

Disaster and emergency management in Australia

It is a rapidly growing sector. Driven by increasing climate resilience initiatives, seasonal bushfires, and flood recovery efforts, the field spans local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as the private corporate sector.

MY EXPERIENCE: DISASTER MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST WITH OVER 17 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ACROSS THE ITALIAN RED CROSS AND THE ITALIAN NATIONAL CIVIL PROTECTION, SPECIALIZING IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN DEPLOYMENT AND NATURAL DISASTER RESPONSE OPERATIONS –(Cyclone Idai and Kenneth Response in Mozambique, Earthquake of L'Aquila, Flood in Bangladesh, Kenya, Germany and Italy Response, Refugee/IDP Shelter And Emergency Relief coordination)
Experience in Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

Where the Jobs Are

Employment in this sector generally falls into three main buckets:

1. Government & Public Sector

- **Federal:** The **National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)** leads nation-wide disaster response, policy, and recovery funding.
- **State Agencies:** Each state has dedicated combat agencies and departments (e.g., NSW State Emergency Service, Emergency Management Victoria, Queensland Reconstruction Authority). Roles focus heavily on operational capability, risk mitigation, and community recovery.

NSW Government

- **Local Councils:** Local government areas (LGAs) regularly hire **Disaster Management Officers** or **Emergency Management Leads** to manage municipal emergency management plans, local flood risks, and community preparedness.

2. Corporate & Private Sector

- **Mining & Resources:** Energy and resource companies heavily recruit **Emergency Services Officers (ESOs)** and **Emergency Management**

Advisors for fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) roles to manage on-site industrial hazards, medical response, and crisis planning.

- **Consulting & Banking:** Firms hire **Business Resilience Consultants** and **Risk & Resilience Managers** to handle corporate crisis management, business continuity planning, and compliance (such as APRA's operational resilience standards).

3. Non-Profit & Community Sectors

- Organizations like the Australian Red Cross, Traditional Owner groups, and multicultural community networks employ project officers to manage grassroots resilience and culturally safe emergency planning.

Common Job Titles & Salaries

Salaries vary significantly based on the sector, seniority, and whether the role is regional or corporate. Average expectations include:

Job Title	Focus Area	Estimated Salary Range (AUD)
Disaster Management Officer	Local Council / Regional Preparedness	\$95,000 – \$115,000
Emergency Management Lead / Supervisor	Frameworks, Governance & Drills	\$120,000 – \$145,000
Business Resilience Consultant	Corporate Crisis & Business Continuity	\$70,000 (Entry) – \$140,000+ (Senior)
Emergency Services Officer (ESO)	FIFO Mining / Industrial Medical & Rescue	\$100,000 – \$150,000+ (Roster dependent)
Disaster Recovery / Project Coordinator	Post-event Infrastructure & Community Support	\$90,000 – \$120,000 (Often contract-based)

Qualifications & Pathways

Requirements depend on whether you want to focus on **strategic planning** (Emergency/Disaster Managers) or **boots-on-the-ground response** (Incident/Response Managers). (experience in both)

- **Vocational Training: A Diploma of Public Safety (Emergency Management)** or specific skill sets from the Public Safety Training Package are highly regarded for operational and government roles.

(I attended many
such courses)

- **Higher Education: (Post-graduate certificates or degrees in Emergency and Disaster Management)**, Climate Adaptation, or Environmental Hazards are increasingly preferred for high-level policy and strategic planning roles. (17+ year rescue experi)
- **On-site / FIFO Requirements:** For industrial emergency roles, you typically need certifications in mine rescue, advanced first aid, open-circuit breathing apparatus, and a medium/heavy rigid driving license (**IVECO, VOLKSWAGEN, MERCEDES – Special Red Cross Driving license – 1- 3**).

How to Find Openings

- **Public Sector:** Check state government job boards (e.g., *IWorkforNSW*, *SmartJobs QLD*) and the Department of Home Affairs portal for federal NEMA roles. Jobs at Home Affairs
- **General Job Boards:** Search terms like "Disaster Management", "Emergency Management", or "Business Resilience" on SEEK, LinkedIn, and Indeed.

Australia's standard **General Skilled Migration (GSM)** pathway (which includes the popular points-based Subclasses 189, 190, and 491) has a **strict age limit of under 45**.

However, several viable pathways remain open for a 55-year-old Italian citizen looking to live and work in Australia.

