

# NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

## Key Conversations Tool for Emergency and Disaster Management

### What is a key conversation?

A key conversation is a short, structured conversation based around a simple scenario. Key conversations can be used as thought starters to raise awareness of small groups of workers during routine meetings or during planned training.

### Who is this for?

This Key Conversation Tool and templates are aimed at direct support workers. It is best used with a group of at least three people during a team meeting or planned training.

## Key Conversations Tool for Emergency and Disaster Management

### How to use this tool

The objective of using this tool, is to encourage your workers to feel more prepared for emergencies and disasters. It aims to do this by increasing awareness and facilitating discussion around some of the challenges and expected responses.

The key conversation is broken into 3 stages:

**Stage 1:** Introduction and supporting materials.

**Stage 2:** Group scenario activity

**Stage 3:** Feedback and discussion

Each key conversation will take up to 30 minutes, depending on the number of people involved.

### Scenarios

The tool contains a completed scenario and a blank template.

**The completed group scenario activity** is for exploring how the Emergency and Disaster Management Standard applies to your workers and the services they deliver.

**The blank group scenario activity** has been added, to allow you to create your own scenarios, specific to your service delivery. Remember to de-identify if you are using real examples with groups of team members.

### Facilitators

The key conversations tool could be used by supervisors, team leaders and managers or any person who can lead group discussions. The tool has facilitator instructions, and the group scenario activity has a facilitator key with prompts, tips and expected responses.

The facilitator's focus will be on creating opportunities for workers to explore and ask questions.

Facilitators should have knowledge of the Emergency and Disaster Management Practice Standard and the relevant policies and procedures of their organisation.

### Desired outcomes

At the end of the session, your team will be more aware of:

- the Emergency and Disaster Management Practice Standard and amendments
- using emergency plans
- individual safeguards during an emergency
- risk management
- continuity of support.

This exercise does not replace the training requirements for emergency and disaster management but aims to increase your workers understanding of their role and responsibilities.

### Facilitator preparation - Supporting resources

There are 2 factsheets, which can be found in the appendix, which could be printed or made available as supporting information for your workers during the activity.

- **Factsheet 1:** An outline of the Emergency and Disaster Management Standard and amendments to other standards.
- **Factsheet 2:** An overview of the Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery (PPRR) risk management model.

Throughout the tool there are links to additional resources which you may want to give to your workers to assist them with their discussion and decision-making. The facilitator will need to be familiar with the content of the supporting resources and information, so it can answer questions from the workers participating in the key conversations.

### Other supporting information

Depending on the experience level of your workers you may also want to provide them with other resources, to support their learning, such as:

- your policies, procedures and plans for emergency and disaster management
- other related policies and procedures
- information on the NDIS Practice Standards and Code of Conduct
- information on incident reporting and reportable incidents.

### Support for workers

Talking about emergencies and disasters – although important – can have an impact on individuals or bring up current or past situations that they have been part of.

Consider what your approach will be to supporting workers. Some options could include:

1. **Setting up a designated support person** who is available during the activity, for workers to access if they need support.
2. **Letting people know if they wish to leave the session**, they can do this at any time.
3. **Encouraging people to seek support** after the session if they need to do so. This could be from an appropriate person within your organisation, or another appropriate person in their lives.
4. **Having Employee Assistance Programs available** to anyone who needs to access them.

## Stage 1 – Introduction

### Instructions for facilitators

Below is a facilitation guide. The boxes provide suggested scripts. Vary the script and information depending on your scenarios and the skills and experience of the workers you have in the room. This instruction has been developed for the emergency and disaster management scenario (scenario 1).

#### 1. Open the session - 5 minutes

Talk to the team about the reasons why you are doing this exercise, and why Practice Standards are important. A possible opening statement is below.



“The NDIS Practice Standards – or the Standards – together with the NDIS Code of Conduct, help people with disability know what they should expect from us as a provider of supports. The Standards are something we must comply with as a registered provider; they help us to assess our performance and we use the Standards to make sure we manage the risks to people with disability and provide high quality and safe services.

In November 2021, the NDIS Commission introduced a new **Emergency and Disaster Management Practice Standard** and made changes to other Standards. These changes outline how providers must prepare for and respond to different types of emergencies and disasters.

This was introduced in response to:

- the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to people with disabilities’ wellbeing and safety; and
- the impact that service disruptions were having on people’s lives.

