

# Event health and medical care guidelines

A guideline for organisers of mass gathering events in Queensland



**Queensland**  
Government

## Event health and medical care guidelines - A guideline for organisers of mass gathering events in Queensland

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# Emergency medical response

**Any medical or other life-threatening emergencies that occur during an event should be managed through normal means by calling “000” immediately.**

## Introduction

This guideline has been developed to support event organisers to assess the risk and prepare for the management of medical incidents that may occur during mass gathering events held in Queensland. It provides advice to event organisers on health considerations for events and guidance on planning for the appropriate level of health and first aid care.

Local governments are encouraged to adopt the contents of this guideline, within their regulatory approval processes.

## Scope

This guideline provides information on the provision of health services and resourcing for event organisers and other stakeholders involved in the planning for and assessment of public and private events held in Queensland.

This guideline is specifically aimed at events that require event approvals under the definition prescribed by the Local Government region where the event is being held. Despite this, the principles within this guideline can be applied more broadly to all events held in Queensland.

This document does not consider:

- the resourcing requirements for Queensland Health, Queensland Ambulance Service or other Queensland Government agencies in order to support communities where events are being held (e.g., community resources outside of the event).
- preventative health or public health matters (e.g., food safety, waste management and hydration stations).
- other types of hazards and emergencies associated with events.

## Context

For this guideline, a mass gathering event is defined as a gathering of people brought together for a common purpose by some prearrangement or an event approved by a local government.

It is important to recognise that different events may qualify as mass gatherings respective to the size of the local population. For example, a football tournament held in a rural community with 500 patrons may be considered a mass gathering for that region, however a large metropolitan area may define a mass gathering as having over 5,000 patrons.

# What is unique about Queensland?

Queensland is a geographically large and diverse state, and health services are provided based on populations. For example, a small outback town will typically have lesser available health services (e.g., GP clinics or hospitals) than a metropolitan area.

It is therefore important that event organisers understand and appreciate the baseline health services available in the region they are operating in. This is particularly critical where a highly attended event may cause a temporary increase in a region's population.

The provision of adequate onsite medical care may not only protect event patrons but may also reduce the demand on the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and the local Hospital and Health Service (public hospitals). In instances where the level of healthcare required exceeds the capability of onsite medical care teams the QAS and relevant Hospital and Health Service will be required to provide care to event patrons.

## **Contrasting impact of mass gathering events on Queensland's health care system**

The rural township of Birdsville has an estimated general population of 140 people and the local health resources adequately reflects general population numbers. Each year, the town accommodates the Big Red Bash musical festival, which sees the population number significantly increase to approximately 10,000 people, having the potential to put significant strain on local health resources, with the nearest tertiary hospital located over 690 kilometres away.

Similarly, large-scale events with international profile such as the Olympic and Commonwealth Games and World Cup competitions hold similar risks but in a different capacity. The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games saw over 1.5 million spectators across 18 competition venues in South-East Queensland, requiring significant regional coordination of the health care system in that region, as well as ensuring the local community's ability to access their health care needs.

# Obligations for event organisers

Event organisers owe a duty of care to provide appropriate levels of medical care for people attending an event. If the event has a higher risk, and therefore higher likelihood of injury or illness, event organisers may need to engage with a private event health provider to fulfil terms of public liability insurance and ensure the safety of event patrons.

As per the [Events in Queensland: Best Practice Guidelines](#), event organisers should develop an emergency response plan as part of their event planning. It is recommended that health and medical care considerations are included as part of this planning (see **page 9** of this guideline for more information).

## Understanding your event risk profile

There are a number of factors that will need to be considered when planning for the health response to your event.

These include but are not limited to:

- the number of patrons attending the event
- whether the event is a seated or standing audience
- the environment in which the event is being held (e.g., access to shade in summer events)
- the distance from the nearest health care facilities
- the level of services that the facility/facilities provide
- the types of medical problems that may be seen at the event based on the activity and the demographic of attendees
- the likelihood of such medical problems occurring.

