Business Plan

2022/23 – 2023/24

Purpose

The purpose of this business plan is to define the priorities and actions for the financial years 2022-2024 to achieve the Council's strategic objectives, as per the framework below. The actions highlighted in this Business Plan are the actions agreed by the National Search and Rescue (NATSAR) Council to execute the strategy.

The Council has agreed that the three priority strategic objectives for 2022-2024 are

1. Represent the national SAR community as the Centre of Excellence (COE) for SAR.
2. Facilitate effective coordination of SAR operations across SAR authorities.
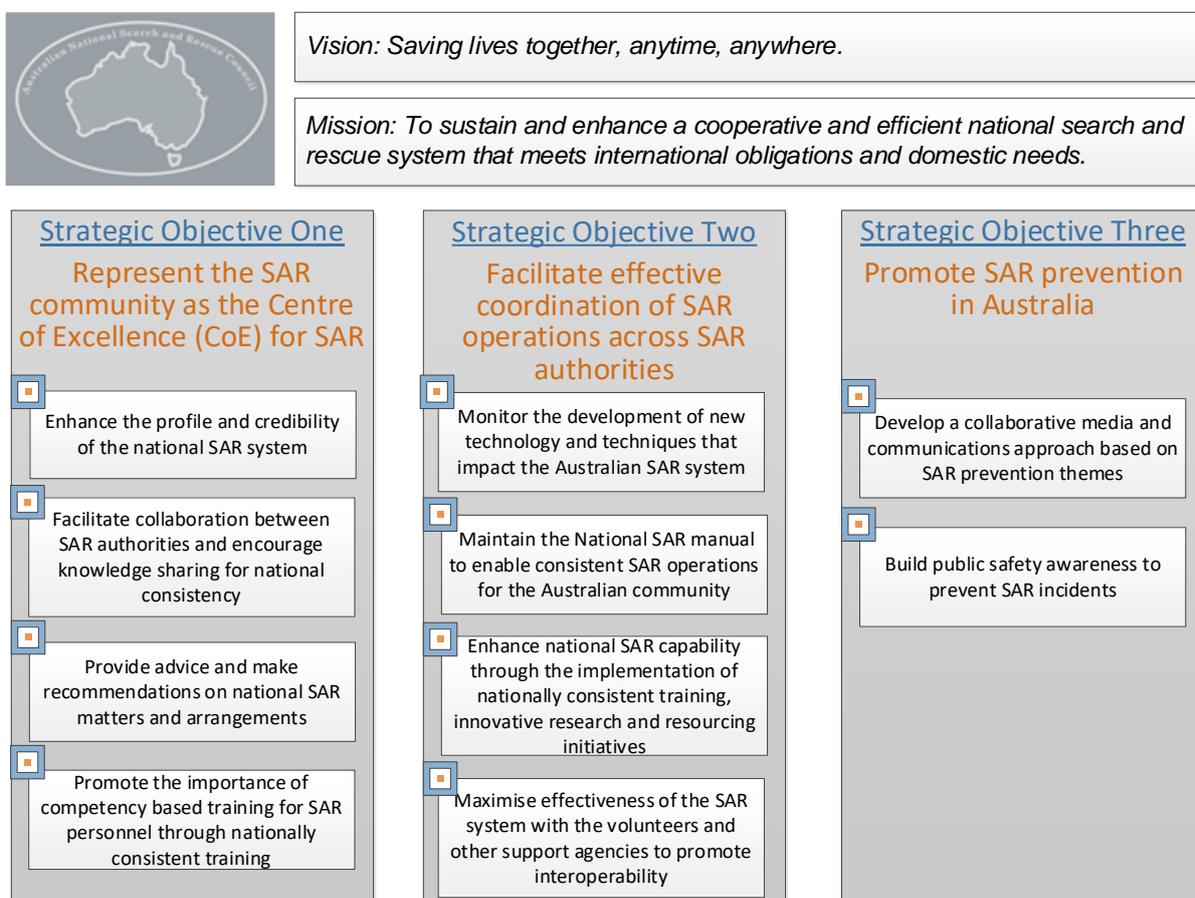3. Promote SAR prevention in Australia.

Vision: Saving lives together, anytime, anywhere.

Mission: To sustain and enhance a cooperative and efficient national search and rescue system that meets international obligations and domestic needs.