These experiences were heard by the NDIS Commission and also the Royal Commission in to Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

The new standards – in response to different emergencies and disasters - require us to:

- Plan for how essential supports and services can continue.
- Have individual safeguards, for when our services are disrupted.
- Plan for how we will keep people with disability and our workers safe.
- Include people with disability and their networks in planning for emergencies.
- Communicate with people when things change.
- Ensure all our workers have information and skills to respond and continue to provide supports safely at these times.”

## 2. Discuss support options

Let the group know that if the activity or discussion brings up current or past situations that they have been part of, or if they have concerns, they can:

- Leave the session at any time if they do not feel comfortable.
- Advise the group of any identified people who you have made available, to discuss any concerns if they choose to.
- Encourage people to seek support from an appropriate person after the session.
- Discuss any Employee Assistance Programs or other organisational supports that may be available.

## 3. Go through factsheets and any supporting resources - 5 minutes.



“To help you with these exercises, there are two factsheets. Factsheet 1 outlines the Emergency and Disaster Management Standards, and Factsheet 2 breaks down the emergency response model - Plan, Prevent, Response and Recovery. Let’s start by going through these two factsheets together.”

- Talk through the factsheet on the PPRR model first and provide workers a copy for their reference.
- Talk through the Emergency and Disaster Management Standard and amendments, and how your organisation meets these obligations, and provide workers a copy for their reference.
- Talk through any other resources you decide to include such as your policies and procedures or other supporting information.



Examples of some additional resources which you could use to support discussions for the emergency and disaster management scenario could be:

- NDIS Commission: [Incident response: Is everyone safe?](#)
- Collaborating 4 Inclusion: [Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness \(PCEP\)](#)
- Department of Fire and Emergency Services [Emergency Kits Webpage](#)
- Emergency WA: [Prepare - Emergency WA Warnings & Incidents](#)

## 4. Set up the groups

If working with a larger group, ask people to separate into groups of three to four. Provide the handout.

Encourage your workers to have open conversations within their group, consider the challenges and respond to each scenario and question.

Ask them to think about what needs to be considered to make sure people with disability are included and their safety and well-being is supported.

### Group scenario activity - 10 minutes

If there are multiple groups, move around to the different groups to allow people to ask questions and seek clarification. Make a note of any questions or concerns raised by workers so that you can revisit with the whole group later.

### Regroup and discuss responses - 10 minutes.

Bring the groups back together.

- Ask each group about their response to each question.
- Provide any additional responses based on the 'answers' section in the facilitator guide and go through the additional information with the whole group.
- If you are asked a question and don't know the answer – let the group know you aren't sure but will find out and let them know.
- Discuss any concerns or questions raised.

### Finishing the session

- Collect response sheets.
- Thank the group for their contribution to the conversation and let them know that you are available to talk to them if they want to continue the conversation.
- Let them know which other people within your organisation they can approach if they want to talk about the topics discussed.
- Forward the response sheet to your manager, quality manager or the person responsible for developing your procedures. Ensure you have included any questions raised and your observations to inform and improve future training on emergency and disaster management.

## Scenario 1 – Group Activity

This page could be provided directly to workers participating.



### Scenario

We provide drop in daily living and community participation services to Claire. We are the only disability organisation that supports Claire. She is a young woman who lives independently in disability housing. Claire uses a wheelchair and a communication device. She has a limited support network who would be unlikely to be able to support in an emergency.

## Scenario 1 - Team Response

Spend 10 minutes discussing the following questions. Ask one person to take notes and provide feedback to the group.

1. What types of emergencies could impact on the services we provide to Claire and how might they affect her?

Types of emergencies or disaster	Impacts to Claire



2. What things might we need to do to support Claire in an emergency?

3. What is our responsibility in an emergency, thinking about the four stages of the PRRR model?

Stage	Responsibilities
<b>Prevention</b>	
<b>Preparedness</b>	
<b>Response</b>	
<b>Recovery</b>	

4. Where would you find information about how to respond in an emergency?



## Scenario 1 – Facilitator Answer Key

This facilitator answer key provides information around the expected responses to the scenario questions. It provides space for you as the facilitator, to note any areas where there may be gaps in learning or that require follow up in your training, plans, policies, or procedures.



### Scenario

We provide drop in daily living and community participation services to Claire. We are the only disability organisation that supports Claire. She is a young woman who lives independently in disability housing. Claire uses a wheelchair and a communication device. She has a limited support network who would be unlikely to be able to support in an emergency.

