

# Conducting Debriefs: a guide for public health

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The NSW Ministry for Health acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands across NSW. We acknowledge that we live and work on Aboriginal lands. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal people.

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# 1

## Background

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## 1.1 About this document

This guidance, and the accompanying toolkits and templates, are to assist the NSW public health network in conducting debriefs, also known as after action reviews (AARs). These guidelines aim to embed debriefs into business as usual, strengthen existing practice, and ensure continuous improvement in incident and emergency response.

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## 1.2 Key definitions

Debrief	An overarching and generic term to describe the process of a team or individuals formally reflecting on their performance during or after a recent experience, particular task, or event in a non-punitive environment.
After Action Review	A debrief carried out after an event, focused on performance during an event that enables those involved to discuss what happened, why it happened, and how to improve future responses.
Intra Action Review	A quick form of evaluation conducted during prolonged state or national responses.
Early Action Review	Occurs as an event is unfolding. Focused on evaluating the timelines of initial detection, notification, and response to any event.

The term debrief is used throughout this document and can refer to any of the types of reviews listed above.

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## 1.3 Audience

This guide is designed for public health staff planning to conduct a debrief. This guide may also serve as a reference more broadly for those looking to conduct or participate in a debrief.

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## 1.4 Structure

This guide provides a roadmap for planning, implementing, reporting on, and sharing the findings of a debrief. It is structured to follow the three steps needed for a successful debrief:

1. Define, decide, and plan
2. Implement
3. Report and share.

Accompanying this guide are toolkits and templates to standardise the approach to, and support, conducting debriefs. The ready-to-use toolkits and templates are provided in the Appendix and comprise the following:

1. [Example trigger questions](#)
2. [Debriefs from an Aboriginal Perspective](#)
3. [Debrief report template](#)
4. [Example pre-debrief survey](#)
5. [Post-debrief evaluation survey questions](#).

The content in this guide has been drawn from key debrief resources, including the [Lessons Management Framework](#), Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Facilitating Debriefs training manual, World Health Organization (WHO) [Guidance for after action review \(AAR\)](#) and existing NSW Health public health network toolkits and experience. This guide can also be used as a tool to support the [Lessons Management Framework](#).

# 2

## Introduction to debriefs

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## 2.1 What is a debrief?

A debrief is a qualitative review of actions taken to respond to an event, which for the purposes of this guide refers to an event of public health concern. A debrief aims to identify and document the strategies and capabilities in place before the response, any challenges or best practices observed during the response, and lessons learned.

Conducting debriefs can assist with tracking progress, correcting unintended impacts, and ensuring that planned outcomes are achieved. Debriefs are tools for system improvement and support the transfer of knowledge about best practice.

A debrief can vary in scope but typically follows a simple analytical framework centred on four questions (Figure 1).

