

# NATSAR Manual Amendment Schedule – 2026 Edition

Amendments endorsed at NATSAR 49

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
Page 1	Change in Council Chair	Mark Morrow Chairman	Alex Barrell Chair <i>See Attachment 1 for name change and updated Foreword.</i>
Page 2	To avoid legal ties to any one person, particularly in coronial inquests.	Published by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) on behalf of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council Written and amended by retired Senior Sergeant Dr Jim Whitehead, Queensland Police Service (2016 – 2023) on behalf of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council Reviewed by the Australian National Search and Rescue Council, with editing led by Leading Senior Constable Andrew Craig, Australian Federal Police (2025)	Published by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) on behalf of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council. <i>See Attachment 2 for revised text following AMSA Office of Legal Counsel review.</i>
Back of front cover	Remove personal names	Written and amended by retired Senior Sergeant Dr Jim Whitehead, Queensland Police Service (2016 – 2023) on behalf of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council Reviewed by the Australian National Search and Rescue Council, with editing led by Leading Senior Constable Andrew Craig, Australian Federal Police (2025)	Remove and replace with: Written and amended by the National Search and Rescue (NATSAR) Council and published by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) on behalf of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council. <i>See Attachment 2 for revised text following AMSA Office of Legal Counsel review.</i>
Page 2 & back of front cover	Remove duplication		Merge information relating to National library and copyright on page 2 to the back cover. <i>See Attachment 2 for revised text following AMSA Office of Legal Counsel review.</i>

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
Page 447	Cornial inquest identified contradiction	Note: If any individual category above is rated as ONE (1), regardless of its total – the search <b>could</b> require an emergency response.	<i>'Could' is the agreed term.</i>
Page 156		3.11.30. Also, if there is a number 1 assigned to any of the categories then an immediate response <b>is</b> required.	<i>Make consistent with page 447 'could'</i>
Page 156	Introduction of new definitions		<p>Conclusion: The permanent finalisation of active search activities, due to the matter being resolved.</p> <p>Suspension: The ceasing of active search activities, when the target is not found.</p> <p>Pause: The temporary ceasing of active search activities, with the intention of resuming in the near future.</p> <p>Caveat: each jurisdiction may use their own terms</p> <p><i>See Attachment 3 for revised Chapter 6</i></p>
Page 447	Inclusion of note to describe the application of the SUA for land SAR only.		The Search Urgency Assessment Form is an artifact used for Land SAR purposes only.
Page 465	Was previously included but removed inadvertently		Note: This LPB category is the only one that is NOT a circle around LKP. This distance is either side of their intended track
Page 20	Addition of new acronyms		<p>a. Acronym/Abbreviation: AEP Meaning: Aerodrome Emergency Plan</p> <p>b. Acronym/Abbreviation: CASA Meaning: Civil Aviation Safety Authority</p> <p>c. Acronym/Abbreviation: IAMSAR</p>

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
			Meaning: International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue
Page 27	Addition of new glossary items		<p>a. Term: Aerodrome Emergency Plan (AEP)  Definition: A plan preparing an aerodrome to cope with an emergency occurring at the aerodrome or in its vicinity, to minimise the effects of an emergency, particularly in respect of saving lives and maintaining aircraft operations.</p> <p>b. Term: International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual  Definition: A manual jointly published by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to assist global States in meeting their own SAR needs and obligations accepted under the <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i>, the <i>International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979</i> and the <i>International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS)</i>. It provides guidance for a common and harmonised global aviation and maritime approach to organising and providing SAR services.</p>
Page 40	Addition of new text following paragraph 1.1.52 to incorporate AEP content		<p>Aerodrome Emergency Plans (AEPs)  1.1.53 Annex 14 Aerodromes, Volume I of the Convention on International Civil Aviation sets out the standards and recommended practices applicable to aerodrome emergency planning throughout the world for aircraft emergencies on, or in the vicinity of, aerodromes. It recommends that aerodrome emergency plans (AEPs) should provide for cooperation and coordination with the RCC. Annex 12 Search and Rescue recommends that SAR plans of operation should be integrated with AEPs to provide for rescue services in the vicinity of aerodromes including, for coastal aerodromes, areas of water. In Australia, the required integration between AEPs and JRCC Australia occurs through State and Territory emergency response plan arrangements.</p> <p>1.1.54 Australian Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASRs) establishes the capability for the CASR Part 139 Manual of Standards to prescribe requirements for aerodrome emergency response arrangements in Australia which vary dependent on the activities of an aerodrome. Some aerodromes will require an AEP while others need to have appropriate emergency procedures in place as part of the local emergency plan administered under the applicable State or Territory emergency arrangements.</p> <p>1.1.55 The IAMSAR Manual includes guidance on AEPs and recommends that cooperation and coordination between the aerodrome operators and the RCC should be promoted for the provision of mutual assistance, including the ready availability of, and coordination with, appropriate specialist rescue services to respond to emergencies where an aerodrome is located close to water and/or swampy areas or difficult terrain.</p>

