

SEMC COMMUNIQUE



October 2023

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) met on 4 October 2023.

Dr Ron Edwards announced that he is stepping down as Chair of the SEMC. The Minister for Emergency Services thanked Dr Edwards for his service. Dr Edwards was appointed as Chair on 9 October 2017. During his tenure, the SEMC has completed the Community Disaster Resilience Strategy, and delivered the SEMC Subcommittee Review and the LEMA Improvement Plan. The Minister noted that Dr Edwards has led the SEMC with integrity, and his experience in the emergency management sector has proven invaluable.

Presentations

Tailings Dams Regulations and Emergency Response

Nicole Tucker, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS) and Paul Newell, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) presented an overview of the current regulatory requirements for tailings storage facilities. Tailings storage facilities are subject to multiple federal and state legislation that includes control measures applicable to the design, construction, operation, closure, and compliance monitoring of such facilities. Organisations operating tailing dams are required to undertake detailed emergency response planning and preparation, such as developing clear emergency response procedures, identifying key roles, responsibilities and contacts, and detailing impact prevention and mitigation strategies.

DMIRS and DWER work closely to regulate tailings storage facilities in Western Australia, with DWER responsible for regulation and monitoring of the environmental impacts of the facilities. DMIRS is responsible for regulation and monitoring of all aspects of safety, from design through to operation.

Cyber Security and Artificial Intelligence

Greg Italiano, Government Chief Information Officer, Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) provided an update on the State Hazard Plan – Cyber Security. The Office of Digital Government (DGov) within DPC is leading the development of the plan, with a draft finalised and stakeholder review underway. Western Australia has a Cyber Security Policy, which establishes a minimum standard for cyber security controls across the public sector and requires agencies to report annually against their implementation of the Policy. DGov is currently undertaking a review of the Policy to ensure it continues to reflect best practice.

DGov also operates the WA Government Cyber Security Operations Centre (WA SOC) which supports agencies by supplementing their security operations, develops and shares threat intelligence, and improves the visibility of threats, which strengthens government's capability to detect and respond to incidents. Currently, there are 69 government agencies accessing WA SOC services. To further help the sector, DGov is developing a whole of government program for cyber security support and guidance including comprehensive training packages, targeted assistance for agencies to implement the requirements of the Cyber Security Policy, and enhanced assurance services.

Review of WA's COVID-19 Management and Response

Brett Michael, Executive Director, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and the Hon. John Day provided an update on the recently completed *Review of WA's COVID-19 Management and Response*. An independent review was commissioned in January 2023 to investigate the State's COVID-19 response, identify key learnings and opportunities for improvements, and make recommendations to better prepare the government for future pandemics or large-scale emergencies.

The Review involved interviews with key stakeholders, workshops with representatives from a wide range of sectors, 900 written submissions, a desktop review of relevant national and international research, and independent data analysis. The Review found that overall, Western Australia performed well during the pandemic, however there are opportunities to improve the State's pandemic preparedness and response. The final report was tabled in Parliament in August 2023 and all 35 recommendations received full or in-principle support.

The presentation highlighted two key recommendations specific to the SEMC and two other recommendations were identified as highly relevant. Implementation of the Review's recommendations will be coordinated by DPC, with a lead agency allocated as a support.

Discussion Items and Outcomes

Community Disaster Resilience Strategy

The SEMC endorsed the Community Disaster Resilience Strategy, which seeks to provide the necessary guidance to support all Western Australians to increase their disaster resilience, identify priorities for activities and projects, and initiatives that would benefit from direct investment. The Strategy will be published on the SEMC website after endorsement by the Minister for Emergency Services. The SEMC also allocated \$1.5 million from the 2024 National Disaster Risk Reduction grant funding for community-led initiatives that support the Strategy's key priority areas.

Western Australian Emergency Management Capability Framework

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) State Risk Team undertook a comprehensive review of the existing SEMC Emergency Management Capability Framework. The review sought to ensure the Framework is consistent with evolving best practices in the sector and adequately addresses the needs of key stakeholders. The SEMC was advised that DFES has undertaken extensive stakeholder consultation and engaged with subject matter experts to inform the development of a new Western Australian Emergency Management Capability Framework. The new Framework has been approved by the SEMC and will be published on the SEMC website. A communication plan has been developed to ensure broad awareness across the sector.