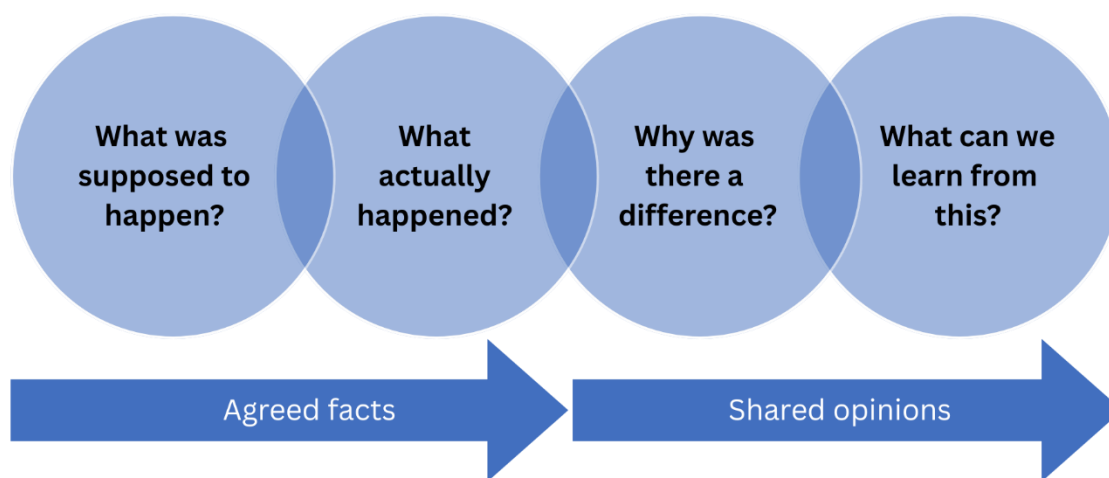


Figure 1. Analytical framework of debriefs

Debriefs follow a response to any event of public health concern. The ideal timing for a debrief is within three months of the official declaration of the end of the event. Conducting a debrief is part of routine emergency management procedures and an expectation under the Public Health Emergency Response Preparedness minimum standards (PD\_2024\_002).

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## 2.2 Continuum of reviews

Debriefs are part of a continuum of reviews that occur during an emergency response (see Figure 2). The continuum also includes early action reviews and intra action reviews.

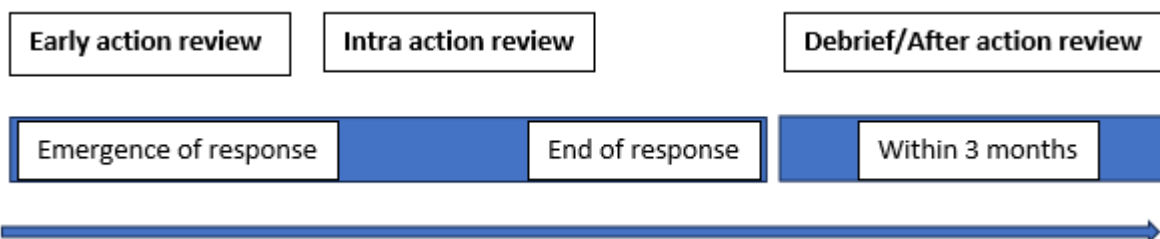


Figure 2. Continuum of reviews for emergency responses

Choice of review depends on numerous factors associated with the response, including the phase of the emergency response; type of response being reviewed; number of people involved; scope and complexity of the event; cultural context; available resources; and a general assessment of which format might work best. A brief description of early and intra action reviews is provided below.

### Early action review (EAR)

EAR is a rapid performance improvement approach that evaluates the timelines of detection, notification, and response to any health event. An EAR should be conducted while an event is unfolding as it promotes early collaboration and coordination among stakeholders and increases the likelihood of effective control measures.

EAR leverages the 7-1-7 approach for detection, notification, and response. This approach defines three time-based metrics that assess and improve early detection and response:

- Less than/equal to 7 days to detect a suspected public health threat.
- Less than/equal to 1 day to notify a public health authority responsible for action.
- Less than/equal to 7 days to complete early response actions.

Recommendations from EARs can support the development of effective outbreak responses or other response planning tools.

Table 1 provides a sample EAR agenda. Once completed, review outcomes can be synthesised into a report and findings incorporated into planning, advocacy, and larger reviews.

*Table 1. Sample EAR agenda*

Time	Activity
5 min	Discuss event background information and key milestones.
5 min	Discuss barriers and enablers to detection, notification, and early response.
10 min	Prioritise the implementation of actions and any remaining early response actions. Assign responsible authorities for any immediate actions.

### Intra-action review (IAR)

IAR is a quick form of evaluation and reflection during prolonged events to identify if and where a change in response is needed. An IAR is conducted during a national or state response and involves key stakeholders with sound knowledge of public health emergency responses. An IAR identifies gaps, lessons learned, and best practices to improve a response plan, propose alternative approaches if required, and contribute to improving the management of multiple health emergencies. An IAR is conducted at any time and as frequently as needed. It does not replace a debrief.

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## 2.3 Features of a debrief

- Some element of advanced planning
- Open and honest professional discussion
- Equal interaction and participation
- Focus on the results of an event
- Focus on systems rather than individual actors
- Identifies ways to sustain what was done well
- Develops recommendations to improve future responses
- Build a culture of continuous personal and institutional learning.