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
			<p>1.1.56 The integrated nature of Australia’s emergency management arrangements involves coordination at the local, State/Territory and national level depending on the scale and type of emergency. For the emergency response to an aircraft accident in the vicinity of an aerodrome, but outside the aerodrome boundary, there needs to be a clear understanding between stakeholders at the local level, the police SAR authority at the State/Territory level, and the national SAR authorities (AMSA for civil aircraft and ADF for military aircraft) regarding who will assume the role of overall coordinator and who will act in support. Appendix B sets out arrangements for aircraft accidents in the vicinity of aerodromes.</p>
Page 42 - SAR Authority Best Placed to Coordinate	New paragraph to incorporate AEP content		<p>New 1.2.21 Within the boundary of an aerodrome the overall coordination of the response to an aircraft emergency will be determined by that aerodrome’s response planning arrangements and will normally involve police and emergency services, and where stationed, specialised Airservices Australia or ADF airport rescue and firefighting services. Where an aircraft crashes or ditches outside an aerodrome, but in its vicinity, the responsibility for SAR coordination is JRCC Australia for a civil aircraft and the ADF for a military aircraft. However, the police may be best placed to be the Overall Coordinator in the vicinity of an aerodrome dependent on the location, for example in an urban environment, or within port limits, with JRCC Australia or the ADF providing SAR support, or in accordance with the “Reasons for Transfer of Coordination” later in this chapter.</p> <p>(renumber existing paragraph 1.2.21 to 1.2.22 then renumber subsequent paragraphs).</p>
Page 345 & 346	Adding new footnote re AEP content to Appendix B – National SAR Responsibilities		<p>For the column headed “Responsible Authority”, add new footnote to the individual responsible authority applicable to each of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “International civil aircraft, manned space vehicles and aircraft on the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus) Registers”, i.e. JRCC Australia<sup>new footnote #</sup>;</li> <li>• “Aircraft not included in the CASA and RA-Aus registers including ultralights, paragliders, hang-gliders, and gyrocopters (unregistered aircraft)”, i.e. Police<sup>new footnote #</sup>; and</li> <li>• “Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Foreign Military Personnel, Aircraft, Ships and Submarines”, i.e. ADF<sup>5 and new footnote #</sup> as follows:</li> </ul>

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
			<p><small>new footnote #</small> In the case of aircraft emergencies on aerodromes, the response will be coordinated by the aerodrome operator, police and emergency services in accordance with the relevant aerodrome emergency plan (AEP) or local emergency procedures in accordance with State/Territory emergency plan arrangements. For aircraft emergencies outside, but in the vicinity of, an aerodrome boundary, overall coordination may be transferred between JRCC Australia, the ADF and Police in accordance with the principle of 'Best Placed' SAR Authority.</p>
<p>Vol 2 Chap 1 Paras 1.2.14- 1.2.17</p>	<p>Clarification.  Also Channel 16 is commonly used and understood to describe the distress and calling channel. Most mariners would not recognise 156.8MHz as the associated frequency.</p>	<p>156.8 MHz (Marine VHF Channel)</p> <p>1.2.14 The international distress, safety and calling frequency for radiotelephony stations of the maritime mobile service, when using frequencies in the Marine VHF bands 156 to 174 MHz</p> <p>1.2.15 State and Territory limited coast radio stations, port authorities, merchant ships, fishing craft and pleasure craft use VHF Ch. 16.</p> <p>1.2.16 Merchant ships maintain a continuous bridge listening watch on VHF channel 16 to the maximum extent practicable when at sea; and is monitored in all active marine rescue bases (e.g. Marine Rescue NSW monitor VHF Ch. 16).</p> <p>1.2.17 156.3 MHz (Marine VHF Channel 6) is used for coordination at the scene of an incident.</p>	<p>156.8 MHz (Marine VHF Channel 16)</p> <p>1.2.14 The international distress, safety and calling frequency for radiotelephony stations of the maritime mobile service <b>is 156.8MHz (Marine VHF Channel 16)</b>, when using frequencies in the Marine VHF bands 156 to 174.</p> <p>1.2.15 Merchant ships maintain a continuous bridge listening watch on VHF channel 16 to the maximum extent practicable when at sea; and is monitored in all active marine rescue bases (e.g. Marine Rescue NSW monitor VHF Ch. 16).</p> <p><b>In addition, GMDSS compliant vessels maintain a DSC watch on 156.525 (Marine VHF 70). No other communication is allowed on this channel.</b></p> <p>1.2.16 156.3 MHz (Marine VHF Channel 6) is used for coordination at the scene of an incident.</p>