Where practicable, it is strongly recommended that event organisers engage with a private event health provider to assist with a risk assessment and the identification of the level of medical care required for an event.

## Engaging health or medical service providers

Engaging a private event health provider to provide support to an event will ensure additional protection to the event organiser, event patrons and staff. These providers can offer logistical advice and planning tips leading up to an event, as well as on the ground support during an event.

When planning an event and engaging a private provider, the provider may not be associated with the usual local health service, therefore, it is strongly encouraged that they make contact with the local Hospital and Health Service and QAS throughout the process.

The following table outlines the key roles or organisations involved in the provision of health care for events in Queensland.

Health provider	Description
First aider (incl. first aid provider)	A person who holds the nationally recognised qualification for the provision of first aid and is engaged by a first aid provider to provide support at an event. To find the current unit/s of competency visit <a href="http://www.training.gov.au">www.training.gov.au</a> . First aiders may be engaged in a volunteer or paid capacity, generally through a volunteer or private first aid organisation.
Registered health practitioner (incl. private event health provider)	Usually a nurse, paramedic or physician. A person registered with the appropriate board through the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law). For events, registered health practitioners are generally engaged through a private event health provider. There are a number of providers within Queensland that provide specialist health support to events.
Queensland Ambulance Service	Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) is the statewide ambulance provider and will provide emergency response to medical incidents. QAS also may provide contracted health support to organised events.
Queensland Health	Queensland Health is the state provider of health services in Queensland and manages public hospitals through 16 Hospital and Health Services. Queensland Health does not typically provide health support directly to events. For some large events, Queensland Health may provide health services to preserve the capacity of local hospitals and support the local community.

## Role of first aid providers

First aid providers have the following responsibilities:

- Conduct a risk assessment and develop a medical plan based on identified risks
- Provide a mix of appropriately trained personnel with skills and knowledge in accordance with identified risks; the number of first aid personnel will vary with the type of event
- Ensure appropriate structures are in place to facilitate the safe practice of first aid personnel
- Ensure appropriate documentation of patient encounters
- Provide the event manager a basic medical report following the event
- Have the appropriate professional indemnity insurance
- Ensure conspicuous and accessible first aid posts.

It is important to note that first aiders are generally not registered health practitioners, and their role is to provide first response care until registered health practitioners or other medical assistance is available.

For smaller community events that have a lower risk profile, there may not be a recognised first aid provider contracted. For such events, event organisers should, through their duty of care, ensure that at least one person on the team running the event holds the nationally recognised qualification for the provision of first aid.

## Role of private event health providers

There are organisations within Queensland that specialise in the provision of health or medical care at mass gathering events.

Event organisers may choose to engage with private medical care service providers, who may not be associated with the usual local service provider or public health care system. It is suggested that event organisers check to ensure that the service provider is a reputable provider and appropriately licensed and indemnified, prior to being contracted for an event.

Where appropriate, it is important that the service provider coordinates with local emergency services to plan a response to any emergency or significant medical problems requiring assistance, including notifying local health authorities of the details of the event and provide them with emergency plans for a possible major incident.

Irrespective of contracting a private medical care provider, QAS should still be notified of an event 6 weeks prior to the event, as well as the estimated number of attendees to ensure that any they have sufficient time to plan for any possible impacts to their services.

## Minimising impact on the health system

Organised events often provide a positive experience for the community in which they are being held, however they can also cause a strain on the existing services in that community, including local health services.

Well-planned events, with an appropriate level of health and first aid resources, should aim to mitigate the impact to local health services and ensure that the access to such services is maintained for the community.

## Considerations for rural and regional events

Due to Queensland's geographical diversity, consideration of the location of an event is important for organisers that are planning a mass gathering event in Queensland. An analysis of rural/regional events versus metropolitan events reveals that the average distance and time to an Emergency Department (ED) is further and longer for rural/regional events.