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## 2.4 Benefits of a debrief

- Ensures critical thinking of the event
- Builds consensus on issues for improvement
- Allows cross-sectional learning
- Strengthens and/or rebuilds relationships
- Allows documentation of lessons learned
- Builds capacity for preparedness and response
- Improves performance
- Promotes good relationships and strengthens team dynamics
- Relatively quick and cost effective to conduct
- Provides a sense of closure and validation for participants.

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## 2.5 Steps in a debrief

There are three steps needed for a successful debrief: 1) define, decide, and plan, 2) implement and 3) report and share.

# 3

Define, decide, and  
plan

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## 3.1 Defining the scope and objectives

The scope and objective of a debrief will determine the profile of participants, format, questions and duration of the review. For longer events, the debrief should cover the most challenging period. A diversity of opinions is key to success, so efforts should be made to ensure all participants can contribute, even when there are divergent views within the group.

It is important to define what is in, and out, of scope for the debrief. Consultation with key stakeholders via a pre-meeting or pre-debrief survey can help to refine the scope, as well as identify potential contentious issues or sensitivities to consider prior to the review.

When organising a pre-meeting to define the scope, take the time to consider your audience. If the audience is predominately or entirely from a vulnerable or priority population, appoint a facilitator or co-facilitator from that population to ensure a safe, inclusive, culturally appropriate environment is provided.

When developing a pre-debrief survey to define the scope, adopt a co-design approach if required to ensure the design and the language used in the survey resonates with the audience. [Appendix 4](#) provides an example of a pre-debrief survey.

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## 3.2 Themes of a debrief

The facilitator may use a chronological format to structure the discussion of a debrief, or the discussion may be organised around key themes, also known as domains.

Themes are the broad functions used to structure the review. Most debriefs use a format with less than 5 themes. Table 2 provides examples of themes and their corresponding functions.

Table 2. Themes and functions of a debrief

Themes	Functions
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Process/Standard Operating Guidelines/Standard Operating Procedure</li> <li>• Reporting</li> <li>• Organisational</li> <li>• Management</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Structure</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Standards</li> <li>• Legal</li> </ul>
Command control coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational planning</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Decision making</li> <li>• Incident management</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipment</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Capability</li> <li>• Facilities</li> <li>• People</li> <li>• Workforce</li> <li>• Data</li> </ul>
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interoperability</li> <li>• Situational awareness</li> <li>• Intelligence and surveillance</li> <li>• Change management</li> <li>• Agency specific issues</li> <li>• Information management</li> <li>• Operational surge</li> <li>• Timely access to information</li> </ul>

Themes	Functions
Capability development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and development</li> <li>• Exercising</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Simulation</li> <li>• Lessons and knowledge management</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal communication</li> <li>• Public communication</li> <li>• Risk communication</li> <li>• Media communication</li> <li>• Cross jurisdictional communication</li> </ul>
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Human factors</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Priority population perspectives</li> </ul>
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Preparedness</li> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Regional and rural perspectives</li> <li>• Recovery</li> <li>• Expectations</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Defining themes

In determining themes to cover in a debrief, the facilitator should first review the objectives and scope of the event under evaluation. This includes identifying key areas of focus such as successes, challenges, lessons learned, and areas for improvement. Additionally, the facilitator should gather input from relevant stakeholders to ensure comprehensive coverage of the debrief topics. This may be done through use of surveys or consulting with a representative group. The facilitator should define the themes in collaboration with the sponsor or the entity that authorises the event.

Consider the number of debrief themes and ideally focus on a small number of key areas identified during surveys or interviews. Choosing to debrief more themes will lengthen a debrief, limit the ability to drill down to root causes and/or create many recommendations that can overwhelm effective implementation.

Through open discussion and reflection, the facilitator can pinpoint recurring issues, notable achievements, and overarching trends, which will help in shaping the themes for deeper exploration during the review process. Ultimately, the selected themes should align closely with the goals of the debrief and provide actionable insights.

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## 3.4 Compiling the scoping document

A scoping document, also known as a briefing paper, provides key information for participants of a debrief and is 1-3 pages in length. The scoping document is prepared from SITREPs, briefs and pre-debrief surveys or interviews.