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
Volume 2, Chapter 6 – page 313	Amended content in response to new/updated definitions proposed (Amendment No. 7)		See Attachment 3 for proposed Chapter 6 changes.
Appendix E-5 LPB	Old URL to expire	The current Australian data base for the entry of LPB details is: <a href="http://goo.gl/OLZmW">http://goo.gl/OLZmW</a>	<p>The current Australian data base for the entry of LPB details is: <a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdqUvpIR0GFsmd-w03nv9YFS3nNKNpx0HGoFCozq-iXbG3cpg/viewform?formkey=dFd4ejVYTW8xczNjbkxOb21MU0dBNIE6MQ">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdqUvpIR0GFsmd-w03nv9YFS3nNKNpx0HGoFCozq-iXbG3cpg/viewform?formkey=dFd4ejVYTW8xczNjbkxOb21MU0dBNIE6MQ</a></p> <div data-bbox="1084 679 1433 1082" style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Missing Person Database</p>  </div>
Pg 5 – Table of Contents & Pg 21 – Acronym Table	Emergency Management Australia name change	Emergency Management Australia (EMA)	National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
Pg 39 1.1.38	Emergency Management Australia name change	Emergency Management Australia (EMA) 1.1.38 The Commonwealth Government, through Emergency Management Australia (EMA), is responsible for coordinating any Commonwealth assistance to	National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is responsible for coordinating the provision of non-financial assistance from the Australian Government to states and territories during emergencies. NEMA operates the Australian Government National Situation Room (NSR) which offers 24/7 comprehensive all-hazards situational awareness,

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
1.1.39		<p>States/Territories following natural or technological disaster. The National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Canberra exercises this responsibility.</p> <p>1.1.39 State/Territory Governments have constitutional responsibility, within their borders, for coordinating and planning for the response to natural or technological disasters and civil emergencies. When the total resources (government, community and commercial) of an affected State/Territory cannot reasonably cope with the needs of the situation, the State/Territory Government can seek assistance from the Commonwealth Government through EMA.</p>	<p>impact analysis, and decision support. Through its crisis operations, anticipatory analysis, and planning capabilities, the NSR enables informed decision-making. To enhance coordination and communication between the Australian Government and affected jurisdictions, government agencies, states, and territories may be invited to deploy liaison officers to the NSR.</p> <p>In cases where an incident is assessed as having extreme to catastrophic impact or complexity, it may be designated a Tier IV incident under the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework. These high-level incidents are coordinated by NEMA, with the Prime Minister serving as the Lead Minister.</p> <p>NEMA also oversees the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM)—the primary forum for senior officials to coordinate crisis response efforts. The NCM provides a national overview of the crisis and fosters collaboration among the Australian Government, state and territory governments, and key non-government stakeholders. It serves as a central platform for coordination before, during, and after a crisis, ensuring timely and effective action.</p> <p>Additionally, NEMA manages the National Joint Common Operating Picture (NJCOP)—a near real-time, all-hazards platform that displays all active significant crisis events. NJCOP supports a shared understanding of the situation across jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally, during crisis events.</p>
Page 3	Clarification	<p>This manual is under continual review and will be updated as necessary. The National SAR Manual is promulgated online for the use of all search and rescue practitioners. The Internet version is the controlled document and is the latest version of this manual. The online version should always be referred to as it contains the most up to date information.</p> <p>Suggestions and questions regarding this Manual should be forwarded to: The Secretariat of the National SAR Council Australian Maritime Safety Authority GPO Box 2181</p>	<p>The National SAR Manual is promulgated online for the use of all search and rescue practitioners. The Internet version is the controlled document and is the latest version of this manual. The online version should always be referred to as it contains the most up to date information.</p> <p>Suggestions and questions regarding this Manual should be forwarded to: The Secretariat of the National SAR Council <a href="mailto:NationalSARCouncil@amsa.gov.au">NationalSARCouncil@amsa.gov.au</a></p> <p>Suggested amendments to the National SAR Manual will be considered by NATSAR Council. NATSAR Council is the owner of the National SAR Manual and all changes must be endorsed by NATSAR Council.</p>

