Lessons from the Floodplain

Reflections on interstate resource sharing during the 2025/26 NT flood and storm response



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About AFAC

- The Australian and New Zealand Council for fire and emergency services, dedicated to connected and capable emergency management.



AFAC Membership

Emergency services members



Affiliate members



AFAC Delivers

- National Aerial Firefighting Centre
- National Resource Sharing Centre
- Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience
- Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme

What is NRSC?




FIRE
Australian Capital Territory
Parks and Conservation Service


1960
1961
2000
1980
1995
1999


NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE


DIV G
Div K
BRANCH I
DIV D
DIV A/W
BRIEFING




SES



2025/26: A “normal” season that still demanded more

111

days NRSC was coordinating interstate deployments

8

separate events

1,792

personnel deployed

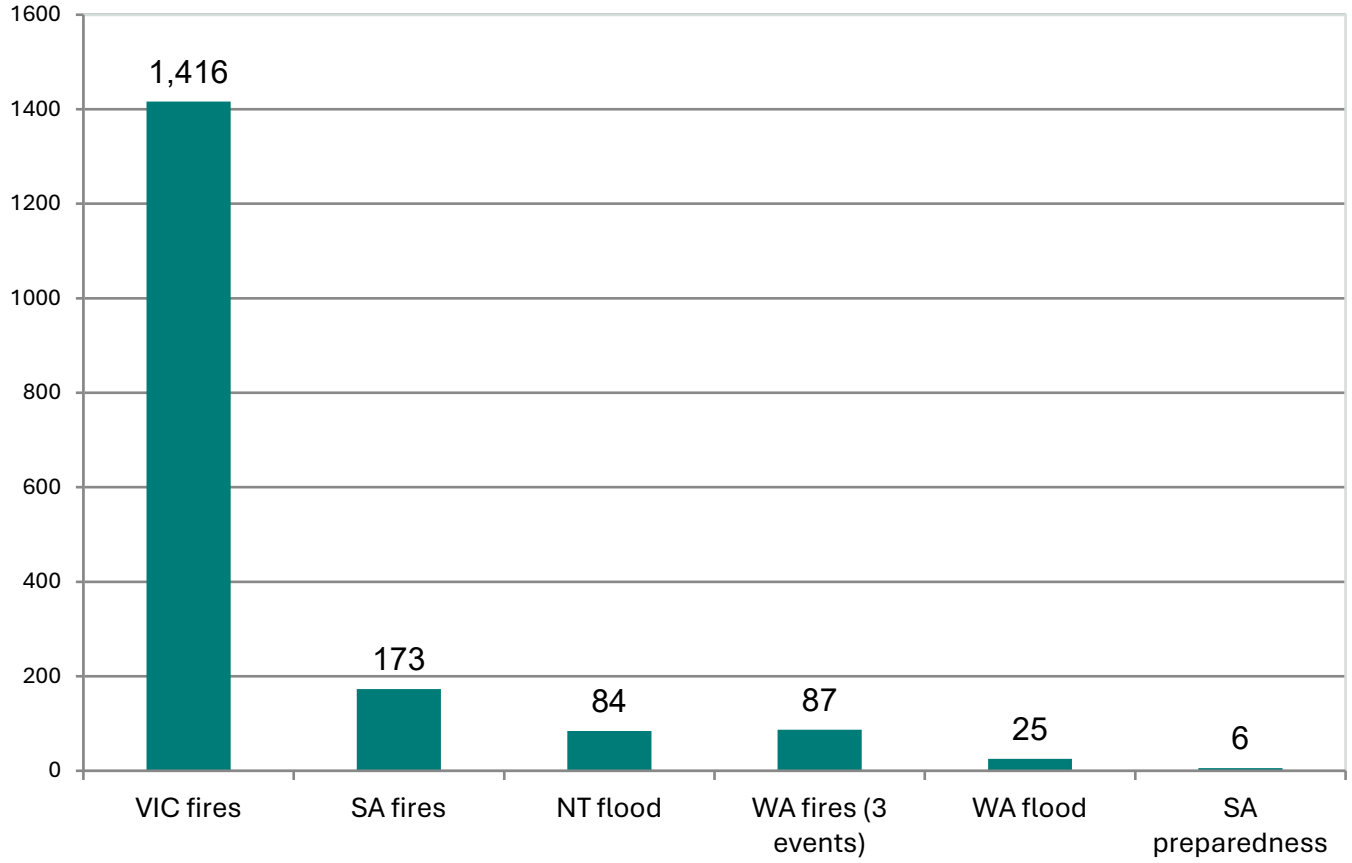
110

vehicles deployed

The lesson is not that no jurisdiction’s system failed. It is that “ordinary” seasons are requiring extraordinary coordination beyond what any one agency can sustain.