Participants should receive the scoping document prior to the debrief with sufficient time to allow for corrections of fact. It includes the following information:

- Name, date and time of the debrief
- List of invitees (facilitator/s, participants, observers) and their organisations
- Agenda
- Summary of the event, including timelines and actions
- Proposed themes for discussion, informed by pre-debrief survey.

Key milestones are often included in the scoping document to improve understanding of the timelines. The milestones reported are influenced by the scope of the debrief and may include:

- Date of notification of the outbreak or event
- Date of laboratory confirmation
- Date of outbreak or event intervention
- Date of public communication
- Date outbreak or event declared over.

Timelines for outbreaks are best illustrated by graphical representation using an epidemic curve. This approach allows for easy interpretation of often complex and detailed information.

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## 3.5 Building a debrief team

The debrief team will be composed of people required to fulfil the scope, objective, and format of the debrief. Table 3 summarises key roles and responsibilities for team members. Not all roles described below will be required. Some team members may also have multiple roles e.g. both take notes and contribute to report writing.

Table 3. Debrief team roles and responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Debrief lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops the scope and objectives of the debrief.</li> <li>• Initiates the debrief.</li> <li>• Plans and conducts the debrief.</li> <li>• Liaises with senior management and partners on planning and reporting of the debrief.</li> <li>• Compiles and shares the final debrief report.</li> </ul>
Lead facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads the overall facilitation of a debrief.</li> <li>• Must be impartial and/or not directly involved in the response.</li> <li>• Must be clear on the aim of the debrief.</li> <li>• Supports the debrief lead.</li> </ul>
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the lead facilitator.</li> <li>• Guide the discussion around key themes and prevent deviation from the debrief objectives.</li> <li>• Encourage contributions from all participants.</li> <li>• Time management.</li> </ul>
Note takers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure comments and discussion are captured and documented at a high level.</li> <li>• Should have familiarity with the topic and structures but not necessarily be a technical expert.</li> </ul>
Report writer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidates inputs from note takers to produce a final debrief report for review by the debrief lead.</li> </ul>

The lead facilitator plays a critical function and can have a significant impact on the way a debrief works and the value of subsequent findings. Effective lead facilitators stay neutral and objective, possess keen observation skills, are adaptive and authentic, and communicate in a clear and concise manner.

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## 3.6 Important considerations

### 3.6.1. Participants

#### Demographics of participants

It is important to consider the demographics of participants and how to best cater to them. Communication styles (direct, indirect, written, verbal, visual) may need to be adjusted for audiences from different cultural backgrounds to build trust and engagement among the group. For example, when requesting input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, accept silences as consideration, avoid the temptation to fill the gaps and allow the individual to respond in their own time. Seek out appropriate supportive resources if required. For example, [Communicating Positively: A Guide to Appropriate Aboriginal Terminology](#).

When a debrief consists of people from priority populations, it is strongly recommended the debrief is facilitated or co-facilitated by a representative from that population. This will ensure the location and mode of delivery of the debrief is appropriate and culturally sensitive. For example, adopting a yarning circle methodology for debriefs when participants are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Refer to [Appendix 2](#) for more details on conducting a debrief from an Aboriginal perspective.

#### Potential impact on participants

It is important to be mindful how debriefs may impact participants and parties, including those preparing the debrief. Debriefs may be traumatic as they require people to revisit and recall actions and experiences from an event of significance. It is important to consider the available resources and services that can assist and support those in need, either prior to, during, or after the debrief. For example, the [Employee Assistance Program](#), [13YARN](#) and [ACON](#). Principles for reducing impact on participants may include adopting [integrated trauma-informed care](#) approaches, embracing strengths-based approaches and providing structured yet flexible debrief process.

#### Psychological safety

Psychological safety develops in teams with shared experience and involves the development of trust and mutual respect. Psychological safety is a critical success factor for an effective debrief, as participants will be confident that they will not be penalised or embarrassed by their colleagues for speaking up and offering constructive comment, asking questions, proposing new ideas or reporting an error. It is important to reflect on the incident without attributing blame.

### 3.6.2. The environment

It is important to consider the environment for the debrief. Ensure a safe space is created for all participants. Strategies for building a safe space may include establishing clear ground rules, fostering open communication, leading by example, addressing conflict constructively, and offering support.