**Use this box to record questions raised by workers through the activity.**

Below are some of the answers and information you might expect to hear from your workers. These are general answers, and the information is not a complete representation of the situation, your service and the people you support. Use these as conversation starters or to highlight any missed information.

1. What types of emergencies could impact on the services we provide to Claire and how would they affect her?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bushfire / structural fire</li> <li>• Cyclone / storms / flooding</li> <li>• Pandemic</li> <li>• Heatwave</li> <li>• Individual health emergency</li> <li>• Other natural disasters e.g., earthquake</li> <li>• Human induced emergencies – e.g., bomb threat</li> </ul>	

Some of the potential impacts on Claire - Remember these are just conversation starters and do not cover all the risks.

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<p>Claire may experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk to immediate safety</li> <li>• Risk to health</li> <li>• Loss or damage to property or possessions</li> <li>• Short or long term loss of amenities, such as power or water</li> <li>• May have to leave her home, evacuate, or relocate to a place of safety</li> <li>• Could face barriers or additional risks associated with her mobility</li> <li>• May face additional risks associated with communication</li> <li>• Access to essential aids and ability to use them may be impacted</li> <li>• Limited informal networks could mean less support is available</li> <li>• Change can have an impact and regular support workers may not be available</li> <li>• Change to routine / some non-essential supports may not be available</li> <li>• Infection control issues</li> </ul>	

2. What things might we need to do to support Claire in an emergency?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take immediate actions to keep everyone safe. Examples could be first aid, medical attention, going to a place of safety, and evacuation.</li> <li>• Continue to communicate with Claire and her key supports, ensure she is consulted and supported in a way that reflects her needs and preferences.</li> </ul>	



- Check Claire’s support needs for any emergency-related safeguards that have been previously identified.
- If Claire needs to relocate, ensure Claire has everything that is essential to meet her support needs. For example, you could have emergency-related supports documented in her Support Plan, including critical health information and information about key allied health professionals.
- Have an emergency bag ready to go (could include identification, medications, aids and equipment PPE, water, torch etc.)
- Notify Claire’s nominated next of kin/guardian/support person (with consent).



[Incident response: Is everyone safe?](#) is a poster produced by the NDIS Commission about ensuring the safety and wellbeing of people with disability.

For information on emergency kits and relocation kits or go bags visit: [Department of Fire and Emergency Services Emergency Kits Webpage](#)

3. Where would you find information about how to respond in an emergency?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claire’s Support Plan</li> <li>• Emergency policy or procedures</li> <li>• Emergency plans</li> <li>• Through your line manager</li> <li>• State and Commonwealth websites such as Department of Health and DFES, ABC Emergency (for natural hazards like fires and floods)</li> </ul>	



4. What is our organisations responsibility in an emergency thinking about the new standard and the PRRR emergency model?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<p><b>Prepare:</b> Understand the risk of emergency and the potential impacts on Claire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with Claire and any of her key support networks.</li> <li>• Understand what her critical and essential supports are and what are her needs and preferences.</li> <li>• Document these things as part of Claire’s support planning.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Plan:</b> Have an emergency plan and be ready to implement it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a communication strategy.</li> <li>• Include roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Include different scenarios and arrangements to address them, including risks such as isolation, workforce shortage, relocation, or evacuation.</li> <li>• Assist Claire and the people who support her in how to access, use and activate the plan.</li> <li>• Keep an appropriate stock of equipment and supplies relevant to the supports we provide.</li> <li>• Look at and review the plan regularly to check it’s still up to date.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Respond:</b> Activate the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some workers may have set roles to lead the response.</li> <li>• Know what our role is and the roles of others.</li> <li>• Know where to access emergency plans and when to access them.</li> <li>• Action individual strategies that prevent or limit disruption of services for Claire.</li> <li>• Continue communicating with Claire including when things change.</li> </ul>	

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Claire to find alternate supports if disruption is unavoidable.</li> <li>• Notify the NDIS Commission if essential supports are at risks of ceasing.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recover:</b> Adapt our services to any changes caused by the emergency/disaster and resume full services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support people to adapt to any changes.</li> <li>• Offer additional support to anyone involved.</li> <li>• Review any plans to see where we can improve.</li> <li>• See what lessons we have learned that could strengthen our everyday services.</li> </ul>	

**Use the Group Activity and Facilitator Key templates on the next 5 pages to create scenarios and activities specific to your organisation.**

## Scenario – Group Activity

This page could be provided directly to workers participating.