Current manual reference	Reason for amendment	Previous Wording	New Wording
		Canberra ACT 2601 <a href="mailto:NationalSARCouncil@amsa.gov.au">NationalSARCouncil@amsa.gov.au</a>	

## Attachment 1 – Foreword

Search and Rescue (SAR) is a vital national capability—one that embodies our collective commitment to saving lives. Whether on land, at sea, or in the air, SAR operations are often complex, resource-intensive, and time-critical. In Australia, where vast distances, remote terrain, and expansive ocean regions present unique challenges, the importance of coordination and cooperation across jurisdictions and domains cannot be overstated.

Australia’s SAR arrangements are designed to complement the efforts of emergency services—police, fire, ambulance and the network of volunteer rescue services—particularly in situations where a cooperative arrangement is required. These include remote inland rescues, maritime emergencies, and aviation incidents, often in environments that demand highly specialised skills and equipment.

The Australian Search and Rescue Region spans approximately 52.8 million square kilometres—covering the continent, surrounding oceans, and the Australian Antarctic territories. This immense area, representing almost one-tenth of the Earth’s surface, underscores the need for a unified and strategic approach to SAR. With dedicated SAR assets limited, we rely on the ability to draw upon government, commercial, and private resources through formal arrangements and mutual support.

SAR operations in Australia are frequently conducted jointly by Commonwealth, State, and Territory authorities. This interdependence demands that our procedures, training, and operational standards are harmonised to ensure seamless collaboration. The capacity to act cooperatively—across agencies, jurisdictions, and domains—is not just beneficial; it is essential.

The National Search and Rescue Council plays a central role in fostering this cooperation. Through the Inter-Governmental Agreement on National Search and Rescue Response Arrangements, reaffirmed in 2017, Ministers across all levels of government endorsed the Council’s leadership in coordinating SAR policy and practice. This Manual, sponsored by the Council, is a key instrument in that mission.

By documenting standardised techniques and procedures, the National Search and Rescue Manual enables SAR authorities to work together with clarity and purpose. It is a tool for building interoperability, enhancing capability, and ultimately, saving lives. In an environment of finite resources and growing complexity, our strength lies in unity—across land, maritime, and aviation domains, and across all levels of government and industry.

Together, we remain committed to a coordinated, cooperative, and effective national SAR system.

**Alex Barrell**

Chair

National Search and Rescue Council

## Attachment 2 – Copyright page

Written and amended by the National Search and Rescue Council.

First published in 1992 by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) on behalf of the National Search and Rescue Council.

© AMSA 2026

The reproduction of this work in whole or in part is invited for search and rescue purposes provided due acknowledgment is given. You must not use the reproduction for any commercial purpose and retain this copyright notice as part of that reproduction.



A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

**ISSN:** 2653-2085 (Online)

For further information contact the National Search and Rescue Council Secretariat at: [nationalsarcouncil@amsa.gov.au](mailto:nationalsarcouncil@amsa.gov.au)

2026 EDITION Version 1 – February 2026



## Attachment 3 – Chapter 6 Conclusion of SAR Operations

### 6.1. Conclusion General

6.1.1. SAR operations enter the conclusion stage when:

- a) The target is located, and the survivors are rescued;
- b) The emergency beacon has been located and the survivors rescued, or if there was no distress, the beacon has been turned off;
- c) Information is received that the target is no longer in distress;
- d) All known persons on board are accounted for, or it has been determined that there is no longer a chance of survival (time frame for survival has been exceeded based on medical opinion); or
- e) The SAR Authority determines that further searching has no significant chance of succeeding and either suspend or ~~conclude~~~~terminate~~ the search.