A culture of inclusion should be established which respects, appreciates, and values diverse viewpoints, perspectives and approaches and proactively invites meaningful contributions from all.

Implementing strategies like these will help create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where all participants feel valued, heard, and empowered to contribute effectively.

### 3.6.3. PowerPoint slides for structure

PowerPoint slides provide structure to the debrief and keep participants focused. A debrief slide set template is available on the [Public Health Emergency Management](#) team channel for members of the NSW Public Health Network. If you are not a member of the NSW Public Health Network, contact [NSWH-PHpreparedness@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NSWH-PHpreparedness@health.nsw.gov.au) to request a copy.

### 3.6.4. Trigger questions

Trigger questions are used to guide discussions and are organised according to the themes being reviewed. Questions should be open as they generate discussion and help frame the scope of the debrief. The development of trigger questions should be led by the lead facilitator. [Appendix 1](#) provides examples of trigger questions.

### 3.6.5. Documentation

Thoughtful documentation is key to building a positive debrief culture. Effective debriefs offer a level of trust that facilitates open and honest discussion. This is precious and often results in participants sharing sensitive information or controversial thoughts and opinions.

Note takers are to capture high level information to encourage open and honest discussions, as well as safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals and parties involved. It is important to capture insights, root causes and lessons learnt without attribution or apportioning blame, and to develop clear actionable recommendations.

The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* sets out the rules about how members of the public can access government information held by public sector agencies in New South Wales, including NSW Health.

### 3.6.6. Other considerations

Attendance should not be limited to those who had a direct impact on the response. Wider participation in the debrief can help support considerations for more comprehensive responses in future. This approach is especially important for addressing the unique needs of different communities.

Consider the group of participants and plan for levels of experience, personalities, and maturity (being *willing* and *able* to inquire into what happened).

Other considerations may include, but are not limited to, the location of participants, hierarchies or power imbalances between participants, literacy levels, accessibility needs, gender, identity, and religious implications.

The facilitator will be responsible for navigating these considerations and guiding the debrief to ensure open and honest discussion, and equitable participation.

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## 3.7 Additional tips for preparing a debrief

- Obtain inputs from interested parties
- Consider potential scenarios that may occur during the debrief and develop strategies for facilitators.
- Consider how you can gather input from those unable to attend e.g. follow up survey
- Thoroughly brief facilitators and interviewers on their roles
- Consider providing a QR code to a post-debrief evaluation survey during the introduction and close of the debrief so participants can provide immediate feedback.
- Consider mode of delivery (in person or via videoconference) and how this may impact attendance, participation, and delivery methods.
- Allow for 2-3 weeks of preparation.
- Revisit recent recommendations from similar public health events prior to the debrief and consider whether those recommendations have been actioned.

# 4

## Implement

## 4.1 Conducting a debrief

Normally, debriefs have consistent components and follow a similar structure: introducing the debrief, guiding the discussion, and closing the debrief (Table 4). It is important when conducting a debrief to seek maximum participation and ensure honest and professional dialogue. Additionally, maintain focus on a positive and informative debrief.

*Table 4. Components of a debrief*

<b>Introducing the debrief</b>	Remind the team of the purpose and context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The goal is to guide and improve future responses.</li> <li>• The debrief does not grade success or failure.</li> <li>• There are always strengths to sustain and areas to improve.</li> <li>• Participants to share observations without assigning praise or blame.</li> <li>• Everyone has something to contribute.</li> <li>• Introduce ground rules and expectations.</li> </ul>
	Sample ground rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important that everyone participates.</li> <li>• Everyone's views have equal value.</li> <li>• There are no right or wrong answers.</li> <li>• Be open to new ideas.</li> <li>• No blame.</li> <li>• Be creative to proposing new solutions.</li> <li>• Quotes will not be attributed to individuals without permission.</li> </ul>
<b>Guiding the discussion</b>	Four key questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was supposed to happen?</li> <li>• What actually happened?</li> <li>• Why was there a difference?</li> <li>• What can we learn from this?</li> </ul>
<b>Closing the debrief</b>	Summarise the discussion and assign future actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise the key points identified.</li> <li>• End the session on a positive note.</li> <li>• Link observations to recommendations for future improvements.</li> <li>• Inform members of reporting plans and sharing lessons learned.</li> <li>• Assign roles for follow up.</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Facilitation techniques

Facilitating a debrief can be challenging so tips and scenario-based facilitation techniques (see Table 5) are outlined below.

