
Post Traumatic Stress Injury	The widely recognised term is PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, describing a psychiatric condition arising from exposure to trauma, there's a growing shift in terminology. "Disorder" is often associated with an inherent deficiency, like immunodeficiencies or metabolic disorders – something a person is often born with, can identify themselves by, and/or is permanent. In contrast, "injury" is a no-fault or no-shame word. Most injuries are treatable using the right methods. With the right dialogue around post-traumatic stress, including renaming PTSD to PTSI, people will seek treatment. Stella Centre - PTSI Breaking Down PTSD Stigma
Serious Disruption	A serious disruption means— (a) loss of human life, or illness or injury to humans; or (b) widespread or severe property loss or damage; or (c) widespread or severe damage to the environment. Disaster Management Act 2003

20) Revisions

Document number		C4.3			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
1.0	04.12.2025	SSC	04.12.2025	Associate General Secretary	Disaster Recovery Specialist
Next scheduled review		04.12.2028			