

# SEMC COMMUNIQUÉ

August 2025

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) met on 7 August 2025 and was attended by the Minister for Emergency Services, Honorable Paul Papalia CSC MLA. The Minister welcomed the Chair Brett Chaloner to the SEMC and noted the important work of the SEMC to support the State to plan and prepare for emerging challenges, including nuclear powered warships and the transition to renewable energy.

## Presentations

### Beyond Barriers | Churchill Fellowship

Ms Anni Fordham, Manager Public Information at the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) provided an overview of her Churchill Fellowship Research Project 'Beyond Barriers', examining how other nations ensure emergency information reach all community members.

Ms Fordham's research highlights the complexity and the urgency of improving how to reach diverse communities during emergencies and identifies opportunities for Western Australia (WA) to lead the way.

The research demonstrates that:

- Trust motivates people to act, and partnerships make trust possible.
- When agencies combine their unique perspectives and capabilities in a coordinated approach, the result is stronger, more effective, and trusted emergency information ensures no one is left behind.
- Technology is a tool, not a strategy. While it enables communication it does not replace inclusive planning, local networks or cultural competence.
- Australia, particularly WA is world-leading in the development, coordination and collaboration to deliver Emergency WA.

The SEMC is considering how this research can inform the State's Emergency Management arrangements.

A copy of the report is available on the [Winston Churchill Trust](#) website.

### Marine Heatwave | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Dr Fran Stanley and Dr Tom Holmes from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) provided the SEMC with an overview of the marine heatwave occurring across the coast of WA, driven by climate change and its implications.

The extent of the heatwave is unprecedented, in intensity, duration and geographically. While the full extent of the impacts are not yet understood, they will likely be felt across not only the environment with extensive coral bleaching and mortality, but tourism, community wellbeing, fisheries and infrastructure with potential coastal erosion.

DBCA will continue to work with external partners to document the impacts over the next 12 months, seek to understand what areas have survived and why, and to document recovery and any potential indirect impacts such as disease and predators.

The SEMC discussed the possibility that coral bleaching presents as an emerging example of systemic and cascading risk, and its implications for the emergency management sector. The Chair requested the Climate Change Subcommittee consider coral bleaching further as part of their exploration of systemic risk.

## Discussion Items and Outcomes

### State Hazard Plan – Fire

The revised State Hazard Plan – Fire was approved by the SEMC, having undergone extensive consultation and SEMC subcommittee endorsement.

Key changes include:

- Emphasising fire management is a shared responsibility and clarifying specific roles and responsibilities across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.
- Introduction of recommended training standards.
- Clarifying initial Controlling Agencies and the transfer of control process.

DFES will communicate the changes across the sector in preparation for the high threat period.

### Colvin and Glasser Reviews Final Report

In 2023, two reviews were commissioned in response to the increasing size, scale, intensity, cost and complexity of natural disasters:

- [Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding](#) – Mr Andrew Colvin APM OAM – commissioned by the Australian Government.
- [Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements](#) – Dr Robert Glasser – commissioned by the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting.

The reviews were released on 25 October 2024, both finding that Australia's disaster management frameworks and arrangements have not evolved at the same rate as the changing nature of disasters.

In January 2025 the SEMC established a multi-agency working group to consider the impacts and potential opportunities arising from the recommendations. The SEMC considered the recommendations from the working group and will provide relevant advice to the Minister for Emergency Services.

### Closure of the State Government's response to AFAC Independent Operational Review of the Wooroloo Bushfire

Following the Wooroloo Bushfire in 2021, the State Government requested AFAC undertake an independent review of the fire operations during the bushfire.

The Wooroloo Bushfire Review was publicly released on 29 March 2022 with various recommendations to enhance prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to bushfire in WA.

DFES led the response to the 13 recommendations and has now completed the work required to respond to the recommendations. Where projects have long-term horizons, or incorporate continual improvement, these components have been transitioned to agency business plans and will continue as a priority.

The Wooroloo Bushfire Review and updates on the Government response to the Wooroloo Bushfire Review documents are available on the [SEMC](#) website.

**Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer Biosecurity Response Transition to Management**

As of 1 July 2025, the Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer biosecurity response commenced transition from eradication to management. The followed determination from the National Management Group (NMG) it is no longer technically feasible to eradicate shot-hole borer from WA.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will now focus on standing down eradication activities, slowing the spread, training and preparing industries for long-term sustainability.

**State Exercise – Liquid Fuel Disruption**

The SEMC noted the Risk and Capability Subcommittee will deliver an exercise to test the State Emergency Management Arrangements against the systemic risk of a significant liquid fuel supply disruption event. This will be the first time the State has officially approached the exercising of a systemic risk and will provide valuable guidance on the way systemic risks are exercised and reported in the future.

**Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning Forums**

The Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning (DIEP) Forum is part of the Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction program developed by Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve from the University of Sydney.

A DIEP Forum is designed to improve emergency preparedness, response, and recovery by ensuring people with a disability are actively included in all stages of planning and decision-making. The forum also helps build stronger cross-sector partnerships among emergency services, disability advocates, support providers and local government to improve community resilience.

Between August and October 2025, 18 DIEP Forums involving 23 local governments will be held, while a WA State DIEP is also planned for October 2025. This will provide a valuable opportunity to co-design solutions that ensure the inclusion of people with a disability in all phases of the emergency management cycle (preparedness, prevention, response and recovery).

**Comprehensive Review Schedule**

The following State Emergency Management documents are planned for comprehensive review and broad consultation in 2025:

State Hazard Plan – HAZMAT Annex B Space Re-entry Debris (SPRED)	WA Community Evacuation in Emergencies Guideline
State Hazard Plan – Cyber Security Incident	Local Recovery Guideline
	Impact Statement Guideline and Template

**Next Meeting of the SEMC**

The next meeting of SEMC will be held on 9 October 2025.

**Contact Us**

If you have feedback or questions, get in touch at [info@semc.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@semc.wa.gov.au).