



**Queensland  
Disaster Management  
Lessons Management  
Framework**

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Alistair Dawson  
Inspector-General Emergency Management

## Content

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Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait  
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The Office recognises their connection  
to land, sea and community. We pay our  
respects to them, their cultures, and to  
their Elders, past, present and emerging.

## Foreword

The importance of managing lessons emerged in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Debbie. That review's first recommendation, accepted by Government, was that *'Queensland should implement and maintain a system-wide lesson management program'*.

Much work by many people across the sector followed. I would like to recognise and thank them for their efforts and leadership in helping to develop this framework. The pages that follow show over 18 months of work to understand the principles behind successful lessons management and confirm them in a Queensland context.

Our community expects that the many people involved in managing our disasters have the best tools, experience and practice to draw on in facing the challenges of the future. This State is no stranger to disasters. Those tools and that experience and practice are available in Queensland. Sharing that expertise is critical for the next inevitable event. This framework sets the way forward for all involved, and I commend it to the sector.

I see the framework as a further step in raising the standards of disaster management in Queensland. If it is to be truly embedded in our daily business, though, it needs to be a standard in its own right. The Office will work collaboratively over coming months to make this so.

Alistair Dawson  
Inspector-General Emergency Management

# Contents

Foreword	4
Contents	7
Background	8
Lessons Management	9
Purpose	9
Principles	10
Elements	11
Governance	12
Enabling environment	12
Authorising environment	12
Engagement	13
Roles and responsibilities	13
Leadership	15
Learning Culture	15
Tools	15
Capability	15
The Lessons Management Lifecycle	16
Managing lessons	16
The Observation, Insight, Lesson Identified, Lesson Learned (OILL) Process	17
Definitions	19
Appendix A – Lessons Management Working Terms and Definitions	20
Appendix B – Writing good observations	22
References	23

## Background

Queensland's disaster management sector recognises the importance of lessons management for driving continuous improvement and knowledge across disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Various mechanisms exist to harness learnings, good practice and innovation at different levels of the Queensland disaster management arrangements. In order to realise the opportunity for sector-wide learning and improvement that currently exists, a cohesive Lessons Management Framework that draws together learnings from agencies across the sector has been developed.

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*The process of managing lessons is integral to the continuous improvement of organisational capability and individual learning (AIDR, 2019:2)*

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Following the Cyclone Debbie Review, the Queensland Government endorsed an action plan to implement the review recommendations across the sector. The action plan tasked the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management (the Office) to lead the development of a sector-wide lessons management program. The disaster management sector-wide<sup>1</sup> Lessons Management Framework (the framework) aims to provide greater confidence to the community that the capacity and capability of the disaster sector is enhanced as lessons identified lead to sustained improvements.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan for the roles and responsibilities of entities involved in disaster operations and disaster management in Queensland.



## Lessons Management

Lessons management refers to collecting, analysing, disseminating and applying learning experiences from events, exercises, programs and reviews (AIDR, 2019:3). The value of taking a formal approach to identifying and learning lessons is that the sector can reduce the risk of mistakes reoccurring and increase the chance that successes are repeated. Lessons learned describes more than just learning from experience. Learning must be used to justify changes that will lead to improved performance.

The framework has been developed in accordance with the Emergency Management Assurance Framework (EMAF), the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland and Queensland's disaster management arrangements.

**Lessons management:** A component of knowledge management that seeks to introduce better practice and improvement opportunities for an organisation's systems and processes. Lessons management broadly involves collecting and analysing information and data to develop, implement, validate and share changes intended to improve efficiency and/or effectiveness (AIDR, 2019:43).

## Purpose

The purpose of the framework is to enable interoperability and leverage the internal processes currently applied across all levels of the disaster management arrangements in Queensland to drive system level improvements. The framework provides a consistent approach to lessons management and promotes sharing of lessons across the sector. The framework:

- Encourages a collaborative approach to sustainable improvement within the disaster management sector.
- Enables disaster management practitioners to capture and share observations and insights that will lead to sustainable improvements in disaster management practice.
- Facilitates learning and development that will improve community outcomes.
- Provides an environment that is professional, respectful of the offerings and contexts of contributors and collaborators to build sector-wide trust; connectedness and confidence in the efficacy of the arrangements.

Learning and sharing lessons across the sector will identify opportunities to share effective practice and improve performance, based on sound analysis of past performance. This will encourage and improve emergency and disaster management practice to enhance community outcomes and build resilience.