Additional considerations specifically for regional and rural events include:

- In-event health services may need to be more self-sufficient, given distance from nearest public health services.
- The further distance and travel time to and from events could mean that ambulance resources are utilised for a longer period of time, which may impact on service provision to the existing local community.
- In the rural environment the closest hospital ED is likely to receive all patients from the one event, whereas metropolitan areas, patients can be dispersed across multiple EDs.

In some of the more remote areas of Queensland, available medical care may be limited to paramedic or nursing care only, sometimes with only a single nurse available or a doctor available on-call. Therefore, it is important that event organisers liaise closely with local health services well in advance of rural and remote events.



# Health emergency response planning

Whilst the basic requirements for emergency response plans are outlined in the “*Events in Queensland: Best Practice Guidelines*”, there are health-specific considerations that should be made when preparing these plans.

Event emergency response plans should include a section detailing roles, responsibilities, and processes to effectively respond to an emergency at the event, which should include planning for the provision of medical care for all event attendees (including workforce).

Development of this plan should involve consultation and input from relevant stakeholders, such as landowners, relevant government agencies and community organisations, where required.

Early and effective planning is likely to result in better outcomes for event patrons in need of attention, therefore it is vital that the management and planning of medical care for an event is considered from the early stages of event planning.

Planning considerations can be focussed on these key areas:

- Staffing
- Access
- Equipment
- Communications

## Staffing

### Staff skill-mix and training

The skill-mix of your health and first aid staffing should be relative to the identified risk level of your event. For a small, low-risk event in metropolitan areas, the provision of first-aid officers or teams may suffice, however for higher risk events or events held a significant distance from the nearest health facility, there may be a need to supplement first aid teams with paramedics, nurses or doctors.

First aid is the initial point of medical assistance to an individual who may be sick or injured. First aid training is not limited to a person with a qualification however, having people on-site who are trained in first aid at a mass gathering event can be crucial to the outcome of a medical incident. It is suggested that a mass gathering event has as many on-site staff trained in first aid as possible, or staff who are not trained in first aid are made aware of those who hold a valid first aid qualification.

Training for registered health professionals such as paramedics, nurses or doctors, if engaged for your event, is normally a requirement of their registration and is not a requirement for event organisers to provide. However, site-specific inductions and any other familiarisation activities should be undertaken.

Regardless of the skill-mix of teams at your event, providing on-site training and education to staff members, prior to the planned event, is imperative to achieving a timely response to an emergency incident.

## Delineation of roles within teams

Ensuring that all personnel know what they are doing in an emergency could be essential to the outcome of a situation. Defining each team members roles and responsibilities prior to an emergency can assist in teams cooperating more effectively and reduce the risk of delayed action in a time sensitive scenario. Having an organised, well-planned approach to the following questions in an events emergency response plan is vital:

- Who is calling for help/the ambulance?
- Who is commencing CPR?
- Who is assisting with CPR?
- Who is obtaining the defibrillator?
- Who is organising crowds?

Appendix Two provides a checklist for possible role delineations to fulfill medical care requirements at a mass gathering event, which will be scalable depending on the size of the event and risks identified.

## Venue familiarisation

Staff that are unfamiliar with the venues infrastructure and layout may impair timely access to a patron in need of care. To assist with a prompt response to a medical episode, it is suggested that event staff are familiar with an events parameter, as well as locations of critical infrastructure such as the location of first aid/medical tents and medical responder positions, bathrooms, and the location access and evacuation points. Ensuring that staff members are familiar with the geography of the venue will assist in undertaking a rapid response to a medical incident.

## Access

### Timely patron access to medical care

The following points could potentially accelerate patron access to medical care if considered when developing an events emergency response plan:

- **Dispersed responders** - Responders with appropriate medical equipment, strategically dispersed among the crowds at mass gatherings can assist in accelerating access to medical care to a patron in need of assistance (e.g. “roving teams”)
- **Staff familiarity** - Ensuring that all event staff are aware of the location of medical resources, as well as being familiar with the events layout.
- **Radio communications** - For larger events with multiple medical support teams, reliable two-way radio communications can assist with successful coordination of medical services. Portable radios provide simple to operate, and highly reliable communication links. These may be available for short-term hire from local, district or state emergency service agencies.
- **Venue layout planning** - Consult with health or first aid personnel to identify the best location for medical posts. Where engaged, private event health providers should be consulted in venue layout planning.