The Most Realistic Work Pathway: Employer Sponsorship

The **Temporary Skill Shortage visa (Subclass 482)** is your most direct route to employment.

- **No Age Limit:** Unlike permanent visas, there is **no maximum age limit** to apply for a Subclass 482 visa.
- **The Catch:** You must secure a job **offer from an approved Australian employer willing to sponsor you**. The position must also be on Australia's Skilled Occupation Lists (which covers hundreds of professions, including many engineering, trade, IT, health, and specialist management roles).
- **Duration:** This visa allows you to live and work full-time in Australia for up to 2 to 4 years (depending on the occupation stream) and can be renewed.

 **Important Note on Permanent Residency (PR):** While you can work indefinitely on temporary sponsored visas, transitioning from a 482 visa to a *Permanent* Employer Nomination Scheme (Subclass 186) visa generally requires you to be under 45. There are rare age exemptions for very high earners (earning above the Fair Work High Income Threshold) or specific medical/academic roles, but for most, the visa remains strictly temporary.

Summary Checklist for Italian Citizens (Age 55)

1. **Check the Occupation List:** Look up the *Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL)* or *Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL)* to see if your professional background qualifies for sponsorship.
2. **Target the Right Employers:** Focus your job search on companies that already have status as **Approved Work Sponsors** in Australia.
3. **Language and Skills:** You will still need to prove your English proficiency (typically via IELTS or PTE academic tests) and pass a skills assessment, depending on the job.

2. REFUGEE MIGRANT SHELTER AND INTEGRATION

(11+ YEARS EXPERIENCE WITH CARITAS ITALIANA – MANAGING SEVERAL REFUGEE CAMPS)

The field of **Refugee and Migrant Management** (often referred to in Australia as **Settlement Services** or **Multicultural Support**) is a major sub-sector of Australia's community services. It focuses on helping humanitarian entrants, asylum seekers, and displaced people integrate into Australian life.

Given your context—an Italian citizen looking at potential career options or paths to Australia—here is an overview of how this sector operates, what roles look like, and how they connect to potential employment sponsorship.

Major Employers & Organizations

The vast majority of refugee and migrant management is executed by large **Not-For-Profit (NFP)** organizations heavily funded by the Australian Government:

- **Settlement Services International (SSI):** One of the largest organizations in the country, handling humanitarian settlement, refugee employment programs, and housing support.
- **AMES Australia:** Primarily operates in Victoria, managing settlement services, language education, and employment coaching for multicultural communities.
- **Multicultural Australia:** Operates extensively across Queensland, delivering the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP).
- **The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC):** A major advocacy and frontline service provider based in Victoria, offering trauma-informed case management, legal aid, and social procurement programs.

Common Roles in the Sector

Roles in this field generally require a mix of **empathy, trauma-informed care, compliance tracking, and community networking.**

1. Humanitarian Case Managers / Settlement Officers

- **What they do:** Meet refugees upon arrival, help them secure long-term housing, register for Medicare and Centrelink (welfare support), enroll children in schools, and orient them to the local community.
- **Average Salary:** \$80,000 – \$95,000 AUD

2. Refugee Employment Consultants / Mentors

- **What they do:** Work with job seekers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. They help bridge the gap into the Australian workforce by assessing skills, translating foreign qualifications, and "job-carving" opportunities with inclusive local businesses.
- **Average Salary:** \$75,000 – \$90,000 AUD

3. Program / Contract Managers

- **What they do:** Oversee government-funded grants (like the *Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration* program), manage multi-disciplinary teams, handle budget compliance, and report on integration metrics.
- **Average Salary:** \$105,000 – \$130,000+ AUD

Path to Sponsorship for an International Applicant

Because you are 55, your pathway relies on an employer sponsoring you on a **Temporary Skill Shortage visa (Subclass 482)**. For this to work in the migrant/refugee sector, your role must line up with Australia's official skilled occupation lists.

The most viable strategic match for this sector is:

- **Welfare Centre Manager** (ANZSCO 134214) – *On the Medium and Long-term list (MLTSSL), allowing longer visas.*
- **Community Worker / Welfare Worker** (ANZSCO 411711 / 411714) – *On the Short-term list (STSOL), allowing up to 2-year sponsorship renewals.*

The Challenges to Consider:

1. **Local Funding Constraints:** Not-for-profits rely heavily on government grants. Because becoming an approved visa sponsor costs money, NFPs are traditionally less likely to sponsor international candidates compared to private corporate sectors (like mining or corporate business continuity).
2. **Lived Experience & Language:** Visas aside, these organizations heavily prioritize hiring staff with lived refugee experience or fluency in dominant humanitarian arrival languages and also European language background paired with corporate or heavy administrative operations experience can still transfer well into higher-level **Program Management** or **Logistics** roles within these networks.