# Principles

Principles are critical factors in enabling the implementation of a successful Lessons Management Framework. While recognising the national principles of lessons management, entities from the Queensland disaster management sector recognised the importance of designing principles which will inform Queensland’s framework. To ensure consistency, these have been aligned with the national principles.

Principles of Lessons Management – Queensland Disaster Sector	Principles of Lessons Management – National <sup>2</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting a learning culture across the sector.</li> <li>• Driving continuous and sustained improvement that advocates good practice.</li> <li>• Evidence based to inform future policy and decision-making.</li> <li>• Forward thinking and adaptable to changes in ideas and technology.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lessons Focussed</b> – Lessons management is focussed on activities that use learning opportunities to inform change and future improvement.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a safe environment that builds trust and encourages active participation.</li> <li>• Keeping people and communities at the centre.</li> <li>• Building the confidence and maturity of the sector over time.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Inclusive</b> – Lessons management benefits from collaborative approaches and the involvement of relevant stakeholders during phases of the lessons cycle.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancing the collaborative ability of the sector with a coordinated approach to lessons management.</li> <li>• Providing scalability for use at all levels of the sector.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Consistent</b> – Lessons management uses consistent, scalable, sustainable processes, tools and themes to support stakeholders to contribute and enable trend analysis across events, organisations and jurisdictions.</p>

**Table 1: Alignment of Queensland and National Principles of Lessons Management**

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2019:10

# Elements

Elements that define, support and sustain the framework are:

- governance
- enabling environment
- engagement
- learning culture
- tools
- lessons management lifecycle<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 1 details the elements that define, support and sustain the framework.