- **Security personnel**, if appropriately trained, may be able to provide first response to some medical incidents. Depending on the level of medical care required at an event, it is suggested that event organisers consider including an events security team, as part of the events medical care planning, to leverage off their ability to manage crowd control, seek medical assistance and to also perform first aid treatment during a medical incident.
  - *To hold a valid security licence in Queensland, security personnel are required to complete, and keep up to date, first aid training.*

## Crowd management

- Finding a patron in need of medical care in a large crowd can be difficult. In addition to maintaining continuous contact with medical support providers through planned communication channels, holding up flags or other visual tools may be used by security personnel to signal their location to the approaching medical teams.
- In addition, having a clear, well planned and coordinated approach to calling and navigating external medical assistance, such as an ambulance, can reduce unnecessary pressures on responders, as well as reduce the risk of prolonging essential medical care to an event patron in need of assistance.

## Venue access for emergency responders

Consider planning emergency response access routes within an events emergency response plan, with staff members aware of the access points to assist in navigation around the venue.

Planning points to consider include:

- The use of a common reference map or grid system should be agreed.
- How will medical teams reach individuals, for example, in crowded areas or through fixed seating?
- How will patients be transported within the event site?
- Will a dedicated access route, or emergency service lane, be provided to allow rapid access to and from the venue for ambulances and other emergency vehicles?
- Will the event have designated emergency vehicle parking in an easy to access location?
- Will the events itself pose an access barrier, for example, inability to easily cross community running or racing routes or a parade?
- Are traffic conditions likely to affect the safe transport of sick or injured patrons from the event to a hospital or health facility?

**For rural/remote events:** Will there be a need for aeromedical rescue aircraft should a medical emergency occur? If so, are there identified landing zones and access routes to these?

# Equipment

## On-site medical equipment

Having appropriate medical equipment in a state of readiness can significantly increase a person's chance of survival during a medical emergency, therefore, it is important to ensure that the right medical equipment is available for use, depending on the risks identified during the events planning.

Equipment to consider includes:

- Medical and First Aid staff identification/uniforms
- First aid kits or caches, stocked as appropriate to the level of health expertise available
- First aid treatment areas or recovery zones
  - Considerations include provision of shade, treatment beds, bottled water, etc.
- Defibrillators
  - Staff training and induction should include familiarity with use and locations of AEDs
  - **Tip:** many public areas have Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs). It is suggested that event organisers contacts local community centres, first aid providers, pharmacies or their local government to enquire whether AEDs are available for access or short-term hire

### Did you know?

The survival rate of out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrest in Australia is reported at approximately 10%. Venues where AEDs have been used, survival rates from sudden cardiac arrest have been reported as greater than 50%.<sup>1</sup>

For more information on possible medical equipment inclusions, it is suggested that event organisers consult with an events medical support provider throughout the planning process.

## Communication

Developing a communication plan allows teams to have clear expectation of their tasks, increases productivity, and assists with expediting medical emergencies. Event organisers are encouraged to develop a clear communication plan, to include matters relating to potential on-site medical care needs. Points to consider within a communication plan from a medical care perspective include:

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<sup>1</sup> Ranse, Jamie & Zeitz, Kathryn. (2010). Chain of Survival at Mass Gatherings: A Case Series of Resuscitation Events. Prehospital and disaster medicine. 25. 457-63

## Details of key medical contacts and procedures

In the event that emergency services are required to attend a medical incident, it is important that there is a clear line of communication established between on-site staff members and key stakeholders outside of the event.

Having a designated person/s responsible for contacting the emergency services and responsible for meeting and assisting them once they arrive - security teams are often a great resource to utilise for this role.

Providing all staff members with details of key medical contacts and the communication procedures specific to a medical incident can assist staff in understanding who to contact during a medical incident, resulting in a timely response to an incident.