- Keep the meeting conversational
- Ask open questions
- Give participants time to consider their responses
- Try to give everyone a chance to speak or ask quieter members for their response first
- Ask participants to be specific and avoid generalisations
- Regularly summarise and repeat back to the group
- Focus on facts
- Build consensus among participants
- Avoid critiquing, criticising, or judging performance
- Avoid assigning blame, lecturing, or focusing on the negative
- Avoid allowing personal experience or opinion to influence the groups discussion.

Table 5. Facilitation techniques

Scenario	Technique
Encouraging a variety of responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask open-ended questions as they invite involvement and participation.</li> </ul>
Encouraging 'quiet ones' to contribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Quiet ones' don't participate very much during a debrief but are listening closely, and when asked, can contribute good insights.</li> <li>• Try waiting until a bit later in the debrief and then ask them, by name, an open-ended question. For example, 'Trish, you were at the vaccination clinic, what was your perspective on this?'</li> </ul>
Interrupting a dominant member of the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people like to talk. Others, particularly leaders, tend to provide all the answers.</li> <li>• Interrupt them tactfully with a comment like 'I'm concerned we're not getting any additional input from the group. Let's hear from ...'</li> </ul>
Handling a group that is in denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are several techniques to encourage discussion.</li> <li>• Act somewhat surprised. 'Really? Interesting. Are there any other thoughts?'</li> <li>• Press a bit firmer. 'What I'm hearing is that you would do this exactly the same way again?'</li> <li>• If able, recall an observation you made yourself. 'I saw two specific instances where...'</li> </ul>
Identifying a root cause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitators should apply root cause analysis principles to identify a root cause.</li> <li>• Asking 'why' 5 times is a good technique to ensure you get to the root cause of an issue.</li> </ul>
Using 'negative polling' to ask questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is an effective way to gain quick consensus. It's much quicker than making sure everyone agrees.</li> <li>• For example, 'Is anyone opposed to moving on?' or 'Does anyone disagree that ...?'</li> </ul>
Avoid win-lose situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Win-lose situations result when only one side perceives the outcome as favourable, so win-lose situations often strain relationships and can potentially lead to damaged relationships, limited creativity and missed opportunities.</li> <li>• Always look for a win-win situation during a debrief. 'Does it have to be one way or the other? Could we agree to both?'</li> </ul>

# 5

## Report and share

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## 5.1 Synthesise information and recommendations

Results of a debrief are to be transformed into key challenges, best practices and actionable recommendations directed to relevant stakeholders. This increases the likelihood of improving operational responses.

The scope, type, and level of formality of the debrief and intended audience will determine the level of detail required in the report.

Writing recommendations is one of the most important steps as many people only read the recommendations of a report. Recommendations should:

- be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound;
- assigned to people or groups for accountability;
- begin with what needs to be done; and
- contain enough information to be understood without reference to the supporting material.

Consider the number of recommendations created to improve the likelihood of implementation. It is best practice to limit the number of recommendations to 5 or fewer.

There is no standard format or length for a debrief report, and several debrief templates are available online. To standardise reporting, a debrief report template has been provided [Appendix 3](#). Using the debrief report template provided will encourage standardised data collection and facilitate the compilation of lessons learned. Allow 2 weeks for report writing.

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## 5.2 Sharing results

The main benefit of a debrief comes from sharing the lessons learned with all relevant parties. The value of gathering and sharing important information from debriefs by connecting experience with future healthcare system response improvements is well recognised. This occurs through the promotion of transparency and collective learning to strengthen preparedness and response to public health events.

Learnings can be shared via presentation at formal or informal network meetings, via written reports, or other suitable methods. A dashboard to hold recommendations is available on the [Public Health Emergency Management](#) team channel. This is available to the NSW Public Health Network.

# 6

## Appendixes

## Appendix 1. Example trigger questions

The list of trigger questions is not exhaustive. Questions will vary depending on the response under review.