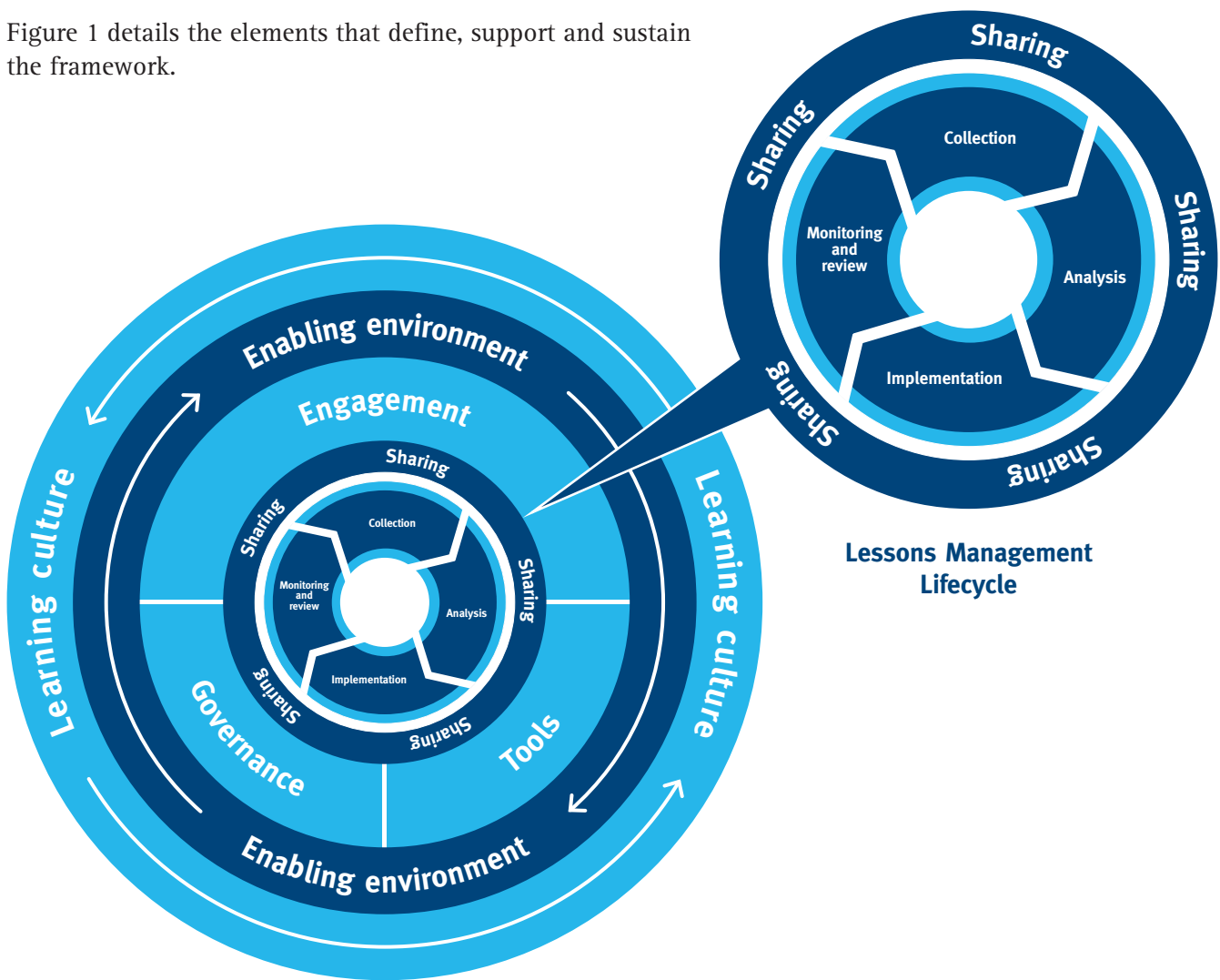


Figure 1 – Lessons Management Framework

<sup>3</sup> The Lessons Management Lifecycle is explained in further detail on page 16.

## Governance

Effective governance provides structure and leadership that will facilitate the management of lessons and ensure accountability and a learning culture (AIDR, 2019:13). The governance that supports improved lessons management in Queensland is one that:

- Provides the authority for lessons management and sets expectations.
- Provides a structure, clear accountabilities, roles and responsibilities for lessons identification, processes and implementation at all levels.
- Ensures monitoring, measurement and validation of identified lessons.

Governance of the framework is embedded through its other elements.

## Enabling environment

An enabling environment including the existence of a learning culture is critical to the wide acceptance and effectiveness of the framework. The enabling environment includes the authorising environment, the leadership, roles and responsibilities and capabilities needed to support the Lessons Management Framework.

### Authorising environment

In Queensland, the requirement for continuous improvement is set out in:

- the *Disaster Management Act 2003* 16C(g) and 16C(i)
- the *Queensland Disaster Management 2016 Strategic Policy Statement*
- the *Queensland State Disaster Management Plan*
- the *Emergency Management Assurance Framework*
- the *Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland*
- the *Prevention Preparedness, Response and Recovery Disaster Management Guideline*.

The *Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland* specifies the shared responsibility of the disaster management sector to ensure a collaborative culture exists (IGEM, 2019:21). A collaborative culture supports a coordinated approach to the sharing of lessons and continuous improvement.

## Engagement

Ongoing communication at every level, within an organisation, between organisations, across the sector and with the broader community, is an important aspect of a successful lessons management process (AIDR, 2019:14). The following principles will guide stakeholder engagement through the lessons management lifecycle (IGEM, 2020:8-9):

### **Clear, accurate and timely communication** –

Clear, accurate, relevant and timely communication is vital, as is recognising the different communication needs and preferences of different stakeholders and that effective communication involves listening and talking.

**Accessible and inclusive** – Meaningful engagement means acknowledging and identifying stakeholders who are potentially affected by, or interested in, our activity, process or decision and provide them with the information and tools they need to participate and provide feedback.

**Transparent** – In the interests of integrity and to inspire trust entities will clearly identify and explain the engagement process, the role of stakeholders in the engagement process, and communicate where possible, how input was considered.

**Measurable** – Evaluating our engagement activities is a critical element of good engagement as it allows us to understand what is effective and improve the quality of our stakeholder's engagement over time'.

## Roles and responsibilities

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has responsibilities under the *Disaster Management Act (2003)* to ensure that disaster management is consistent with plans, policies, standards and guidelines.

Everyone involved in the disaster management sector has a responsibility to contribute to and benefit from lessons management. Entities are encouraged to identify and promote lessons across the Queensland disaster management arrangements.

Figure 2 identifies how observations can be progressed and lessons shared.

