

Foreword

Search and Rescue (SAR) is the search for and provision of lifesaving assistance to people in distress and imminent danger of loss of life. Australian SAR arrangements are intended to complement other emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) in circumstances where those services are unable to operate effectively. Such circumstances could include, for example, remote area operations, rescues at sea, and the need for specialist SAR facilities not normally available to emergency services.

Depending upon the extent and complexity of the incident and on the available staff and facilities, SAR may take many forms in response to a distress situation. Unless the action is indivisible from that of safeguarding life, a SAR operation does not, however, include salvage or the saving of property.

The Australian search and rescue region covers the Australian continent and large areas of the Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans as well the Australian Antarctic territories. This is an area of about 52.8 million square kilometres, or about one tenth of the earth's surface. Dedicated SAR assets are limited in Australia and other government, private and commercial assets may be diverted from their primary function by charter, arrangement and request.

In practice, many SAR operations are conducted jointly by Commonwealth and State / Territory authorities. It is, therefore, essential that the available resources and operational techniques are standardised and coordinated across the Australian region. All SAR authorities in Australia: AMSA, the ADF and State, Territory and Federal Police must be able to act cooperatively.

In 2004, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for search and rescue response in Australia signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on National Search and Rescue Response Arrangements. The IGA confirmed the National Search and Rescue Council's role as the national coordinating body for search and rescue procedures with a function, among others, of sponsoring the National Search and Rescue Manual.

Documenting standardised techniques and procedures, the National Search and Rescue manual enables SAR authorities to cooperate and coordinate to best effect. By establishing and standardising procedures, the manual seeks to promote effective saving of lives.

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