Tracking PTE exposure and organisational responses

Moving towards best practice

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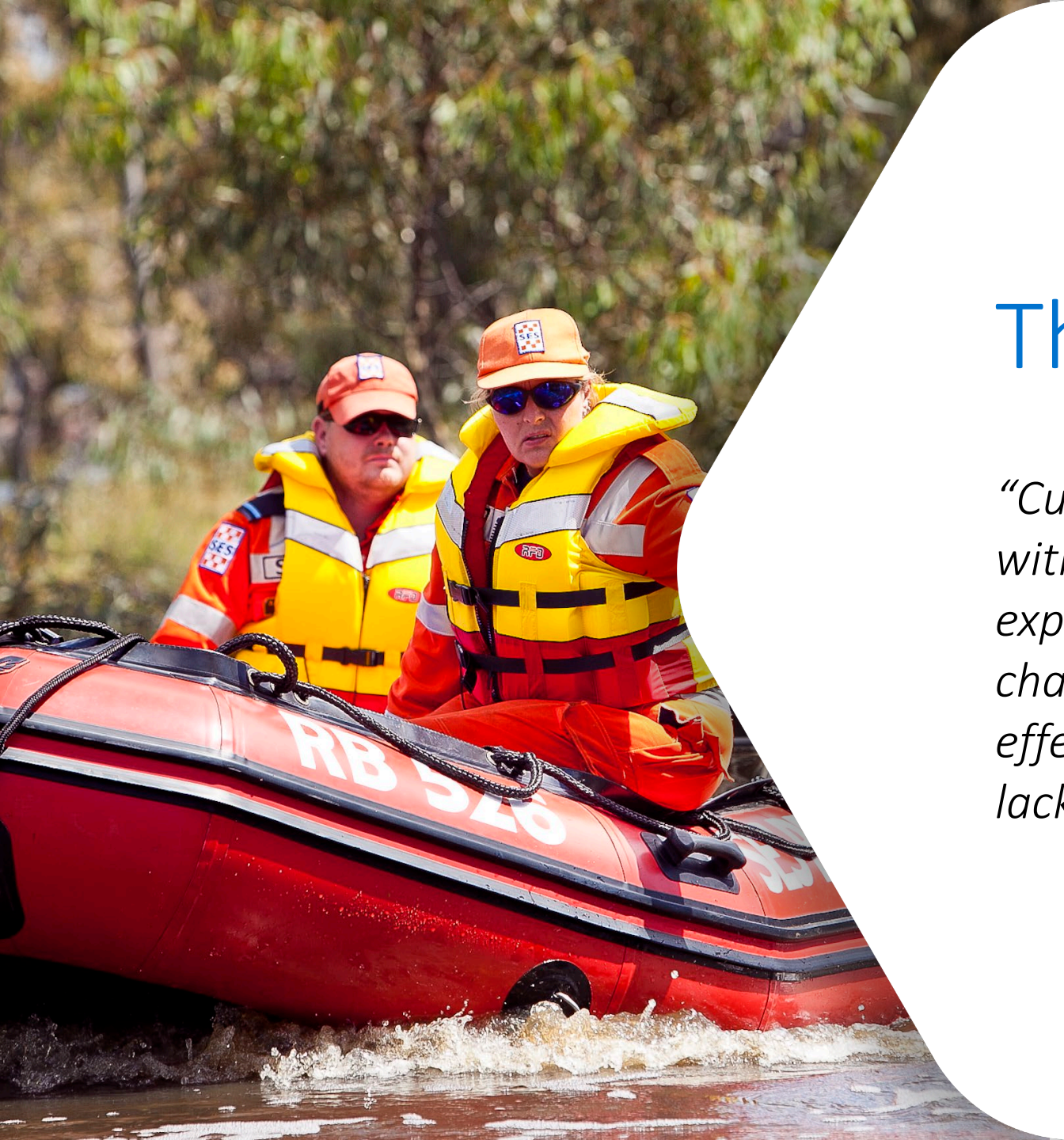
We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise that these lands and waters have always been places of teaching, research and learning.