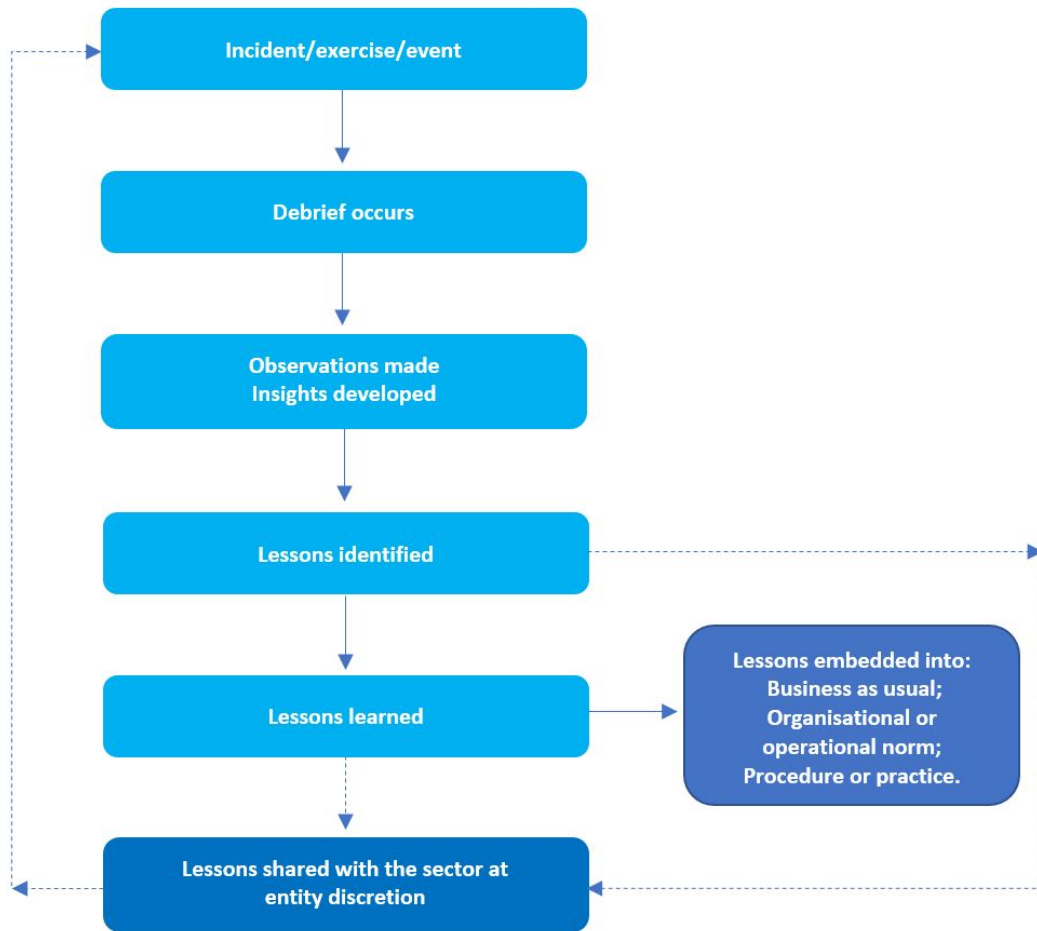


Figure 2 – Sharing Lessons - Suggested process for developing and sharing lessons across the sector

## Leadership

Building collaboration requires strong leadership and depends on trust, communication, and a shared vision and purpose. Strong leadership is key to ensuring the development of an effective learning culture and organisational accountability.

Leadership at all levels is encouraged to promote, enforce and prioritise lessons management within agencies and across Queensland's disaster management arrangements. Leadership should encourage cultural change and promote the purpose and principles of the framework.

Leadership needs to promote, enforce and prioritise lessons management throughout the agency. It will require accountability and ownership, but most importantly, behaviours modelled, discussed and promoted at senior management level (AIDR, 2019:13).

## Learning Culture

An effective sector-wide framework requires the creation and maintenance of a culture which embraces learning and change and supports continuous improvement and lesson sharing.

When sector leaders promote, encourage and prioritise lessons management throughout their entities, the culture is conducive to a sector-wide learning environment. This requires accountability and ownership, but most importantly, behaviours modelled, discussed and promoted at senior management level.

Collecting information for lessons management relies on establishing an environment of trust where people feel safe enough to share and discuss their experiences, improvement opportunities and good practices.

Embedding the habits of learning and applying lessons into the culture and work practices of entities will encourage sustained improvement and a collaborative approach to identify issues within the disaster management sector.

## Tools

To support the Lessons Management Framework including Observations, Insights, Lessons Identified and Lessons Learned (OILL), templates have been developed for the sector to collect observations and develop insights and lessons identified. The process for monitoring and review is also provided within the templates.