## Communication black spots

Communication black spots should be identified, and where required, strategies put in place to ensure that medical and first aid teams are contactable throughout the venue.

It is also suggested that communication black spots outside of the venue's perimeter are considered, as medical incidents can often occur outside of the venue's surroundings, for example, when an event has concluded.

Aspects to consider for inclusion within a medical communication plan:

- Who needs to be involved or consulted in developing a communication plan?
- How will black spots be mitigated? (Use of portable base stations, radios etc.)
- How will the communication plan be tested before the event?
- How will on-site staff members communicate with each other? (Mobile phones, two-way radio, satellite phones)
- What channels of communication needs to be organised with off-site medical providers?
- Has consideration been provided should main source of communication fail? What back-up communication systems have been considered?

## Crisis communications

Event operators should have arrangements in place to communicate with event patrons should there be a medical emergency that requires patrons to take a particular course of action (e.g. evacuation of a cohort of patrons). In such instances, thought should be given to ensuring that there are mechanisms to communicate with patrons that may have vision or hearing impairments.

## Reporting of emergencies

Any medical or other life-threatening emergencies that occur during an event should be managed through normal means by calling "000" immediately.

Event operators should follow the direction of emergency services with regards to reporting of emergencies and any associated documentation requirements.

# Post-event debriefs & review

Post-Event debriefs after a mass gathering event is just as important as planning for the event itself. Debrief meetings will identify what went well and what could be improved for the next mass gathering.

The [Events in Queensland Best Practice Guidelines for Event Delivery in Queensland](#) includes a *Final Report* template available for use when conducting event debrief sessions. It is recommended that key medical stakeholders, such as the events medical support providers and first aid personnel are included in the debrief, to provide medical related input into the report. The final report template can be found [here](#).

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Useful links and resources

- Events in Queensland Best Practice Guidelines  
[Events in Queensland - Best practice guidelines for event delivery in Queensland \(www.qld.gov.au\)](http://www.qld.gov.au)
- Rural and Remote emergency services standardisation guidelines (RESSG)  
[Rural and remote emergency services standardisation guidelines \(RESSG\) | Queensland Health](#)
- Queensland Local Government Directory  
Provides contact details and locality maps for Queensland's 77 local governments  
[Local government directory | State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning](#)
- Queensland Health Hospital and Health Service districts  
[Hospital and Health Service maps | Queensland Health](#)

## Appendix 2 – Example planning schedule

The checklist below has been provided to assist event organisers in ensuring that key tasks that have been discussed throughout the guideline have been considered/undertaken, prior to the event commencing. Please note that not all tasks listed below may be required for each individual event and should be based on the identified level of medical care required for the event.

Prior to event task	Completion date	Other information
Inform key medical stakeholders of event		
Designate role responsibilities		
Staff are familiar with venue/facilities		
Designate medical posts (if required)		
Organise disbursement of responders		
On-site medical equipment identified and arranged		
Crowd management plan complete		
Communication blackspots identified		
Communication plan developed and tested		
Procure communications equipment		
Venue access plan developed and tested		
Set up medical sites		
Provide all staff members with medical contact numbers		



## Appendix 3 – Staff roles for care at events

The checklist below provides examples of possible roles required to fulfill medical care requirements at a mass gathering event. The below checklist should be used as an example only, noting that all roles included on the list will not be applicable across all events and should be used as a guide only.

<b>Personnel</b>	
	Arrange schedules
	Check personnel in and out of venue
	Allocate identification badges
	Arrange substitutes
<b>Equipment</b>	
	Identify defibrillator locations
	Collect needed supplies and equipment
	Deliver supplies and equipment to aid stations
	Resupply as needed
	Return supplies and equipment at end of event
<b>Supplies</b>	
	Monitor and maintain stock of disposable items (supplies and medicines)
	Collect and summarise patient treatment forms
<b>Communication</b>	
	Arrange for use of ambulances
	Coordinate patient transport to hospital
	Coordinate use of on-site transport, such as golf carts, if available
	Arrange for personnel to get to and from aid stations