



**phn**  
SOUTH EASTERN NSW  
An Australian Government Initiative



# Action Plan: Disaster Preparedness and Response 2022 - 2024 Closeout Report

In response to the 2019-2020 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, COORDINARE took on new responsibilities to support communities in their recovery from drought and bushfire trauma, and to help coordinate the Australian Government's pandemic response. In 2022, we developed an Action Plan: Disaster Preparedness and Response, outlining five key objectives. This report highlights the work we have undertaken to achieve them, in partnership with our Local Health Districts and primary care providers, towards a 'one system' health response to future disasters and pandemics.

Over 60 primary care volunteers have signed up to COORDINARE's disaster response register.

Approximately 95% of general practices in South Eastern NSW now have an Emergency Plan.

Over 330 in-reach COVID vaccinations for homebound individuals funded by grants to reach vulnerable populations.

- Objective #1
- Objective #2
- Objective #3
- Objective #4
- Objective #5

Ensure local and regional emergency management processes achieve a coordinated health response that support communities to prepare and respond.

Enhance and develop capabilities of primary care to prepare and respond to disasters in order to ensure the ongoing health and wellbeing of the community.

Strengthen and build local and regional partnerships for planning, communications and effectively responding to disasters that reduce distress and incidence of adverse health issues within the community.

Continuously learn from and improve our disaster preparedness and responses.

Take action to reduce or prevent the likelihood or effects of a pandemic or rapid spread of infectious disease where possible.

# Achievements

Contributing to the NSW Health Services Functional Area Supporting Plan (NSW HEALTHPLAN), COORDINARE has secured the inclusion of Primary Health Networks (PHNs) as a Supporting Agency and **increased visibility of the contribution of primary care** in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

#1

COORDINARE has **ensured the inclusion** of the roles of the PHN and primary care in disaster preparedness and response, in both the Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW LHD HealthPlans and disaster related subplans.

#1

#3

COORDINARE launched and maintains an **up-to-date disaster preparedness and response page** on their website, where primary care providers can find guidance, tools and key information to assist in their readiness and resilience.

#2

Disaster HealthPathways have been localised and implemented, **providing consistent advice and guidance** to health professionals in South Eastern NSW. These pathways cover general practice disaster preparation and management, as well as preparing a patient for a disaster and post natural disaster health.

#2

COORDINARE has created a **suite of resources** to help general practices to develop or strengthen their emergency planning. These resources were developed to support practices without a plan, practices who wanted to audit their plan and practices who undertake practice level quality improvement.

#2

Access to an **Employee Assistance Program** is available for COORDINARE staff and is extended to general practice staff across the region during times of disaster.

#2

**Over 60 primary care volunteers** have signed up to COORDINARE's disaster response register, offering to assist during an emergency situation. This list is audited twice-yearly to maintain currency. Volunteers can register via our website at any time and callouts for new volunteers are made quarterly.

#2

General Practices were surveyed at the end of 2022 and again in 2023, allowing COORDINARE an insight into primary care disaster preparedness and where further support is required. Data indicates that around **95% of general practices in South Eastern NSW have an Emergency Plan.**

#2

#4

Disaster Preparedness **focussed editions of the Staying Ahead newsletter** are sent to general practices four times a year, encouraging preparedness and highlighting tools, education, and supports available.

#2

#5

COORDINARE has been successful in gaining **observer status on both the Illawarra South Coast and South Eastern Regional Emergency Management Committees** and ensures the organisation is represented at each meeting to provide updates on disaster related primary care activity. Organisational investment has led to increased engagement and an improved understanding of the role of general practice.

#3

#1

# Achievements

## Regular meetings with Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW Local Health District

Disaster Management teams have been implemented and are ongoing to strengthen coordinated health planning, response and continuous improvement.

#3

#1

## COORDINARE supported the implementation of a GP led Community of Practice in Southern NSW.

This group provided space for those interested in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery to learn together, raise and workshop issues and challenges, seek support, offer ideas and develop relationships with others. This initiative proved valuable in the Black Summer bushfire recovery phase.

#3

#4

COORDINARE has implemented processes for the **rapid commissioning of services**, in the event of Australian Government disaster response funding being allocated to PHNs. This allows for expedited decisions without compromising probity as well as streamlined procurement processes for small community grants.

#4

COORDINARE's planning and approach to disaster preparedness, response and recovery continues to be **informed by the commissioned reflective view** of the PHN's disaster response to the 2019/20 bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic.

#4

**Case studies** on the steps practices have taken in their disaster planning were shared with other practices via newsletters, social media and the COORDINARE website.

#4

#2

Four **emergency management desktop scenarios** were held for general practice, with 37 attendees from 25 practices attending. Evaluation of the events showed that learning outcomes were overwhelmingly entirely met.

#4

#2

Internal disaster workflows, a communications plan and a **disaster hub** have been rolled out within COORDINARE providing the organisation with ready access to procedures for use before, during, and after an emergency or critical incident. This work ensures that our staff remain safe and contributes to business continuity.

#4

#5

35 grants provided to general practices, community and other organisations to fund a range of activities that address social, cultural, physical and hesitancy barriers preventing vulnerable groups from accessing the COVID-19 vaccination, including **over 330 in-reach vaccinations** for homebound individuals.

#5

#2

Since 2022, COORDINARE have fully **funded 186 Registered Nurses** working in General Practice and Residential Aged Care to complete Authorised Nurse Immuniser training.

#5

#2

**Free Vaccine Hesitancy training** from the University of Tasmania has been offered to over 89 Registered Nurses who had completed Authorised Nurse Immuniser training funded by COORDINARE.

#5

#2

# COORDINARE will:

- Implement a multidisciplinary 'Disaster Preparedness and Response' Interest Group for primary care staff working in the South Eastern NSW PHN region, who have an interest in their local community's resilience.
- Maintain our relationships with Local Health District Disaster Management teams.
- Build on our connections with Regional Emergency Management Committee members.
- Pursue disaster specific training opportunities for primary care providers in our region, including that which may be relevant for disaster response volunteers.
- Work collaboratively with COORDINARE's Aboriginal Health Councils and Aboriginal Health Consultants to incorporate First Nations knowledge and experience into our disaster planning and response.
- Critically evaluate the objectives and activities from our 2022 Action Plan: Disaster Preparedness and Response.
- Seek primary care feedback on our work to date, and utilise learnings to create a renewed Disaster Preparedness and Response Action Plan for 2025.