## Capability

The concept of lessons management may be new for some disaster management stakeholders. Training and education will build confidence and engagement in the process. Disaster management groups may assess training needs and coordinate the delivery of the Lessons Management training through their local Emergency Management Coordinator, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

Training for lessons management will form part of the Queensland Disaster Management Training Framework.

# The Lessons Management Lifecycle<sup>4</sup>

Lessons management is an overarching term that refers to collecting, analysing, disseminating and applying learning experiences from events, exercises, programs and reviews (AIDR, 2019:3). The lifecycle is the series of changes or developments that lessons pass through from beginning to end.

## Managing lessons

The lifecycle for managing lessons consists of four steps which are underpinned by continuous stakeholder engagement:

1. collection
2. analysis
3. implementation and
4. monitoring and review.

### Collection:

The first step in the lesson management lifecycle is the collection of observations.

Quality **observations** are essential for being able to identify appropriate and quality lessons. Observations should be clear and consist of the following parts:

- Who: did the observation come from?
- When: the date the observation occurred?
- Where: did the activity occur?
- What: is the detail of what occurred, what was seen, heard, felt etc?
- Suggested solutions: the opportunity to discuss what has been or could be done to address the issue.

For more information on how to write good observations refer to Appendix B.

In this step, information is gathered to inform step two, 'analysis' (AIDR, 2019:21).

### Analysis:

Involves the review of the collected data to identify trends or themes that an organisation may use to define its learning opportunities. This informs possible solutions, strategy development and implementation options (AIDR, 2019:25). Coding will allow observations to be extracted to inform analysis at any time. Using a common coding system can facilitate the exchange of information and lessons across entities, agencies, sectors and jurisdictions<sup>5</sup>.

### Implementation:

Once the analysis is complete, consideration needs to be made on how to implement the lesson(s) identified (AIDR, 2019:30).

### Monitoring and review<sup>6</sup>:

Focuses on establishing or confirming the success or outcomes of implementation activities around lessons identified. The responsibility for the monitoring and review of agency and local area specific insights and lessons identified will be the responsibility of that agency or local area (AIDR, 2019:30).

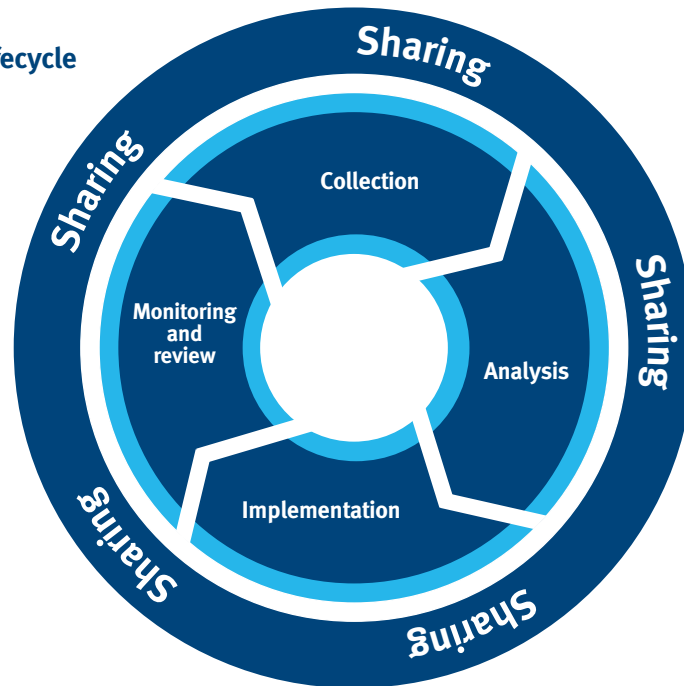
4 The Queensland lessons management lifecycle is consistent with that developed by the Australian Institute of Disaster Research (AIDR) and other jurisdictions such as the Victorian emergency management sector.

5 Coding will utilise the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland, P<sup>2</sup>OST<sup>2</sup>E – elements of capability and National Themes Levels 1 & 2.

6 Monitoring and review of lessons learned will remain with each respective agency. Tools have been developed to assist with this process. IGEM has responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of the progress of review recommendations.



**Figure 3:**  
**Lessons Management Lifecycle**



## The Observation, Insight, Lesson Identified, Lesson Learned (OILL) Process

The OILL process is one approach to synthesising observations<sup>7</sup>, analysing for insights and identifying lessons (AIDR, 2019:25). The approach is widely used by emergency management agencies including entities within the Queensland disaster management sector. A description of each step is provided below (AIDR, 2019:24).