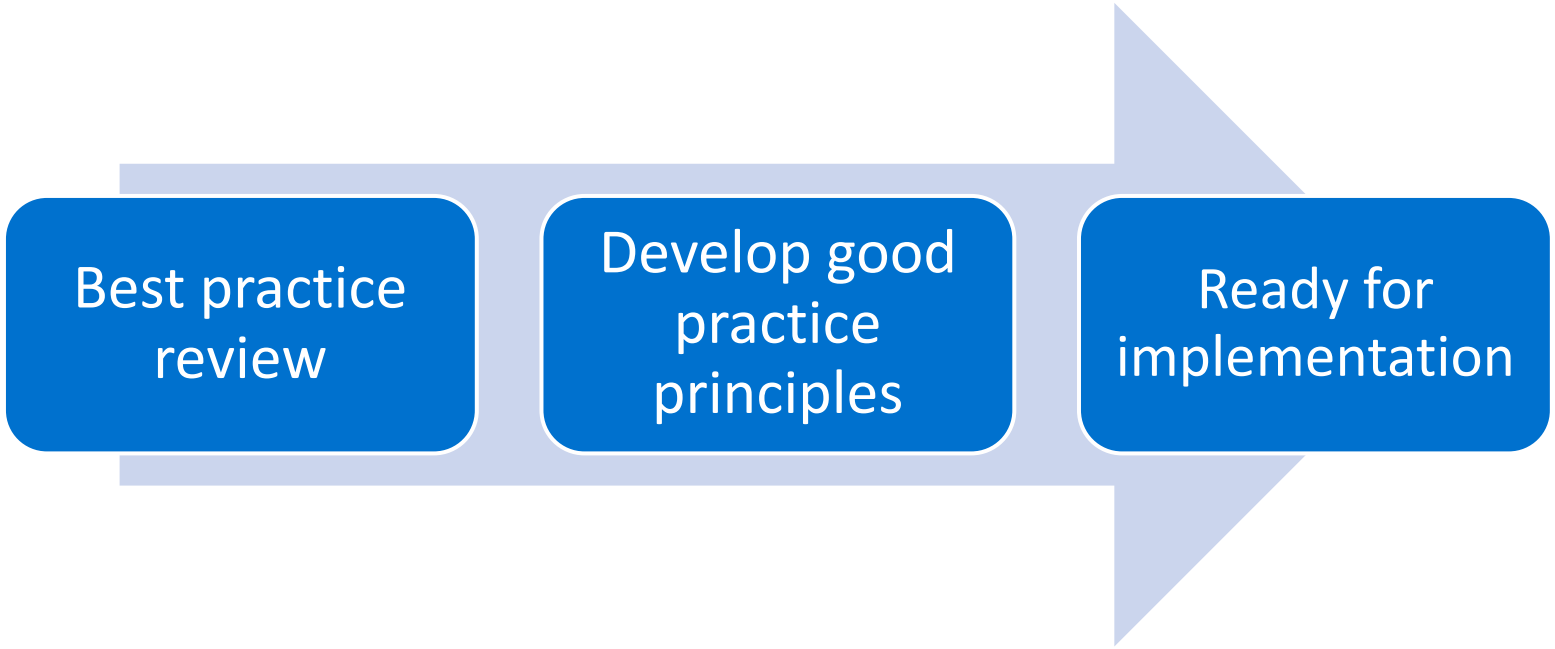


The problem

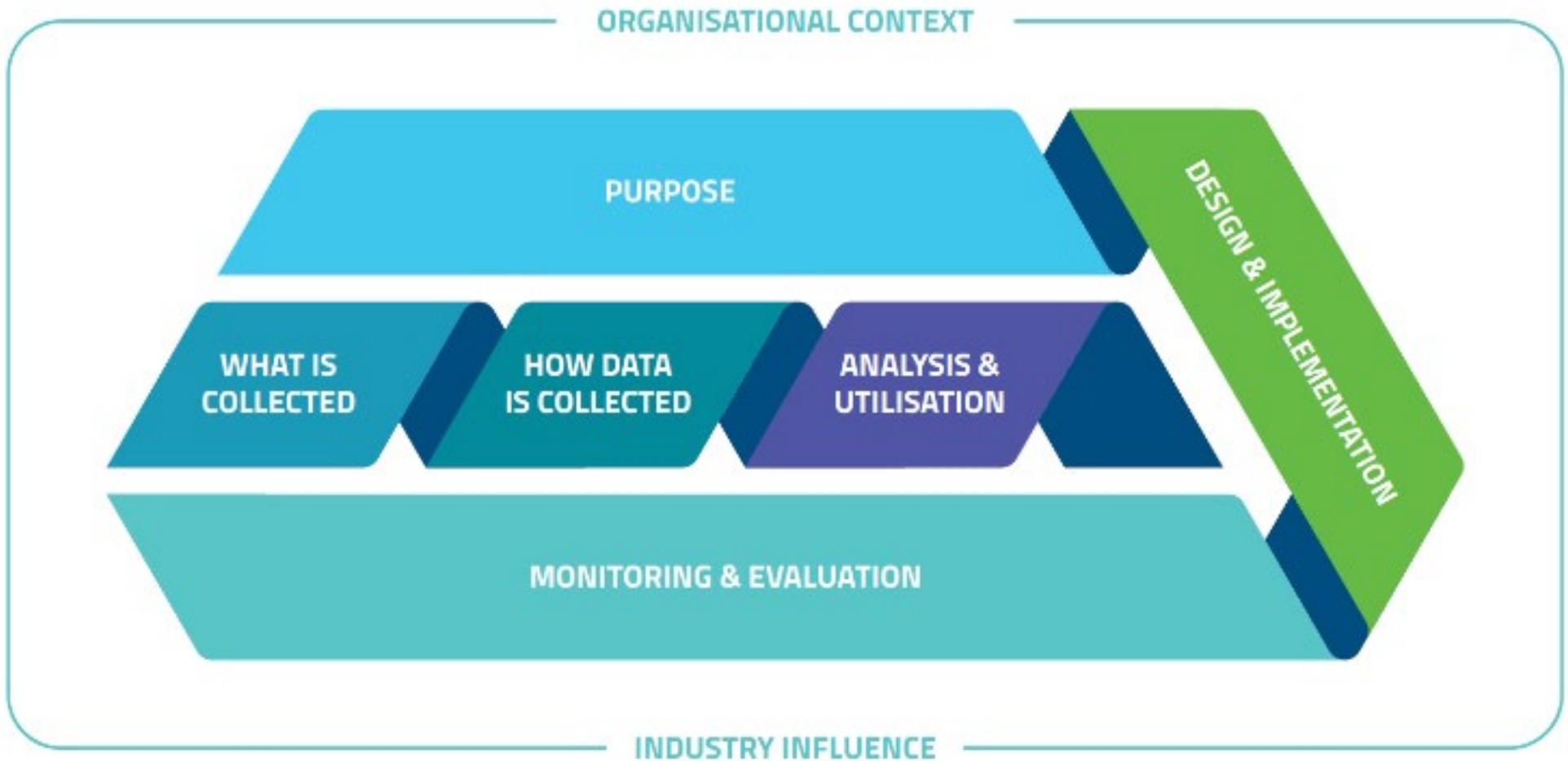
“Cumulative trauma is a key psychosocial hazard within emergency services due to continued exposure to PTEs. It has proved to be a challenging task to measure, track and respond effectively to this risk which is why systems are lacking across the sector.”