Theme	Example Trigger Questions
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What improvements can be made to our governance structures to ensure better outcomes?</li> <li>• Were control guidelines, response protocols or other guidance material available, used, and appropriate?</li> <li>• How effectively are we at identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks within our governance framework?</li> <li>• How can we enhance accountability across all levels?</li> <li>• How are decisions documented and communicated?</li> </ul>
Command control coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the roles and responsibilities within the command structure clear to all team members during the response?</li> <li>• How effective were the control measures implemented throughout the response?</li> <li>• How was the coordination with different sectors, including the private sector?</li> <li>• How effective were our decision-making processes within the command control framework?</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the necessary resources readily available during the response? What can be done to ensure better availability in the future?</li> <li>• How well did we prioritise and allocate resources?</li> <li>• How sustainable were our resource management practices during the response? What steps can we take to ensure long-term sustainability and preparedness for future emergencies?</li> <li>• Were there any unintended consequences of the resource allocation?</li> </ul>
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effectively did different teams coordinate and collaborate during the emergency?</li> <li>• Did we have the right tools to measure the response?</li> <li>• How efficient were our workflows and processes during the response?</li> <li>• What strategies can we implement to improve operations?</li> </ul>
Capability development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well did team competencies meet the demands of the response?</li> <li>• Were there any challenges for the workforce to return to 'business as usual'?</li> <li>• What specific training programs or initiatives can be implemented to enhance overall capabilities?</li> <li>• How can the mechanisms we have in place to ensure continuous improvement be improved?</li> </ul>

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did messages reach target groups and were they understood?</li> <li>• Which communication channels were most effective for disseminating risk information?</li> <li>• Were priority populations involved in messaging development?</li> <li>• Did the population that was in greatest need of receiving communication messages effectively receive those messages? If not, why? How do we know?</li> </ul>
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the emergency impact the well-being of staff and what support systems need to be in place to better support teams in the future?</li> <li>• How well did our organisational culture and values support performance during the response?</li> <li>• How effectively did we handle conflicts and maintain cohesion with stakeholders?</li> </ul>
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well did we incorporate community feedback into our response efforts?</li> <li>• Were there any mechanisms in place to listen to at-risk communities?</li> <li>• How effective were our efforts to educate the community about health risks and preparedness measures?</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2. Debriefs from an Aboriginal perspective

This template outlines how to conduct a debrief from an Aboriginal perspective. The template is to be used as a guide only.

Define	<p>Ensure the debrief process falls under an Aboriginal governance structure.</p> <p>Defining the scope and themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All resources used to gather information prior to a debrief are created by Aboriginal people so they are culturally safe e.g. language used in pre-surveys.</li> </ul>
Decide	<p>Debrief team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lead facilitator/co-facilitator is independent and Aboriginal.</li> <li>At minimum, debrief teams should consist of two Aboriginal members.</li> </ul> <p>Location and environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location is determined by Aboriginal people to ensure a culturally safe site is chosen.</li> <li>Environment created provides a culturally safe space e.g. mutual respect, deep listening, two-way dialogue, recognise and account for power, privilege, and personal biases.</li> <li>Location should be accessible via public transport.</li> </ul> <p>Mode of delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-person/face to face preferred.</li> <li>Yarning circle methodology.</li> </ul>
Plan	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreed to by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parties.</li> <li>Allow sufficient time for yarning, silences, and reflection.</li> <li>Allow time for group discussion without the lead facilitator.</li> <li>If required, respect the restriction of discussion specific to gender (known as 'women's business' or 'men's business') and plan accordingly.</li> </ul> <p>Resources, materials; and information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All resources, materials and information shared are to be developed by Aboriginal people or assessed by Aboriginal people for cultural safety.</li> </ul>
Implement	<p>Conducting a debrief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No hierarchy: collectively come together to share stories, ideas, and concerns on an equal playing field.</li> <li>Consider engaging an Elder/s or other respected person/s to support participants (field questions, ask questions or speak on behalf of others who may not feel comfortable).</li> <li>Consider alternative mechanisms for participants to share information with the lead facilitator/co-facilitator e.g. text message.</li> <li>Accept that the discussion may not entirely follow the agenda, and not all agenda items may be covered.</li> <li>Recognise silence often represents listening, remaining noncommittal or</li> </ul>