### Observation

A record of a noteworthy fact or occurrence that someone has heard, seen, noticed or experienced as an opportunity for improvement or an example of good practice. For more information on how to write good observations refer to Appendix B.

### Insight

A deduction drawn from the evidence collected (observations), which needs to be further considered. An insight defines the issue, not the solution.

Root cause: The analysis used to identify the root causes of raw observations (AIDR, 2019:53).

### Lesson identified

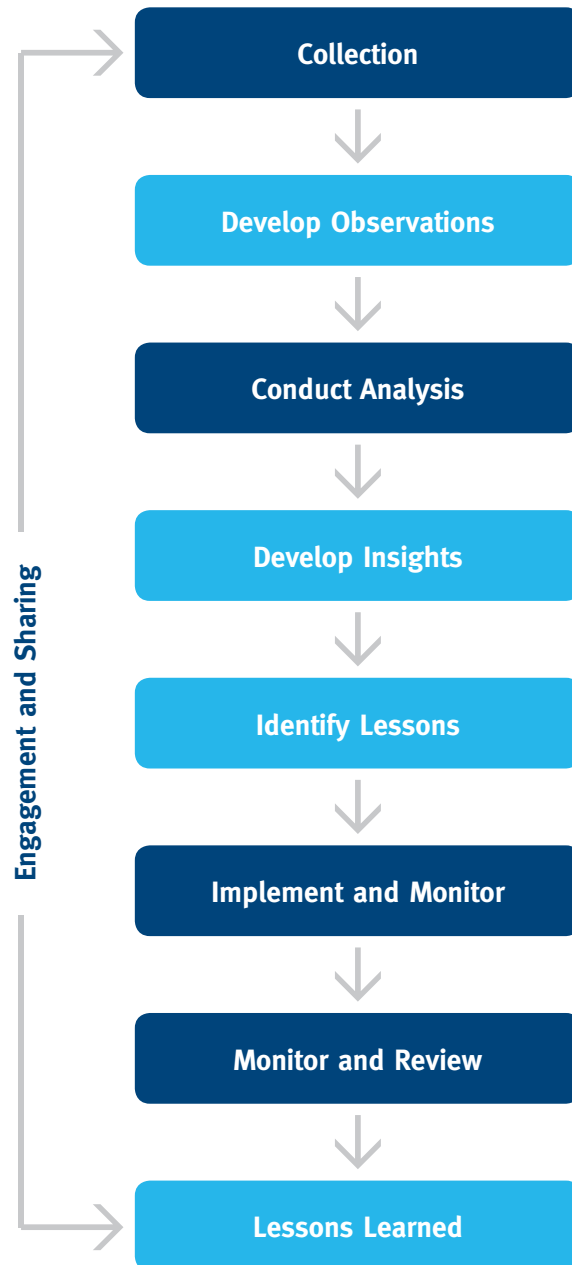
A conclusion with a determined root cause based on the analysis of one or more insights and a viable course of action that can either sustain a positive action or address an area for improvement.

### Lesson learned

A lesson is learned when the approved change is implemented and embedded in the organisation. Depending on the changes required it may take several years for the change to be institutionalised across the organisation.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on the OILL process see the OILL Training Session Plans and PowerPoints.

Figure 4 demonstrates the elements of the lessons management process.



- Lessons management process
- OILL

**Figure 4: Elements of the lessons management process lessons**

# Definitions

*The Queensland Disaster Management Lexicon* is the standard for common language in Queensland disaster management and is used to define terms specific to Queensland. Lessons management working terms and definitions have been created and should be read in conjunction with the Lexicon. The lessons management working terms and definitions can be found in *Appendix A*.

# Appendix A

## Lessons Management Working Terms and Definitions

### Analyse

To study the whole by thoroughly examining its parts and their interactions. In the lessons learning process, the analysis phase should allow discovery of the root cause of a problem or success, identify the appropriate remedial action to correct the problem and the appropriate action body to achieve the correction or sustain the success.

### Analysis

The process of systematically applying statistical techniques and/or logic to interpret, compare, categorise and summarise data collected to refine observations.

### Continuous improvement

How entities monitor, evaluate, measure and improve disaster management activities.