Strategic Objective One

Represent the SAR community as the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for SAR

- Enhance the profile and credibility of the national SAR system
- Facilitate collaboration between SAR authorities and encourage knowledge sharing for national consistency
- Provide advice and make recommendations on national SAR matters and arrangements
- Promote the importance of competency based training for SAR personnel through nationally consistent training

Strategic Objective Two

Facilitate effective coordination of SAR operations across SAR authorities

- Monitor the development of new technology and techniques that impact the Australian SAR system
- Maintain the National SAR manual to enable consistent SAR operations for the Australian community
- Enhance national SAR capability through the implementation of nationally consistent training, innovative research and resourcing initiatives
- Maximise effectiveness of the SAR system with the volunteers and other support agencies to promote interoperability

Strategic Objective Three

Promote SAR prevention in Australia

- Develop a collaborative media and communications approach based on SAR prevention themes
- Build public safety awareness to prevent SAR incidents

Figure 1. Strategic objectives at a glance

1. Represent the SAR Community as the Centre of Excellence (COE) for SAR

As the cooperative national body that is responsible for SAR arrangements in Australia, the NATSAR Council aims to be a centre of excellence that can effectively represent the Australian community on all SAR matters. This includes setting the strategic direction of SAR in Australia and encouraging best practise standards to deliver consistent and efficient services across the country. We will continue to promote the value and performance of the national SAR system to state, territory and commonwealth government decision makers whose continued support allows the Council to deliver important SAR initiatives that save thousands of lives every year.

To achieve this within a cooperative SAR system we must have effective means of collaboration and information sharing to ensure that all state, territory and commonwealth SAR agencies are speaking with one authoritative voice. This is particularly important in Australia because we operate as a federated nation with 10 SAR authorities and hundreds of supporting agencies from volunteers, state emergency services and contracted SAR assets. This means the SAR community has a respected voice representing their best interests.

	Priorities		Core Business	Improvement Initiatives
1.1	Enhance the profile and credibility of the national SAR system.	**Year 1 2022/23**	• Maintain the suite of strategic documents as part of the Council's governance structure (Action Plan, Charter, Business Plan)	• Conduct an environmental scan on behalf of the NATSAR Council, focusing on identifying future risk to the national SAR system and subsequently review national SAR system arrangements to incorporate future planning of risk.
		Year 2 2023/24	• Review the IGA as per the two-year review cycle to ensure it remains relevant and clearly reflects the current national SAR arrangements. • Correspond regularly with senior external stakeholders (e.g. Police Commissioners) via formal channels. • Promote the strength of the collaborative national SAR system during post-incident media coverage, particularly for multi-agency SAR operations. • Represent the NATSAR Council at national SAR forums on important SAR related topics and engage with the wider SAR community (for example Standards Australia and EVDS).	• Explore options for more formalised reporting, similar to NZSAR. • Meet with senior external stakeholders (Assistant Police Commissioners) to highlight significant Council progress and strategic national challenges, via formal written channels and in-person meetings.

	Priorities		Core Business	Improvement Initiatives
			• Host the annual Australian SAR Award event with invitees from across the hosting state's SAR sector.	
1.2	Facilitate collaboration between SAR Authorities and encourage knowledge sharing for national consistency.	**Year 1 2022/23**	• Deliver the annual meeting cycle to facilitate regular engagement and sharing between NATSAR Council members.	• Further promote collaboration with NZSAR regarding shared interests such as MRO, SAR Awards, SAR training, etc.
		Year 2 2023/24	• Proactive sharing and collaboration relating to SAR information, emerging technologies, safety programs, SAR media etc.	• Through the national working group, implement a standardised approach to national SAR data collection.
1.3	Provide advice and make recommendations on national SAR matters and arrangements.	**Year 1 2022/23**	• Respond to enquiries that come in via the NATSAR Council Secretariat relating to the national SAR system.	• Coordinate the Council's position on initiatives that impact SAR in Australia (Electronic Visual Distress Signals, Standards Reviews, etc.).
		Year 2 2023/24	• Provide briefings and input to coronial and other government inquiries as required.	

	Priorities		Core Business	Improvement Initiatives
1.4	Promote the importance of competency based training for SAR personnel through nationally consistent training.	**Year 1 2022/23**		• Participate in the NZSAR's National SAR Course upon request to identify development opportunities for Australia.
		Year 2 2023/24	• Prepare correspondence related to the National Police SAR Managers Course that encourages jurisdictional support for the national approach to training. • Collate figures on the National Police SAR Managers Course, to effectively communicate training outcomes in correspondence with commissioners. • Annually review the course content and structure, and report to Council to ensure national consistency.	• Support jurisdictional based training where there is additional backlog of students wanting to complete the national course. • Explore options around remote training opportunities to leverage technologies and ensure continuity of national SAR capability. • Establish a national training working group to develop an approach to better share responsibilities of the NATSARMC, including more sustainable options for the course in future.