Scenario

Insert scenario here.

## Scenario - Team Response

Spend five minutes discussing the following questions. Ask one person to take notes and provide feedback to the group.

1. Who do you need to inform? This could be people inside and outside the organisation.

2. How do you support the person with disability?

3. Do you think this is a reportable incident, what are the reasons for your answer?

4. What policies, procedures or plans can I access to assist me?

5. What are the risks of not following the policies, procedures or plans in place?

## Scenario 1 – Facilitator Answer Key

This key provides information around the expected responses to the scenario questions. It provides space for you to note any areas where there may be gaps in learning or that require follow up in your training, plans, policies, or procedures.



Insert scenario here

**Scenario**

**Use this box to record questions raised by workers through the activity.**

Below are some of the answers and information you should expect to hear from your workers. Use these as conversation starters where they may have missed information.

1. Who do you need to inform? This could be people inside and outside the organisation.

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<p>Depending on the scenario, expected responses could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising your team leader / manager immediately</li> <li>• Liaising with family members or support networks</li> <li>• Liaising with other decision makers, such as guardians</li> <li>• NDIS Commission</li> </ul>	



2. How do you support the person with disability?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<p>Depending on the scenario, some considerations could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the person to get immediate assistance to address the issue or keep them safe. Examples could be first aid, medical attention, going to a place of safety, evacuation.</li> <li>• Communication with the person and their support network (with consent) and continuing to communicate as the situation changes.</li> <li>• Accessing the person’s Support Plan for directions. Examples could be guidance on actions to take, the person’s preferences, supports such as access to other services, medications that the person might need.</li> <li>• Follow any steps in the organisation’s Emergency Plan.</li> </ul>	



You may choose to give your workers this factsheet to assist with their decision making: [NDIS Commission: Incident response: Is everyone safe?](#)

3. Do you think this is a reportable incident, what are the reasons for your answer?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<p>A reportable incident is an incident that occurs, or is alleged to have occurred, in connection with NDIS supports and services you deliver.</p> <p>Reportable incidents are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The death of a person with disability</li> <li>• Serious injury of a person with disability</li> <li>• Abuse or neglect of a person with disability</li> </ul>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlawful sexual or physical contact with, or assault of, a person with disability</li> <li>• Sexual misconduct, committed against, or in the presence of, a person with disability, including grooming of the person with disability for sexual activity</li> <li>• Unauthorised use of restrictive practices in relation to a person with disability.</li> </ul>	
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You may choose to give your workers this factsheet to assist with their decision making: [NDIS Commission: Identifying and responding to incidents.](#)

4. What policies, procedures or plans does the organisation have, that relate to this and could assist or guide me?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<p>Depending on the scenario, examples of related policies and procedures could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Continuity Plan</li> <li>• Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Continuity of Supports</li> <li>• Emergency Plans including Outbreak Management Plan.</li> <li>• Evacuation Procedures</li> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• Human Rights</li> <li>• Incident Management</li> <li>• Infection Prevention and Control including Waste Management</li> <li>• Information Management</li> <li>• Prevention of Abuse and Neglect</li> <li>• Risk Management</li> <li>• Service Agreements</li> </ul>	



5. What are the risks of not following the policies, procedures or plans in place?

Some expected responses	Any areas for follow up
<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate risk and impact to the person</li> <li>• Immediate risk and impact to workers</li> <li>• Impact to other people with disability</li> <li>• Impact to the organisation such as compliance actions from the NDIS Commission</li> <li>• Performance management</li> </ul>	



## Fact Sheet 1: Emergency and Disaster Management Practice Standard

A new NDIS Practice Standard for Emergency and Disaster Management was introduced and came into effect on 24 January 2022. This fact sheet includes the new Standard and associated changes to existing Standards.

### Core Module: Emergency and Disaster Management

**Outcome:** Emergency and Disaster Management includes planning that ensures that the risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of participants that may arise in an emergency or disaster are considered and mitigated and ensures the continuity of supports critical to the health, safety, and wellbeing of participants in an emergency or disaster.

To achieve this outcome, the following **indicators** should be demonstrated.