Emergency Service Wellbeing Lead

What we did


Best practice review
Develop good practice principles
Ready for implementation

What we found



Good Practice Principles Guide

afac endorsed

Flexible application:

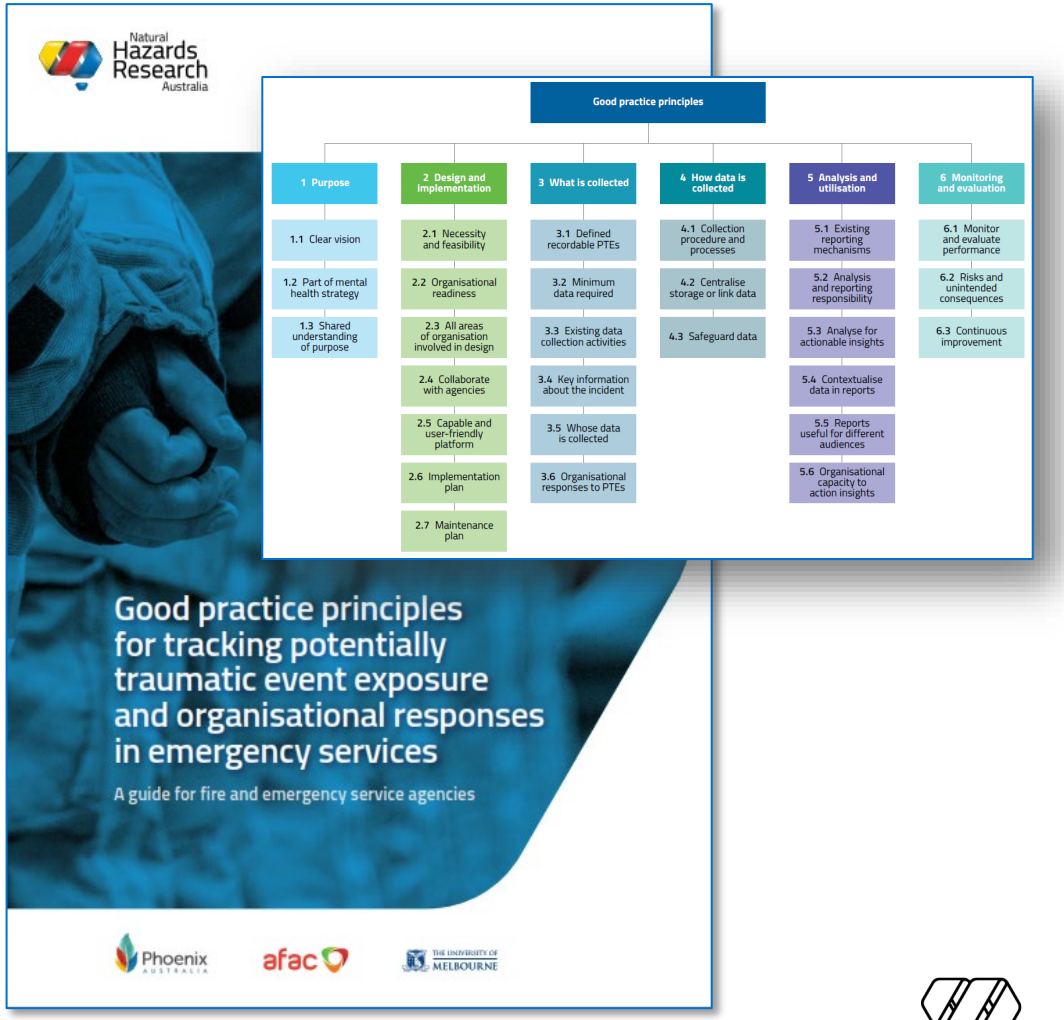
- → Principles designed to be used flexibly and tailored to suit different agencies
- → Many types of tracking systems used

Non-prescriptive guidance:

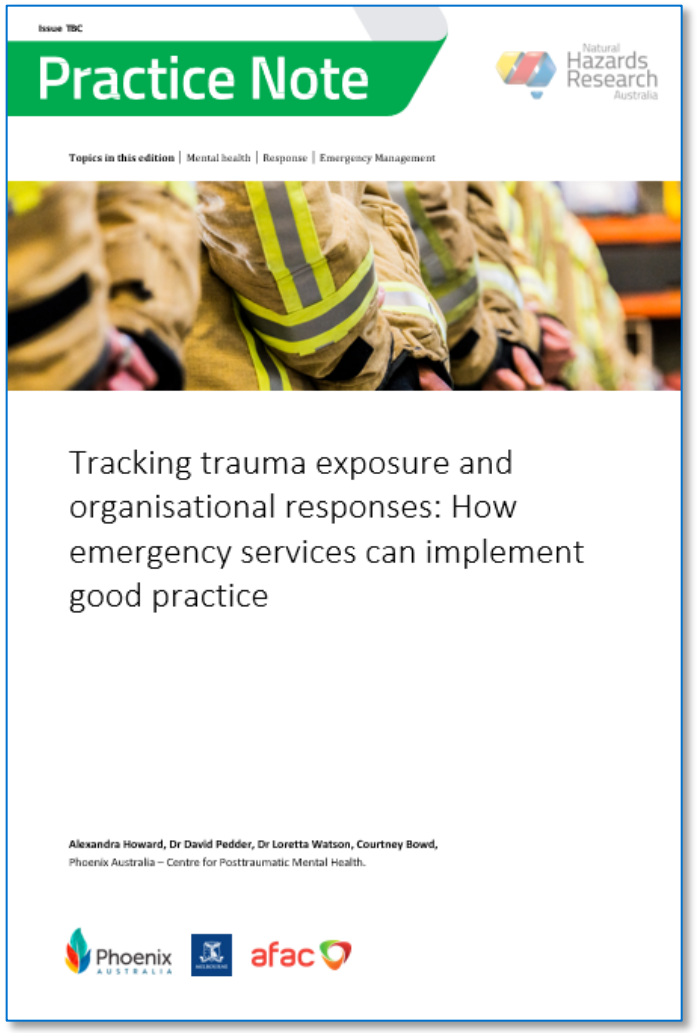
- → Does not set mandatory standards or requirements
- → Includes examples of principles applied

Supplementary resource:

- → Complements existing policies, guidance, and protocols (doesn't replace)



Implementation tools


Issue TBC

Practice Note

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Topics in this edition | Mental health | Response | Emergency Management

Tracking trauma exposure and organisational responses: How emergency services can implement good practice

Alexandra Howard, Dr David Pedder, Dr Loretta Watson, Courtney Bowd,
Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health.

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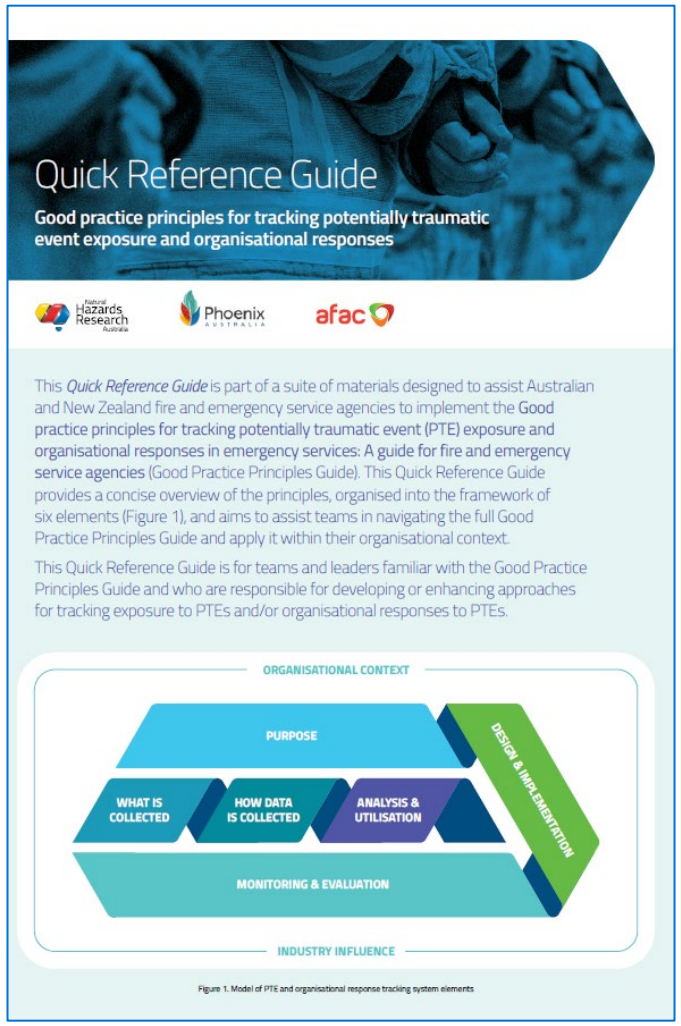
Quick Reference Guide