6.1.2. The authority to end a search rests with different levels within the SAR organisation, depending on the circumstances. In particular, the SAR Authority is responsible for deciding when to suspend ~~or terminate an unsuccessful~~ search where the target has not been found and lives were known to be at risk.

6.1.3. The SAR Authority may delegate to the SMC the authority to conclude the operation in all other circumstances (i.e. when the SMC determines that the target is no longer in distress and in situations where an identified beacon has ceased transmitting).

### 6.2. Conclusion of a search when the target has been found~~successful SAR operation~~

6.2.1. In cases where the missing or lost person is located and either rescued, or recovered, the SAR operation will inevitably be concluded upon completion of the rescue/recovery.

6.2.2 When the target of a search operation has been located and the survivors removed to a place of safety, the SMC shall ensure:

- a) All people and organisations involved in the SAR operation are stood down;
- b) All appropriate agencies are notified;
- c) Next of kin are fully informed;
- d) Shipping is advised of any hazard caused by abandoned vessels etc.;
- e) Arrangements are made for the recovery of dropped survival equipment e.g. rafts;
- f) The collection of all maps, charts, overlays, worksheets, logs, notes, messages in chronological order and filed on a SAR incident file; and
- g) That administrative and financial procedures are completed.

### 6.3. Suspension/~~termination~~ of a search when the target is not found

6.3.1. There will be situations when, despite the best efforts of the SAR system, the missing or lost person is not found, and the SAR Operation is suspended. This decision may be reached when the search operation has no reasonable chance of locating the lost or missing person alive.

6.3.2 When it is determined that further search would be of no avail, the SMC shall consider recommending the suspension ~~or termination~~ of the SAR operation. However, a search operation shall not be suspended ~~or terminated~~, nor the distress phase cancelled without the specific concurrence of the SAR Authority.

6.3.32. The decision to suspend a search shall not be made until a thorough review of the search is conducted. The review will focus on the probability of there being survivors from the initial incident, the probability of survival after the incident, the probability that the survivors were in the search area, and the effectiveness of the search.

6.3.34. The review should:

- a) Examine search decisions to ensure that proper assumptions were made and that planning scenarios were reasonable;
- b) Reconfirm the certainty of initial position and any drift/ lost person behaviour factors used in determining the search area;
- c) Re-evaluate any significant clues and leads;
- d) Examine datum computations and data calculations;
- e) Confirm that all reasonable means of obtaining information about the target have been exhausted;
- f) Review all intelligence material to ensure no information was overlooked;
- g) Examine the search plan to ensure that:
  - i) Assigned areas were searched;
  - ii) The probability of detection was as high as desired; and
  - iii) Compensation was made for search degradation caused by weather, navigational, mechanical or other difficulties;
- h) Consider the survivability of the survivor/s, taking into account:
  - i) Time elapsed since the incident;
  - ii) Environmental conditions;
  - iii) Age, experience and physical condition of (potential) survivors;
  - iv) Survival equipment available; and
  - v) Studies or information relating to survival in similar circumstances;
- i) Consider the rescue plan to ensure that:
  - i) Best use was made of available resources;

ii) Contingency plans were sufficient to cater for unexpected developments;  
and

iii) Coordination with other agencies was effective in ensuring best treatment of survivors.

6.3.54. Before ~~an unsuccessful search is suspended or terminated~~the search, the SAR Authority shall make arrangements to ensure that the next of kin are fully briefed on the complete search effort, including conditions in the search area, other salient operational factors and the reasons for proposing the suspension-~~or termination~~ of the search.

6.3.65. Consideration may be given to notifying the next of kin of the decision to suspend-~~or terminate the~~ search effort at least one day prior to suspension of operations. This provides the next of kin at least one more day of hope while giving them time to accept that the search cannot continue indefinitely. Accordingly, the SMC should maintain regular contact with the relatives during the conduct of the search, providing access to the RCC if practical and appropriate.

6.3.67. In a case where foreign nationals are involved, liaison shall occur with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

6.3.78. The reasons for suspending a search shall be clearly recorded.

6.3.89. When a SAR operation is discontinued or a search is suspended, the SMC shall inform all authorities, assets and facilities that have been activated and/or alerted.