The NT deployment in the national picture

A focused flood response within a multi-hazard season



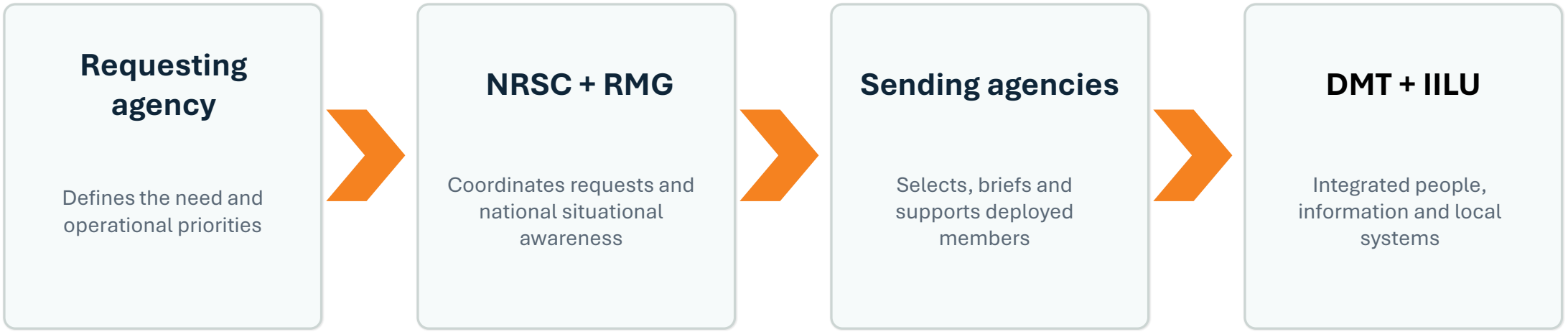
84

personnel associated with the NT flood deployment

Scale matters, but complexity is not measured by headcount alone.

How interstate support connects

The deployment management team is the hinge between national coordination and local operations



The quality of the information determines the quality of the deployment experience.

What worked: professionalism under pressure



Adaptability
Crews remained professional, flexible and mission-focused.

Safety
Feedback recognised an active commitment to safe operations.

Briefing
Comprehensive briefings increased confidence in role and mission.

Coordination
Resource notifications and coordination were identified as positives.

The strongest capability remained the behaviour of people

Four lessons the season reinforced

1 Training & preparedness

Build confidence before deployment through role-specific training, refreshers and realistic joining instructions.

2 Roles & responsibilities

Make the DMT, JLO, IILU and RMG interfaces explicit, especially when teams are less experienced.

3 Communication & information

Create one coherent operating picture and include deployed coordination roles in key briefings.

4 Resource management

Reduce manual handling, improve request visibility, and equip deployed coordination teams consistently.

Priority 1: integration must be designed

Deployment does not automatically generate interoperability. We must work at it.

