

Natural Hazards Social Science Panel

Terms of Reference

Please note that these are Draft Terms of Reference (ToRs), and it is envisioned that an initial task of the first sitting panel will be to review and finalise these, the mechanisms of activation and inter-agency communication, and develop a set of conduct guidelines, after which they will be reviewed on a biennial basis. Note that a separate document 'Suggested considerations for the inaugural NHSSP' contains a list of items that the panel might wish to consider, based upon collated feedback received throughout the development of these Draft ToRs.

1. Background and Context

1.1 There is a need for Social Scientists to support emergency management decision makers by providing a conduit to social science advice. Such advice would be accessible by agencies and other advisory panels before, during and after natural hazard crises and events. This advice should be given in a consistent, structured and reliable way; the Natural Hazards Social Science Panel (NHSSP) has been formed to provide this service.

1.2 The NHSSP defines 'advice' as the sharing of knowledge, views, information and intelligence and not the delivery of specific decision making recommendations.

1.3 The NHSSP builds on the development of the Psychosocial Recovery Advisory Group, which was formed following the Canterbury Earthquake Sequence to provide recovery advice.

1.4 The NHSSP will provide expertise in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) social science, with the emphasis on supporting response and recovery operations. Accordingly, the following three social science fields are prioritised:

- Risk communication
- Behavioural sciences/responses
- Psychosocial support and recovery

1.5 Support in areas of social science expertise not directly represented on the Panel may be requested during emergency events and exercises. When required, appropriate experts will be contacted to assist as needed, e.g. in the case of ongoing events.

1.6 Research coordination and management during a crisis is the role of the Natural Hazards Research Platform (NHRP) (and its inheriting agency) and is not the role of the NHSSP. It is expected that the NHSSP will have active ongoing communication with the NHRP throughout any activation.

1.7 A free and frank exchange of advice between advice requesters (agencies or bodies with an emergency management role) and the NHSSP is the goal. It is envisioned that the NHSSP is not being established to provide direct public advice, and this will be reviewed by the inaugural Panel.

2. Key End-Users

2.1 Advice requesters may include, but are not limited to: emergency lead agencies with the primary mandate for managing the response to an emergency, such as central government ministries and departments (e.g. Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education), and

support agencies such as GeoNet, local government, Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) sector, health care providers, advisory panels (such as the New Zealand Volcanic Science Advisory Panel, the Caldera Advisory Group and other volcanic advisory groups; and the Tsunami Expert Panel), and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

3. Objectives

3.1 To develop and maintain operational arrangements for the provision of social science support for decision-making during crises and events, based on current knowledge and the existing evidence base.

3.2 To draw on the existing evidence base and scientific knowledge in support of decision-making concerning readiness planning and for response purposes, and which is integrated across agencies and disciplines.

3.3 To develop and maintain arrangements for the effective coordination and sharing of social science advice during natural hazard crises and events to assist readiness, response and recovery.

4. Membership

4.1 Membership will be via a call for nominations from organisations across NZ, with nominations and recruitment coordinated by the NHRP to ensure impartiality.

4.2 The Panel membership will ideally include:

- A representative with relevant natural hazards social science knowledge from each of Massey, Canterbury, Victoria, Waikato, Auckland, Lincoln and Otago universities, and a relevant representative from GNS Science, NIWA and other relevant research organisations.
- A Māori Social Science representative.
- One representative each from the NHRP and MCDEM.
- Additional representatives may be included to ensure urban and rural geographic coverage and disciplines are adequately represented. Initially these additional positions will be as agreed by the Selection Committee, and thereafter the NHSSP following due process.

4.3 Each Panel member is expected to propose an appropriate proxy of equivalent standing from within their own organisation, to act on their behalf should the Panel member be unavailable for an extended period of time (e.g. more than a fortnight). Proxies will be subject to approval by the Chair.

4.3 Membership will be for a renewable period of 2 years, reviewable by the Panel as required.

4.4 Panel members will ideally have a PhD and a minimum of three years' experience in their discipline, or for non-doctoral members a minimum of ten years of experience in their discipline.

4.5 The Panel membership may be expanded depending upon the needs during a crisis or event.

4.6 If any member resigns from the Panel, a replacement will be sought from the same organisation, geographic location, or discipline to maintain the representation.

4.7 In addition to the Panel, a wider list of social scientists across NZ who have expertise in natural hazards and have indicated they are available to be contacted as needed in a crisis will be developed and maintained. This list will be held by the Secretariat, as will the list of current Panel members.

4.8 All Panel members are expected to be active contributors to the NHSSP and membership will be reviewed for any member not reasonably contributing to Panel activities. These activities include:

- Attending at least one Panel annual planning meeting (in Wellington) per year;
- Acting as a liaison for the Panel within their organisation, including identifying others from their organisation for the wider list of experts and providing appropriate communications to their organisation on the purpose and activities of the Panel;
- Providing social science expert advice (if available) for events and exercises;
- Acting honestly, fairly and in good faith, and abiding by the NHSSP conduct guidelines (to be developed by the inaugural panel).