6.3.910. On occasions, after the suspension/~~termination~~ of a search for a live target, it may be necessary for the Police or Defence to continue to search for bodies and/or aircraft/vessel wreckage. In such cases the SAR Authority that had responsibility for the coordination of the search and rescue operation may, where possible:

- a) Provide briefings on the path of the person/aircraft/vessel prior to disappearance, last known position, area searched and related intelligence;
- b) Review intelligence to assist search;
- c) Source aircraft for transport or search purposes; and/or
- d) Provide drift information.

6.3.110. Should any other organisation, such as the operating company, wish to continue with or initiate an independent search, the SAR Authority that had responsibility for the coordination of the search and rescue operation should ascertain whether there is any new intelligence that provides grounds to resume or continue the search. Under the circumstances where there is new intelligence, it should be evaluated and if considered valid the search should be continued or resumed. Where there is no new intelligence, then the SAR Authority may assist the requesting organisation by:

- a) Briefing the person/aircraft/vessel's path prior to disappearance, LKP/splash/crash point, area searched and related intelligence;
- b) Advising the possible location of suitable search aircraft; and/or
- c) Providing drift information.

6.3.124. There are instances where family members are not satisfied with the search efforts prior to suspension/~~Termination~~ and wish to continue the search using their own funds and/or assets. In these instances, the SAR authority that had responsibility for the coordination of the initial operation should provide assistance with:

- a) Providing details of what searching had been undertaken;
- b) Advising of possible suitable search assets; and/or
- c) Providing drift information.

#### 6.4. Reopening a Suspended Search

6.4.1. If significant new information is received, reopening of a suspended case should be considered. An evaluation and assessment of the new intelligence is necessary, as is assessing the value of any further searching. Reopening without good reason may lead to unwarranted use of resources, risk of injury to searchers, possible inability to respond to other emergencies, and false hopes among relatives.

#### 6.5 Pausing a Search

6.5.1 There will be times where it is necessary or appropriate to pause search efforts, with the intention of re-commencing search efforts the following day. A SAR operation may be paused for a variety of reasons, including:

- a) Nightfall.
- b) Adverse or hazardous environmental or weather conditions.
- c) Identified risks relating to the target (missing person), such as armed or potentially violent.
- d) Search asset fatigue.
- e) Significant or contradictory information that requires further investigation, in situations when continuing active search efforts would put search assets at unreasonable burden or risk.

6.5.2 The decision to pause must consider the objective risk to the missing or lost person, compared to the risks of continuing the search. A dynamic risk assessment must be completed, taking into account all current, relevant intelligence. Factors that should be considered include:

- a) The current risk to the missing person as a result of:
  - i. Age (young children or elderly)
  - ii. Level of vulnerability due to medical conditions such as Dementia/Alzheimer's.
  - iii. Other Intellectual or Cognitive Disabilities and severity.
  - iv. Other medical conditions and required medication.
  - v. Clothing, access to survival equipment and provisions such as water and/or shelter.
  - vi. Environmental conditions, such as heat or cold, wind, rain, snow.
  - vii. Terrain, such as urban, bushland, existence of specific hazards.
- b) Previous search urgency assessment/s and current intelligence. Whilst a particular level of urgency may have been assessed initially, new information may alter this assessment.
- c) The period-of-time the person has been missing or lost and TFFS factors, including any advice obtained from an independent expert.

- d) Risk posed to searchers due to environmental or terrain hazards, that renders search efforts ineffective or too dangerous for search assets.
- e) Search asset fatigue and availability, such as using volunteers through the night and those same volunteers then not being available the following day. The relative effectiveness of searching at night versus during daylight should be considered.
- f) The credibility and reliability of the available information (or lack thereof), balanced against the potential risk to the missing person. For example, there may be a lack of information supporting the proposition that the person is in the search area. However, the risks to the person if they are in-fact in the search area may dictate that a search should commence immediately to rule-out high probability areas. However, this does not negate the appropriateness of pausing due to darkness once these areas have been searched, with the intention of resuming in daylight once further intelligence confirms the person is in the area and likely in need of assistance.

6.5.3 Whilst taking a pause from active search activities, consideration should be given to suitable resources that may be deployed, such as aircraft fitted with specialised equipment (ie FLIR), or vehicle-based patrols or containment.

#### **6.56. Records and Reports**

6.56.1. Records relating to search and rescue operations, including air searches on behalf of other organisations, shall be retained for periods as required under the relevant legislation and regulation.

6.56.2. When a search has been ~~terminated or~~ suspended without locating the target or its occupants, all records, charts etc. shall be retained and be accessible to SAR staff to allow easy resumption of search activity should further intelligence be received.