Before Role clarity, system access, joining instructions, briefing expectations

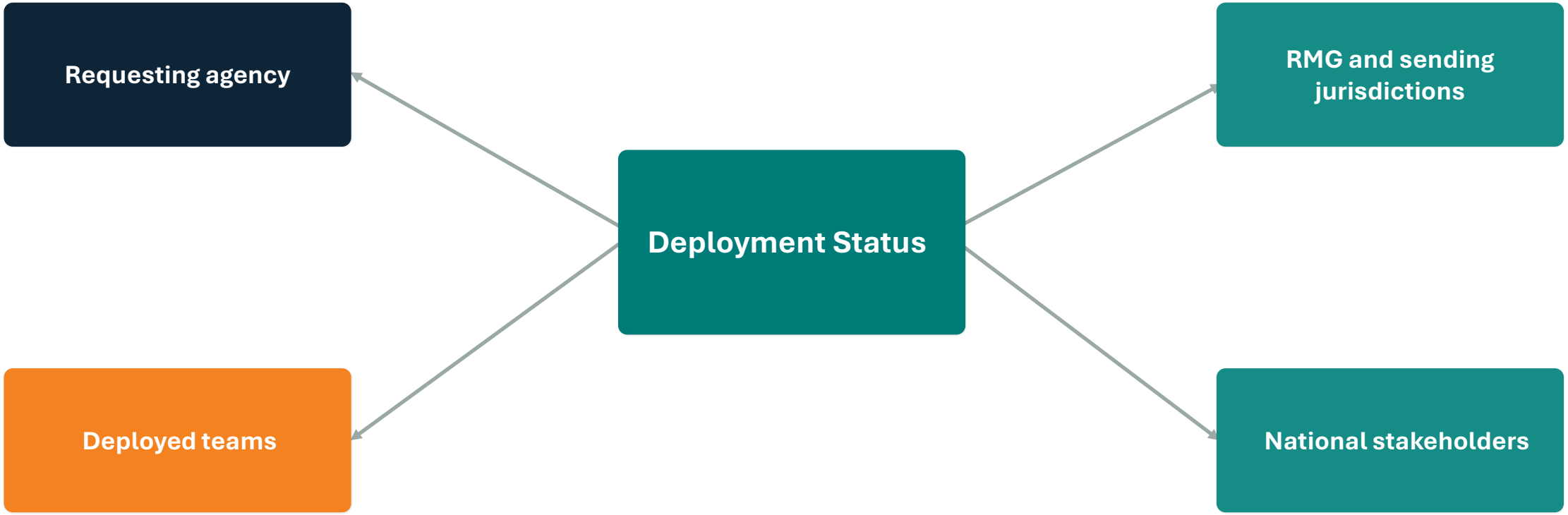
During Inclusion in briefings, clear escalation pathways, shared operating rhythm

After AAR participation, captured observations, assigned improvements

Friction observed

- DMT and JLO exclusion from some requesting-agency briefings
- Gaps in understanding the DMT role
- Need for better joining instructions, induction and identification of DMT
- Need to strengthen IILU understanding of deployed coordination roles

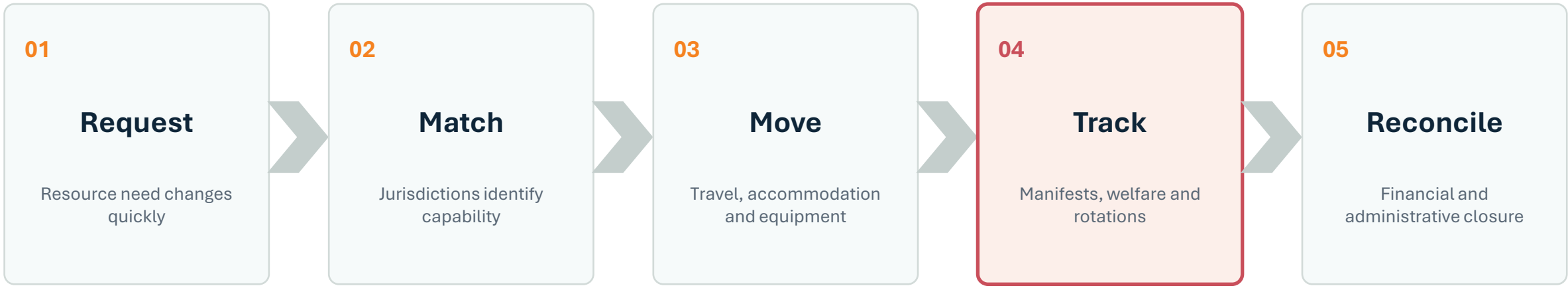
Priority 2: one operating picture, many audiences



Standardisation is valuable only when the right people receive, understand and can act on the information.

Priority 3: sustainability lives in the small systems

Manual work compounds when tempo rises



Priority: automate repeated handling, preserve human judgement for operational decisions.

From observations to commitments

A practical improvement agenda for the next NT request

1	**Prepare people**	Extend DMT training to JLOs; refresh system familiarity before season.
2	**Clarify the joins**	Improve joining instructions, induction and role identification.
3	**Broaden the picture**	Use a coherent daily SITREP and include coordination roles in briefings.
4	**Equip the function**	Develop deployable caches, guides and visible role identifiers.
5	**Reduce handling**	Continue automation and simplify notification pathways.

Three questions for the Territory

Preparedness can be tested before the next river rises

01

Can incoming capability integrate on day one?

Are roles, access, briefing pathways and local expectations already clear?

02

Can we maintain one dependable operating picture?

Do local, deployed and national coordination teams see the information they need?

03

Can our systems sustain the upcoming operational tempo without exhausting people?

Can we support the building of local capability, while ensuring that surge capacity can be integrated and utilised?

THE FINAL LESSON

Resource sharing is not simply the movement of people.

It is the movement of capability, information and trust.

Thank you

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