Panel members should freely and openly exchange relevant ideas, advice, expertise and experiences within the Panel.

- Panel members will act in a timely way on commitments arising from the group activities in planning, response and recovery modes.
- Members will meet their own costs of participation in the Panel (e.g. attending the annual meeting, any time spent in Panel meetings and on advice provision during crises and exercises). Note: meetings during crises and exercises may be held using teleconference, videoconference or skype facilities for convenience.

5. Key functions and roles

During Response:

5.1 It is a recognised role and expectation that science capability supported by the NHRP will be available to assist decision makers during significant hazard events. The National CDEM Plan (2015) and associated Guide also highlight the role of science and research organisations to provide definitive scientific advice or to communicate risk during readiness and response phases; MBIE expects the NHRP to fulfil a coordination role across all science providers in this respect. Thus, the NHSSP will complement and support the NHRP by being a conduit to consistent and reliable social science advice, particularly in the fields of risk communication, behavioural sciences/responses, and psychosocial response and recovery.

5.2 The NHSSP panel focus will thus be social science (in the three areas outlined in Section 1.4) related to natural hazard risk and events.

5.3 The NHSSP will provide support and/or advice during events through direct liaison with the coordinating response agency, complementing and supporting the NHRP.

5.4 Other areas of social science will be drawn on as needed via liaison members with the wider social science community.

5.4 The NHSSP activities may be changed by negotiation depending upon the needs during an event.

At all other times:

5.5 The NHSSP will provide knowledge base support and/or advice by request, to emergency planning agencies (including national and local CDEM and government departments) to support social science evidence based planning and policy, dependent on availability.

5.6 The NHSSP will make available a representative to attend (non-response) meetings of complementary advisory panels such as the Tsunami Experts Panel and the New Zealand Volcanic Science Advisory Panel.

6. The nature of NHSSP support and advice

6.1 The NHSSP focus for non-emergency will be the provision of advice on natural hazard risk and the social science evidence for readiness, response and recovery.

6.2 Support and advice will be evidence based where possible, subject to ethical principles, drawing on broader expertise.

6.3 The NHSSP will initially focus on providing support and advice on three main fields of social science: risk communication; behavioural sciences/response; and psychosocial support and recovery.

6.4 The NHSSP will provide advice on issues such as:

- The ethical conduct of researchers during and after a crisis;
- Potential behavioural response of the public before, during and after hazard events and for exercises;
- Communication of messaging, e.g. for natural hazard impacts and communicating uncertainty;
- Psychosocial impacts and recovery.

Other areas of social science may be drawn on as needed via liaison with the wider social science community.

6.5 Panel members and experts may be called upon via other channels (i.e. outside the NHSSP process) to provide their own solicited advice from time to time. Such advice is to be provided in members' individual professional capacities and will not constitute Panel advice as such. When commenting on an individual basis, Panel members must be clear that this is the case, and they should comment in line with their individual institutional protocols.

6.6 Advice is to be provided as promptly as practicable; however quality advice takes time to collate and timeframes depend on both the area and extent of advice, and the availability of Panel members. Timeframes will be estimated on a case-by-case basis.

7. Administration

7.1 The NHRP will coordinate the Secretariat support (e.g. agenda development, note-taking, contact list records keeping) for all non-response meetings. This may involve nominating or selecting someone from one of the Panel member's organisations to fulfil this role.

- A digital copy of meeting notes and contact databases will be held by the Secretariat.
- The Panel will nominate a Chair who will preside over administrative meetings and provide primary liaison with the NHRP and MCDEM on behalf of the Panel. The Chairmanship will rotate among Panel members, on an annual basis. If the Chair is unavailable for emergency meetings, another Panel member shall be appointed by the Panel to act as Chair.
- Any known conflicts of interest will be declared to the Panel as a matter of course.
- Panel members retain the right to abstain from any particular response to advice.

- These TOR will be reviewed by the Panel biennially for relevance and currency.

7.2 Meetings

- At least one full Panel meeting will be held per year, convened and hosted by the Secretariat.
- Additional NHSSP non-emergency meetings (e.g. to share important research highlights) will be convened on special request from Panel members via the current Panel Chair.
- The scheduling and agendas of NHSSP meetings during crises or events will follow the processes outlined in the NHSSP Activation Standard Operating Procedure (to be developed by the Panel)
- A Panel member will be nominated as Chair for event meetings of the Panel.
- The Chair will encourage full and open debate of issues. Decisions should be reached by consensus, if possible, and by a majority vote if consensus cannot be reached.

7.3 Reporting Processes

- Meeting notes of administrative and emergency meetings will be kept and reported to the Panel membership for distribution. Digital records will be held by the Secretariat and available on request to appropriate agencies and NHSSP members on request. Meeting notes will not be public documents but will fall under the Official Information Act.

7.4 Amendment to Terms of Reference

- Any members of the NHSSP may discuss the NHSSP purpose, objectives, roles, responsibilities and activities, and review these for consistency with the formal Terms of Reference, and any suggested amendments considered by the Panel. This will ensure any new developments, not foreseen when the Terms of Reference were developed, can be included.