If your professional background leans more toward management, coordination, or logistics rather than frontline social work, targeting the administrative and operational corporate structures of organizations like **SSI** or **AMES** would be your strongest point of entry.

Given your profile—a 55-year-old Italian citizen looking for a sponsored work pathway in Australia—focusing on **Management Coordination** within the refugee, migrant, or humanitarian sector is an excellent strategic pivot.

While frontline social work positions are rarely sponsored, senior administrative, operational, and contract management roles frequently are, because they require advanced organizational governance, compliance oversight, and logistics capabilities.

The Visa Target: Welfare Centre Manager (ANZSCO 134214)

This occupation is highly advantageous because it sits on the **Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL)**, meaning employers can **sponsor you for up to four years, with options to renew**.

Core Responsibilities of this Sponsored Role:

- **Contract & Grant Compliance:** Ensuring programs meet strict federal funding guidelines (e.g., Department of Home Affairs KPIs).

- **Resource Allocation:** Coordinating logistics, housing pipelines, and language tuition assets across regional areas.
- **Operational Governance:** Managing multidisciplinary teams of case workers, translators, and employment coaches.
- **Stakeholder Relations:** Coordinating with local government councils, real estate networks, and corporate employers to create settlement pipelines.

Mapping Your Transferable Skills

If you have a background in European corporate management, project coordination, or public administration, the transition to Australian humanitarian coordination relies on mapping your transferable skills:

- **Risk & Contingency Planning:** Refugee settlement requires rapid crisis management (e.g., sudden housing shortages or changes in intake numbers). Your experience managing corporate risk or operational supply chains translates directly here.
- **Quality Assurance (QA):** **Australian non-profits** operate under strict auditing frameworks. Experience with ISO standards, **European Union grant compliance**, or **structured corporate governance** is highly valued.
- **Cross-Cultural Operations:** **Managing international stakeholders, remote teams, or European supply chains demonstrates the cultural agility needed to coordinate diverse settlement staff.**

Action Plan to Secure Sponsorship

Because Not-For-Profits (NFPs) have tighter budgets than corporate sectors, you must position yourself as an elite candidate who solves a complex operational problem.

1. Target the "Big Three" Providers

Focus your networking and applications exclusively on the prime contractors who hold the multi-million dollar Australian Government **Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP)** contracts. These organizations are large enough to have dedicated HR visa-sponsorship budgets:

- **Settlement Services International (SSI)** – Based in NSW, QLD, and Victoria.
- **AMES Australia** – Based heavily in Victoria.
- **Multicultural Australia** – Based in Queensland.

2. Focus on "Operations" and "Program" Titles

Avoid applying for frontline "Case Manager" roles. Instead, search job boards (like SEEK or EthicalJobs) using keywords like:

- *Operations Manager / Regional Coordinator*
- *Program Manager – Settlement Services*
- *Contract Compliance Lead*

3. Address the Sponsorship Status Early

When applying, explicitly state your eligibility: *"Seeking Subclass 482 visa sponsorship as a Welfare Centre Manager. Bring [X] years of senior international management coordination and compliance experience."*

Do you have previous experience managing government grants, tight logistical deadlines, or large corporate teams? Sharing your specific management background can help narrow down which type of program coordination fits you best.

YES

- EUROPEAN UNION, ITALIAN NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT
- SPECILIZED in DG NEAR, DG ECHO AND DG INTPA OF THE EUROPEAN UNION GRANTS SYSTEM.
- BESIDES MASTER'S DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND PG CERTIFICATO IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT, I COMPLETED AN ONLINE ADVANCED MASTER LEVEL COURSE IN MANAGING EUROPEAN PROJECT

“One of my strengths is also managing the intersection of civil and military assets during major disasters. I have a deep operational understanding of how to facilitate effective dialogue and resource sharing, whether utilizing the humanitarian-led **UNITED NATIONS OCHA CMCoord** framework or operating within **NATO’s CIMIC** structure.”

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Best regards

Raja Shahed