6.56.3. Reports on SAR operations shall be generated as required for Coroners Inquiries, Management purposes and for training requirements.

#### **6.67. Incident Debriefs**

6.67.1. Following any SAR incident the conduct of a debrief of agencies and groups involved should be considered. The purpose of incident debriefs are to establish opportunities for improvement in the operation of the national SAR system.

6.67.2. Incidents worthy of debrief may include those where:

- a) Lives have been lost;
- b) Large and complex searches have been conducted;
- c) Multi agency involvement occurred; or
- d) Where coordination, communication or response challenges were experienced during the incident.

6.67.3. This list is not exhaustive and the conduct of a post incident, multi-agency debrief is at the discretion of the SAR Authority in overall coordination of the incident with mutual agreement of other SAR Authorities and agencies involved.

6.7.4. Post incident debriefs should be used to:

- a) Establish opportunities for improvement in the operation of the National SAR System; and
- b) Ensure current policies and procedures are appropriate.

6.7.5. The SAR Authority with overall coordination is to:

- a) Decide the need for a debrief in consultation with other SAR participants;
- b) Organise and host the debrief unless otherwise agreed by the participants;
- c) Establish a venue that maximises opportunity for participation in, and learning from, the debrief;
- d) Capture and share the opportunities for improvement arising;
- e) Initiate changes to the National SAR Manual as appropriate arising from the debrief; and
- f) Include lessons learned from debriefs in their jurisdiction reports to the annual National SAR Council meeting.

6.7.6. No matter how simple or complex the operation may be, it cannot be concluded until a debrief has been conducted.

6.7.7. This is the primary method employed to assess the effectiveness of the plan, and for Team Leaders to assess their own conduct.

6.7.8. Depending on the size of the activity and/or the number of participants, there may be different types of debriefings:

- a) At the end of each phase of the operation. This is to update information and revise plans for subsequent phases.
- b) By the leaders of individual teams to determine the effectiveness of their training and/or operating procedure and the conduct of their allotted tasks.
- c) A debrief by the SMC of everyone involved in the conduct of the operation prior to the conclusion.
- d) After the initial information has been analysed and the control element has had time to study all the records and data relevant to the activity.

6.7.9. Provided the debrief is conducted correctly, many valuable lessons may be learnt which may be applied to the conduct of the immediate operation and may be incorporated into future plans and procedures. A poorly conducted debrief may not only fail to achieve its aim but also have negative effect on those participating.

### **Conducting the Debrief**

6.7.10. The points discussed in briefing are just as relevant in debriefing. However, the debriefing officer needs to do the following:

- a) Control the debrief and not allow it to degenerate into a witch hunt.
- b) Stress that the aim of the debrief is to examine the operation to determine what went right, what went wrong, and why?
- c) Address specific questions, such as:
  - i) Accuracy of maps and charts (paper and electronic)
  - ii) Terrain, sea conditions and state, weather
  - iii) Suitability of search method,
  - iv) Effectiveness of communication system,
  - v) Resupply, and
  - vi) Any other related subjects.
- d) Identify good points and make special mention of them. People prefer to be praised rather than criticised. No matter how often it is stressed that the debrief is not a witch hunt, somebody will believe that they are being criticised, either personally or on behalf of the organisation they represent. Be aware that this will occur.
- e) Seek comments from those being debriefed. Once the major points have been identified, ask for any comments. Maintain control by employing the same system as that used during the briefing. Stress that the information being sought is constructive criticism that will be employed to improve the conduct of operation in the future.
- f) Take written notes. Not only does this ensure that all points are recorded for future use, but it will also allow those being debriefed to observe that a genuine effort has been made. Further comments may not be forthcoming unless it is noted that relevant points are recorded.
- g) Read out a summary of the points discussed to confirm that they have all been addressed.
- h) Issue confirmatory notes to all organisations detailing all points discussed and what actions need to be taken.

6.67.11. Participation at debriefs may be restricted to particular SAR Authorities and agencies depending on the issues that are likely to arise and would be a decision for the SAR Authority with overall coordination for the incident.

6.67.12. SAR Authorities that participate in the debrief will meet their own attendance costs, unless otherwise agreed by the participants.

6.76.13. The debrief should include the opportunity for all significant parties involved in the incident to contribute and learn from it