Good practice principles for tracking potentially traumatic event exposure and organisational responses

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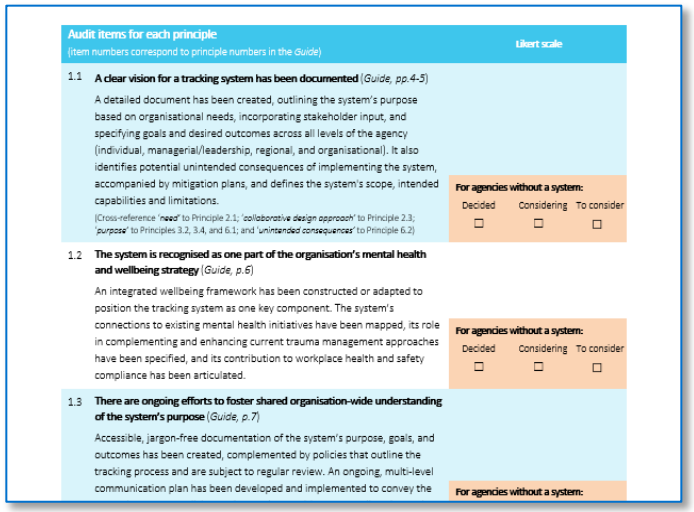
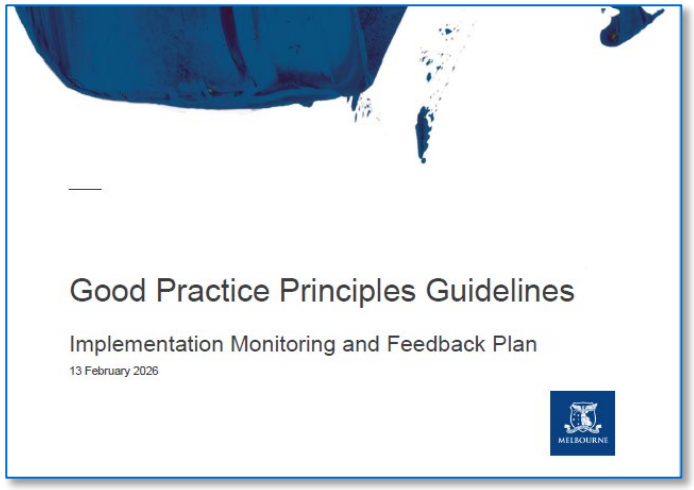
This *Quick Reference Guide* is part of a suite of materials designed to assist Australian and New Zealand fire and emergency service agencies to implement the Good practice principles for tracking potentially traumatic event (PTE) exposure and organisational responses in emergency services: A guide for fire and emergency service agencies (Good Practice Principles Guide). This Quick Reference Guide provides a concise overview of the principles, organised into the framework of six elements (Figure 1), and aims to assist teams in navigating the full Good Practice Principles Guide and apply it within their organisational context.

This Quick Reference Guide is for teams and leaders familiar with the Good Practice Principles Guide and who are responsible for developing or enhancing approaches for tracking exposure to PTEs and/or organisational responses to PTEs.