### Entities

Describes those with roles and responsibilities within disaster management in Queensland. This includes all tiers of government, non-government organisations, not-for-profit organisations, disaster management groups and others with legislated roles in disaster management.

### Entity

An individual, agency, group, organisation or department working within Queensland's disaster management arrangements.

### Insight<sup>8</sup>

A deduction drawn from groups of observations analysed to form the evidence which needs to be further considered. Insights provide guidance for future analysis and potential action. Insights can be positive or negative and can contribute to reinforcing positive behaviour or changing practices. Insights may be developed when a single observation poses a high risk to the organisation or when a number of similarly themed observations have been collected.

### Lesson<sup>9</sup>

A lesson is knowledge or understanding gained by experience. The experience may be positive (a best practice), or negative (gap in performance or doctrine). Successes and failures are both considered sources of lessons. A lesson is the knowledge generated from the analysis of an issue to determine the underlying cause of what occurred.

### Lessons Identified

This is a viable course of action, based on the analysis of one or more insights that can either sustain a positive action or address an area for improvement.

### Lesson Learned

A lesson learned articulates how a lesson identified has been learned through a demonstrated change in behaviour. A lesson does not become learned until it results in institutionalised change and becomes an ongoing element of the organisational or operational norm or standardized procedure or practice.

<sup>8</sup> For further information on Insights see the OILL Training Session Plans and PowerPoints.

<sup>9</sup> For further information on Lessons and Lesson Identification see OILL Training Session Plans and PowerPoints.

A full iteration of a lessons learned cycle would involve:

- the identification of a lesson
- an action proposed and agreed
- the solution implemented and
- tested/validated to ensure the desired behaviour is sustained across the organisation.

## **Lessons Management**

A component of knowledge management that seeks to introduce better practice and improvement opportunities for an organisation's systems and processes. Lessons management broadly involves collecting and analysing information and data to develop, implement, validate and share changes intended to improve efficiency and/or effectiveness.

## **Observation**

A record of a noteworthy fact or occurrence as seen during an activity or operation. In the context of an evaluation, it is the evidence or data collected by an evaluator – that is, what is seen or discovered (observed) during the evaluation. Observations can be of good practices to be sustained, or of opportunities for improvement. The analysis of accumulated observations provides for the development of insights and findings from which recommendations may be developed.

## **Root cause**

The analysis used to identify the root cause of observations.

## **Validation**

Lesson learned validation ensures that the originally observed issue has been successfully corrected by the implemented remedial action.

# Appendix B

## Writing good observations

Observations are the basic building block of the lessons process. Good observations are essential to being able to identify appropriate, quality lessons. Observations need to be able to stand alone and be understood when removed from all other context. An observation may make sense to you when you write it, but will it make sense to someone else later when they need to use it in an analysis across multiple events.

When writing an observation:

- only one idea per observation
- write in plain English
- don't waffle
- keep it anonymous by identifying position or role but not names
- spell out all abbreviations and acronyms
- avoid jargon and colloquialisms
- be descriptive and include examples.

### What are the elements of a good observation?

The structure of an observation consists of the following parts:

#### Who?

Who did the observation come from?

What is their position, role or agency?

Do not use names. This is not about identifying, blaming or shaming individuals.

#### When?

This gives context of the circumstances and how far in the past it occurred. It also allows comparison with other experiences from the same event.

What was the date?

Did the activity have a name?

#### Where?

Where did the activity occur?

Was it in specific terrain, an operations centre, as part of a project or during an exercise?

This allows comparison with other experiences in the same sort of location or environment.

#### What?

This is the detail of what occurred, what was seen, heard or felt and the impacts (i.e. This is what happened and was observed, and it had this impact and/or result).

#### Suggested solutions?

Participants may have suggested solutions on what has been or could be done to address the issue, or they may have already implemented change. Often a suggested solution is not offered or available. If none are available that is fine. Do not feel compelled to come up with one.

Note these are suggested solutions from participants. It is important that lessons managers do not leap to a solution at the collection stage.

## References

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2019; *Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection, Lessons Management* (2nd edition), East Melbourne, Victoria.

Inspector-General Emergency Management, 2019; *Emergency Management Assurance Framework*.

Inspector-General Emergency Management, 2019; *Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland*.

Inspector-General Emergency Management, 2020; *Stakeholder Engagement Framework*.

Inspector-General Emergency Management, 2018; *Queensland Disaster Management Lexicon*.



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