



# Position Statement: International Disaster Relief

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**Approved by:** Board

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## 1. Purpose

This document outlines RANZCO's position on its role in international disaster relief and emergency management responses. It includes advice to members who wish to participate in humanitarian relief activities.

## 2. Background

Natural disasters such as a floods, earthquakes, tsunamis or hurricanes often occur unexpectedly, causing devastation, damage and loss of life.

These disasters have far more devastating effects in low resource settings as local capacity to provide immediate assistance and relief may be limited. Such efforts may be further hampered if the disaster area is located in a conflict zone.

Countries affected may call for international support to help manage a humanitarian response to the emergency and provide disaster relief. Similarly, relief agencies, governments and other stakeholders may offer assistance upon becoming aware of a disaster. United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross / Red Crescent, and established multilateral and bilateral donors who have a track record in engaging in emergency management, will typically use their best endeavours to adhere to relevant international standards, coordinating with others to ensure effective emergency responses (as re-iterated in key international statements such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness<sup>1</sup> and Accra Agenda for Action<sup>2</sup>).

Ideally, the affected communities and their representative government are the key stakeholders that inform and direct comprehensive and coordinated responses to the whole spectrum of emergency needs. However, in limited resource settings, or as a result of the effects of a disaster, the capacity to inform and direct responses may be limited and reliant on external support.

When a disaster occurs, RANZCO members may feel motivated to assist. It is important for members to consider assisting in the most appropriate manner.

## 3. RANZCO position

RANZCO's international program activities are focused on enhancing eye care education and professional standards. These activities are long-term sustainable capacity building initiatives that are customised for local needs and requirements and do not include service delivery.

The College:

- does not have the necessary experience and capacity to co-ordinate emergency efforts, nor does it train competent personnel to respond to international humanitarian disasters; and
- does not fundraise or co-ordinate fundraising to support international disaster relief efforts.

RANZCO acknowledges that its members may wish to participate in humanitarian relief activities in various capacities. The College urges members to do so through reputable and established organisations that have a track record of providing effective support.

Reputable organisations may include:

- signatories to the *Australian Council For International Development Code of Conduct*<sup>3</sup> which sets good standards for program effectiveness, fundraising, governance and financial reporting;
- signatories to the *New Zealand Council for International Development Code of Conduct*<sup>4</sup> which details principles and obligations for aid and development programming, public engagement and organisation;
- signatories to the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*<sup>5</sup> which lays down ten principles that all humanitarian actors should adhere to in their disaster response work; and
- organisations that comply with the World Health Organisation’s *Classification and Minimum Standards for Foreign Medical Teams in sudden onset disasters*<sup>6</sup> which sets out minimum standards for surgical and trauma care teams arriving within the aftermath of a disaster.

## 4. References

1. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005).
2. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Accra Agenda for Action (2008).
3. Australian Council for International Development. Code of Conduct (2014). Available from: <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/files/code-of-conduct>.
4. Council for International Development. Code of Conduct (2014). Available from: <http://www.cid.org.nz/assets/About/Important-Documents/Code-of-Conduct-FINAL-December-2014.pdf>.
5. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (1994). Available from: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct/>.
6. World Health Organisation. Classification and Minimum Standards for Foreign Medical Teams in sudden onset disasters (2013). Available from: [http://www.who.int/hac/global\\_health\\_cluster/fmt\\_guidelines\\_september2013.pdf](http://www.who.int/hac/global_health_cluster/fmt_guidelines_september2013.pdf).

## 5. Record of Amendments

Page	Details of amendment	Date approved
Entire document	Created	22 May 2015