Figure 1. Model of PTE and organisational response tracking system elements


Audit items for each principle (item numbers correspond to principle numbers in the *Guide*)	Likert scale
1.1 **A clear vision for a tracking system has been documented** (*Guide, pp.4-5*) A detailed document has been created, outlining the system's purpose based on organisational needs, incorporating stakeholder input, and specifying goals and desired outcomes across all levels of the agency (individual, managerial/leadership, regional, and organisational). It also identifies potential unintended consequences of implementing the system, accompanied by mitigation plans, and defines the system's scope, intended capabilities and limitations. (Cross-reference '*need*' to Principle 2.1; '*collaborative design approach*' to Principle 2.3; '*purpose*' to Principles 3.2, 3.4, and 6.1; and '*unintended consequences*' to Principle 6.2)	For agencies without a system: Decided ☐ Considering ☐ To consider ☐
1.2 **The system is recognised as one part of the organisation's mental health and wellbeing strategy** (*Guide, p.6*) An integrated wellbeing framework has been constructed or adapted to position the tracking system as one key component. The system's connections to existing mental health initiatives have been mapped, its role in complementing and enhancing current trauma management approaches have been specified, and its contribution to workplace health and safety compliance has been articulated.	For agencies without a system: Decided ☐ Considering ☐ To consider ☐
1.3 **There are ongoing efforts to foster shared organisation-wide understanding of the system's purpose** (*Guide, p.7*) Accessible, jargon-free documentation of the system's purpose, goals, and outcomes has been created, complemented by policies that outline the tracking process and are subject to regular review. An ongoing, multi-level communication plan has been developed and implemented to convey the	For agencies without a system:


Good Practice Principles Guidelines

Implementation Monitoring and Feedback Plan

13 February 2026

MELBOURNE

Tracking System Audit

Purpose

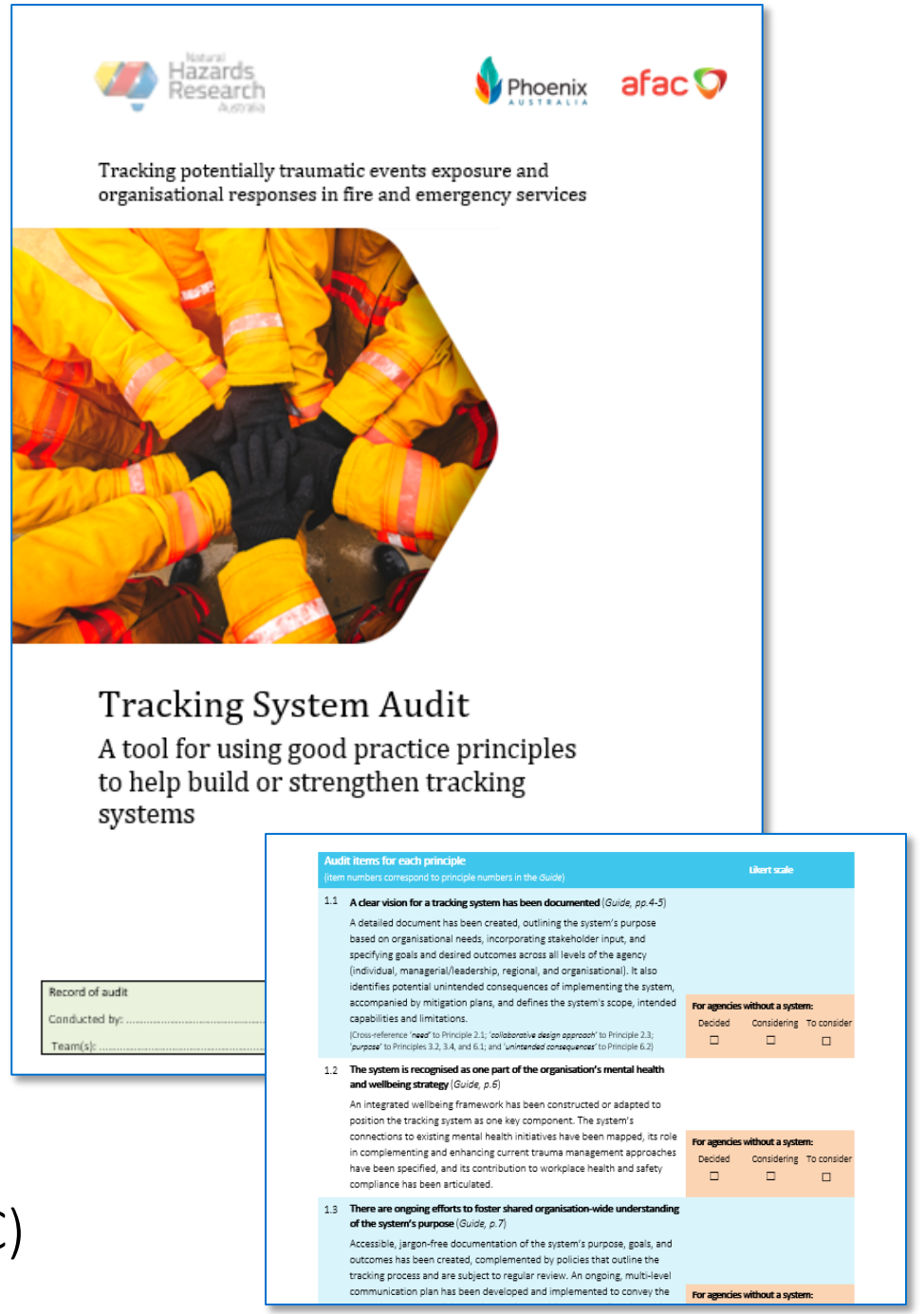
- → Helps agencies build, review, or strengthen their tracking system(s)
- → Assesses alignment with the Principles
- → Identifies strengths, gaps, and priority actions