	<p>waiting for support of others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopt behaviour based on the verbal and non-verbal cues being communicated by Aboriginal participants.</li><li>• Practice trauma-informed care approaches for psychological safety.</li><li>• Provide support as required using Aboriginal services e.g. 13YARN, Brother to Brother.</li></ul>
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Additional resources:

[Embedding Aboriginal voices in governance](#)

[Development and implementation of a shared governance model in a mainstream health unit](#)

[Communicating Positively: A Guide to Appropriate Aboriginal Terminology](#)

[NATSIHWA cultural safety framework summary](#)

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## Appendix 3. Debrief report template

This template is to be used as a guide only. The scope, type, and level of formality of the debrief and intended audience will determine the level of detail required in the report.

### 1. Executive Summary

*Summarise the incident, findings and recommendations within one page. Include:*

- *brief description of the event*
- *timeline of key milestones*
- *summary of discussions (best practices and challenges identified)*
- *recommendations*

### 2. Background

*Summarise the key characteristics of the event. Include:*

- *timeline of the event*
- *number of cases, hospitalisations, and deaths*
- *how the event was detected via existing systems*
- *summary of the response*
- *political, environmental, geographical, and socioeconomical factors that had an impact*

### 3. Scope and objective

*Describe the rationale for conducting the review. Identify the scope and objectives. Identify the themes (focus areas) and inform the audience whether this is a stand-alone report or a sub-report of a larger review.*

### 4. Methods

*Describe the approach and method behind the review. Include:*

- *the format of the debrief*
- *participating organisations, departments, districts*
- *description of reference materials used (consider attaching as an appendix)*

### 5. Findings

*This is the key part of the report. Describe the discussions according to the response themes reviewed. Focus on what happened and the root causes. Recommendations should be made for maintaining best practice and addressing challenges.*

### 6. Recommendations

#### *Debrief Recommendations*

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Lead(s) and/or partner(s)</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>

### 7. Conclusions

*Summarise the key points and analyses discussed above. Include:*

- *how recommendations will be implemented and tracked*
- *specify accountability for implementation*
- *propose improvement to methodologies for conducting the debrief*

### 8. Appendixes

*Appendix 1: Agenda*

*Appendix 2: List of participants*

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## Appendix 4. Example pre-debrief survey

This is an example of a pre-debrief survey for an outbreak. It is to be used as a thought-provoking tool only. Pre-debrief surveys need to be specifically designed to identify the scope of each debrief. They help prioritise key themes for discussion.

### **About you**

- Which organisation are you responding for? (dropdown box)

*Please answer any of the below questions that are relevant to your role in the outbreak response.*

### **Surveillance**

- What aspects of surveillance (including detection of the event and active case finding) worked well and why?
- What were the challenges with surveillance you experienced and how could this be improved?

### **Laboratory**

- What aspects of laboratory testing (including testing capacity, sample collection, resources) do you think should be discussed in the debrief?

### **Coordination**

- Do you feel the coordination of the response was appropriate and why?
- Was the role of each of the relevant organisations clear? Why or why not?

### **Communication**

- What was your experience of information sharing throughout the response? This may include Sitreps, emails, etc.
- Is there any aspect of communication that could be improved?

### **Case Management**

- What aspects of case investigation were done well and why?
- What challenges did you experience in relation to investigating cases and potential exposure sources/products?

### **General**

- Are there any other issues you think should be discussed at the debrief?

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## Appendix 5. Post-debrief evaluation survey questions

These are sample questions only and may need modifying to suit specific debriefs.

1. What was your role in the debrief?
  - Participant
  - Observer
  - Note taker
  - Facilitator
  
2. Overall, how would rate the debrief?
  - Very satisfactory
  - Satisfactory
  - Not very satisfactory
  - Unsatisfactory
  
3. Did the debrief meet your expectations?
  - Yes
  - No
  
4. What did you like most about the debrief?
  
5. What did you like least about the debrief?
  
6. How do you think the debrief could be improved?
  
7. Do you have any other suggestions or comments?

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**NSW Health**

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