2.   Facilitate effective coordination of SAR operations across SAR authorities

Multi-agency SAR operations between the 10 SAR authorities and emergency response agencies are common in Australia due to the cooperative nature of our national SAR arrangements. The intention of this objective is ensure that agencies can work seamlessly together during a multi-agency operation. What this means for our community is that when people venture into the remote outdoors – whether by land, sea or air – and find themselves in distress, they will receive a consistent SAR response no matter where they are located and at any time.

The Council achieves this by developing national procedures that all SAR agencies follow during an incident; progressing national technology, capability and training initiatives that enable interoperability across the 8 jurisdictions, 10 SAR Authorities and associated rescue agencies (including volunteers). Running multi-agency exercises within and between jurisdictions is an important part of testing our capability to respond to scenarios that have been identified as key risks.

	Priorities		Core Business	Improvement Initiatives
2.1	Monitor the development of new technology and techniques that impact the Australian SAR system.	**Year 1 2022/23**	• Annual meeting of the SAR Technology Working Group to keep abreast of emerging technologies and advancements for effective coordination of SAR operations. • Annual meeting of the SAR Dive Working Group to benchmark and standardise SAR dive capabilities across Australia.	• Review existing and emerging SAR technologies and where necessary, form nationally consistent positions for potential use at a jurisdictional level.
		Year 2 2023/24	• Engage with industry to scope emerging technologies relevant to the national SAR system. • Facilitate presenters at NATSAR meetings to discuss technology advancements and techniques applicable to SAR.	
2.2	Maintain the National SAR Manual to enable consistent SAR operations for the Australian community.	**Year 1 2022/23**	• Maintain the annual cycle of manual amendments.	• Review options to consider areas of inclusion in the National SAR Manual, against emerging risks or capabilities.

	Priorities			Core Business	Improvement Initiatives
		Year 2 2023/24			Continually review subject matter gaps not currently covered within the National SAR Manual to illuminate risk and keep abreast new information available.
2.3	Enhance national SAR capability through the implementation of nationally consistent training, innovative research and resourcing initiatives.	**Year 1 2022/23**		• Promote and provide state based, multi-agency and cross-jurisdictional training and exercise opportunities when available. • Contribute to national research and development projects for search and rescue application such as the lost person database and the dementia 'getting home safely' project. •	• Further develop the jurisdictional annual Activity Report to include capability updates with the intention to use this information to build a national capability snapshot. • Support the work of the Data Working Group to provide useful analysis on SAR activity and resourcing.
		Year 2 2023/24		• Promote joint jurisdictional incident debriefs to identify opportunities for enhanced incident coordination. • Facilitate presenters at NATSAR meetings to discuss capability initiatives and legislative changes applicable to SAR.	
2.4	Maximise effectiveness of the SAR system with the volunteer and other support agencies to promote interoperability.	**Year 1 2022/23**		• Representation of National Volunteer Marine SAR Committee on National SAR Council as an observer.	• Members to determine the most appropriate national volunteer group within the land emergency services sector to approach for potential NATSAR representation in future. • Enhance engagement and collaboration with jurisdictional support agencies to better understand state arrangements in order to improve national capability. • Jurisdictions to investigate channels for increased collaboration with emerging volunteer agencies.
		Year 2 2023/24			

3. Promote SAR prevention in Australia

The key to saving lives is to prevent search and rescue incidents before they occur. The Council believes that the key to achieving this is an educated and well-informed community, who has a good understanding of their environment and effective preparation they need to take to ensure their safety. The challenge in Australia is that we have an adventurous population who like to explore the remote outdoors. On top of that, we have a strong tourism industry where people travel to Australia for these types of unique experiences with a limited understanding of our harsh climate and challenging terrain.

To address this, the Council will collaborate across government and partner agencies to support targeted safety education campaigns to high-risk groups. We will build awareness of personal responsibility through collective and consistent messaging based on safety themes and regulatory requirements where applicable.

	Priorities		Core Business	Improvement Initiatives
3.1	Develop a collaborative media and communications approach based on SAR prevention themes.	Year 1 2022/23	• Analyse previous incidents and annual activity reports to identify causative factors that will inform targeted safety campaigns and messaging.	• Promote joint jurisdictional incident debriefs to build case studies for engagement purposes. • Facilitate discussions regarding the Council's approach to public engagement and SAR prevention following the completion of the environmental scan to ensure a nationally consistent approach is considered.
		Year 2 2023/24	• Collaborate across government and partner safety agencies through national safety forums to leverage complementary campaigns. • Share safety education/engagement content across government for use on agency websites, social media, and across industry for relevant forums.	
3.2	Build public safety awareness to prevent SAR incidents.	Year 1 202	• Share case studies of notable incidents, trends and observations across social media to promote safety awareness and effective safety practices.	• Support and endorse public safety campaigns led by partner agencies in the SAR community.
		Year 2 2023/24	• Encourage police engagement with land SAR safety initiatives.	