- Measures are in place to enable continuity of supports that are critical to the safety, health, and wellbeing of each participant before, during and after an emergency or disaster.
- The measures include planning for each of the following:
  - preparing for, and responding to, the emergency or disaster
  - making changes to participant supports
  - adapting, and rapidly responding, to changes to participant supports and to other interruptions
  - communicating changes to participant supports to workers and to participants and their support networks.
- The governing body develops Emergency and Disaster Management Plans (the plans), consults with participants and their support networks about the plans and puts the plans in place.
- The plans explain and guide how the governing body will respond to, and oversee the response to, an emergency or disaster.
- Mechanisms are in place for the governing body to actively test the plans, and adjust them, in the context of a particular kind of emergency or disaster.
- The plans have periodic review points to enable the governing body to respond to the changing nature of an emergency or disaster.
- The governing body regularly reviews the plans and consults with participants and their support networks about the reviews of the plans.
- The governing body communicates the plans to workers, participants, and their support networks.
- Each worker is trained in the implementation of the plans.

## New additional indicators added to existing Practice Standards

### Risk Management

- Where relevant, the risk management system includes measures for the prevention and control of infections and outbreaks.
- Appropriate insurance is in place, including professional indemnity, public liability, and accident insurance.

### Human Resources

- Workers with capabilities that are relevant to assisting in the response to an emergency or disaster (such as contingency planning or infection prevention or control) are identified.
- Plans are in place to identify, source and induct a workforce in the event that workforce disruptions occur in an emergency or disaster.
- Infection prevention and control training, including refresher training, is undertaken by all workers involved in providing supports to participants.
- For each worker, the following details are recorded and kept up to date: their contact details and details of their secondary employment (if any).

### Service Agreements

- Service agreements set out the arrangements for providing supports to be put in place in the event of an emergency or disaster.

### Support Planning

- Risk assessments include consideration of the degree to which participants rely on the provider's services to meet their daily living needs and the extent to which the health and safety of participants would be affected if those services were disrupted.
- Each participant's Support Plan anticipates and incorporates responses to individual, provider and community emergencies and disasters to ensure their safety, health and wellbeing and is understood by each worker supporting them.

### Safe Environment

- Infection prevention and control standard precautions are implemented throughout all settings in which supports are provided to participants.
- Routine environmental cleaning is conducted of settings in which supports are provided to participants (other than in their homes), particularly of frequently touched surfaces.
- Each worker is trained, and has refresher training, in infection prevention and control standard precautions including hand hygiene practices, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Each worker who provides supports directly to participants is trained, and has refresher training, in the use of PPE.
- PPE is available to each worker, and each participant, who requires it.

### **Amended wording to Management of Waste Standard.**

Wording was also added into the Management of Waste Standard. This included information on used PPE, infectious waste and that handling waste includes any PPE, or any other clothing required.

## Factsheet 2 – The PPRR risk management model: A quick overview

The Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery (PPRR) model is an approach to risk management. This model has been used by Australian emergency management agencies for many years with a view to saving time and streamlining the response to a setback, incident, event, emergency, or disaster.

PPRR can help anticipate and plan for possible impacts on services and the key people involved such as people with disability and their networks, workers, suppliers, and community members.

The nature of the PPRR model is that it is cyclical. Emergency and disaster management is ongoing and needs to be managed all the time, not just during an emergency such as a pandemic or during the bushfire season. It is useful to be aware of the language of PPRR, as its part of everyday language of the emergency management sector and informs how decisions are made, roles are allocated, and planning is completed.

### Prevention

Prevention is a series of actions. These are the steps taken in advance to reduce (or eliminate) the likelihood or effects of emergencies. Some of the actions could be, looking at different scenarios – asking ‘what if’ questions, brainstorming to identify what the risks are and thinking about actions to take in worst-case scenarios. Some practical examples might be managing properties so that they are bushfire ready or having back up methods of communication in case usual methods are unavailable during an emergency.

### Preparedness

Preparedness is another series of actions relating to making arrangements in case something does happen. This comes in many different forms, including creating different types of plans, testing plans to check for issues or gaps, talking to people and providing training, and sharing information with people so that they know what to expect and what to do. It might include gathering necessary supplies and being ready.

### Response

This is the planned approach and actions that need to be taken to keep people safe and limit the impact – for example of injury, loss of life, damage to property - in the time immediately before, during and immediately after an emergency, disaster, or crisis.

### Recovery

Recovery refers to the period that follows an emergency, disaster, or crisis. It aims to limit or reduce the impact of the emergency and support people, organisations, and communities to cope with changes arising from an emergency. It involves reviewing and learning from the responses and actions taken and making changes to be more prepared in the future.

**Please note:** This resource was reviewed in May 2023 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.