Wooroloo Bushfire Review: Recommendation 10, Review Impact Assessment Process

The *Review of the Management of the Wooroloo Fire of February 2021* outlined various recommendations to enhance prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to bushfire in WA. In particular, Recommendation 10 proposed that DFES, in conjunction with local government, undertake a review of the impact assessment process. DFES led a review team consisting of internal and external stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive review of current practices, including consideration of the performance and efficiency of the process, including associated tools and templates and multi-agency accessibility. The DFES review made five recommendations in total, with Recommendation 3 specific to the SEMC:

- *Recommendation 3: SEMC consider the recommendations as part of the annual review of the Impact Statement template and process, with the thought to transition the template to an interactive on-line platform. The review should be conducted in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.*

The SEMC has tasked the Community Resilience and Recovery Subcommittee with the implementation of Recommendation 3, as the subcommittee responsible for the Impact Statement template and process.

General Updates

Philanthropic Engagement Framework

The Philanthropic Engagement Framework aims to develop governance and assurance arrangements for the involvement of philanthropic and other not for profit organisations in Emergency Management. The project has delivered a draft Framework which was developed based on extensive consultation across the emergency management and philanthropic sectors. The Framework provides guidance to Emergency Management agencies on key issues to be considered when determining appropriate governance arrangements for public-private partnerships. The draft Framework is currently out for consultation in accordance with State Emergency Management Procedure 3.5, and can be found at <https://engagewaem.com.au/>.

State Support Plan – Emergency Relief and Support (formerly State Support Plan – Emergency Welfare)

The Department of Communities has undertaken a comprehensive review of the State Support Plan – Emergency Welfare (Interim). A key outcome of the review is the change of the title of the plan from State Support Plan – Emergency Welfare to State Support Plan – Emergency Relief and Support, which reflects feedback from stakeholders. The review also included an accessibility redesign to the new State Support Plan format.

The State EM Policy Branch is progressing consequential amendments to the suite of emergency management documents to update references from ‘welfare’ to ‘emergency relief and support’. Other amendments will also be made to position titles and groups throughout the suite of emergency management documents. Stakeholders will be advised when the updated documents are published on the SEMC website.

Local Emergency Management Committee Handbook

The DFES District Emergency Management Advisors (DEMAs) and State Emergency Management (EM) Policy Branch have now completed the development of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) Handbook, which is a new resource for emergency management stakeholders. The LEMC Handbook provides a summary of the WA emergency management arrangements, key roles and responsibilities, and best practice advice for the administration of LEMCs. The LEMC Handbook has primarily been developed for the LEMC Executive Officers, but it will also assist LEMC members to understand their roles and responsibilities. The LEMC Handbook includes sample Terms of Reference and meeting agenda templates to work towards achieving a standardised approach to the administration of LEMCs across Western Australia. The LEMC Handbook and sample templates can be found in the emergency management tools section of the SEMC website.

State Hazard Plan – Search and Rescue

The comprehensive review of the State Hazard Plan – Search and Rescue, was approved by the State Emergency Management Committee in August 2023. The review included an accessibility redesign into the new State Hazard Plan format. The WA Police Force are delivering the agreed communications plan but requests all agencies and organisations to support this internally.

State Hazard Plan – Crash Emergency

The State Hazard Plan – Crash Emergency is out for consultation from 29 September to 24 November 2023, and can be viewed at <https://engagewaem.com.au/>. The following amendments have been made to the draft State Hazard Plan – Crash Emergency:

- Addition of a statement regarding arrangements for a rail crash that does not occur on the Arc Infrastructure or PTA network/s.
- Removal of duplicated text in section 4.2.2 Air Crash Emergency (Search and Rescue Response).
- Addition of section 4.6 (Multiple Hazards) and inclusion of Hostile Act into section 4.6.1.
- Addition of section 4.9 Investigations.
- Section 4.10 Funding Arrangements for Emergency Response updated.

State Hazard Plan – HAZMAT

The draft State Hazard Plan – HAZMAT and proposed amendments are scheduled to be distributed for consultation with emergency management stakeholders in November 2023.

Disaster Ready Fund – EOI Portal

The Commonwealth Government has established the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) which provides up to \$200 million per year, over five years to fund projects that build resilience, prepare for, or reduce the risk of future natural hazard impacts. DFES is the nominated lead agency in Western Australia for the fund and is responsible for working with local governments, communities, and other organisations to identify suitable projects, coordinating proposals, and submitting applications to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Applications are assessed by the NEMA according to established criteria, with the final decision made by the Federal Minister for Emergency Management. To support WA organisations in developing their grant proposals and having the best chance of being successful in Round Two, an EOI portal is now open to assist organisations and agencies seeking to apply for the DRF. DFES will also provide targeted support in grant review and coaching services for eligible projects. DFES encourages prospective applicants to register their EOI through the portal (<https://dfes.smartygrants.com.au/EOI>).

Next Meeting of the SEMC

The next meeting of the SEMC will be held on Wednesday, 6 December 2023.

Contact Us

If you have feedback or questions, get in touch at info@semc.wa.gov.au.