Use

- → Fillable PDF, in conjunction with Guide
- → Supports continuous improvement rather than scoring
- → High-level pass is quick, full Audit takes longer

Intended users

- → Wellbeing teams, leaders, and others with system knowledge
- → Benefit from input across teams (e.g., ops, IT, P&C)



Tracking potentially traumatic events exposure and organisational responses in fire and emergency services

Tracking System Audit

A tool for using good practice principles to help build or strengthen tracking systems

Record of audit

Conducted by: .....

Team(s): .....

Audit items for each principle

(item numbers correspond to principle numbers in the *Guide*)

Likert scale

1.1 **A clear vision for a tracking system has been documented** (*Guide, pp.4-5*)

A detailed document has been created, outlining the system's purpose based on organisational needs, incorporating stakeholder input, and specifying goals and desired outcomes across all levels of the agency (individual, managerial/leadership, regional, and organisational). It also identifies potential unintended consequences of implementing the system, accompanied by mitigation plans, and defines the system's scope, intended capabilities and limitations.

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For agencies without a system: Decided ☐ Considering ☐ To consider ☐

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For agencies without a system: Decided ☐ Considering ☐ To consider ☐

1.3 **There are ongoing efforts to foster shared organisation-wide understanding of the system's purpose** (*Guide, p.7*)

Accessible, jargon-free documentation of the system's purpose, goals, and outcomes has been created, complemented by policies that outline the tracking process and are subject to regular review. An ongoing, multi-level communication plan has been developed and implemented to convey the

For agencies without a system:

Why it matters

Review, benchmark, and improve your current system or select new

Embed in agencies and encourage sector wide learning to improve mental health outcomes

Better target investments to support wellbeing and reduce mental health injury claims

"We are now implementing the new tool with greater confidence that it will achieve its aim of identifying locations with the highest levels of exposure to PTEs enabling us to layer on additional psychoeducation, treatment and support."

Image: Surf Lifesaving Australia

Leading the way toward best practice

An opportunity for Australian Emergency Services and beyond

- Launch of materials and webinar
- Pilot & test with Emergency Services
- Implications for other sectors with trauma as psychosocial hazard
- Global invitation to build on this work
- Measure impact on workplace mental health outcomes
- Monitoring and feedback

T0-A0

RESEARCH TEAM

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Thank you to all the PMC members that have contributed over the duration of these projects

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