

Whole-of-Government **Pandemic Arrangements**

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1.0 Introduction

The Whole-of-Government Pandemic Arrangements (the Arrangements) complement Western Australia's (WA) emergency management plans including the State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity and operational requirements by providing a whole-of-government coordinated approach to a significant epidemic or pandemic (a global human epidemic). They define key roles and responsibilities and establish clear linkages with national arrangements.

The Arrangements replace the Western Australian Government Pandemic Plan (2020) and should be read in conjunction with the State Emergency Management Framework:

- State Emergency Management Policy
- State Emergency Management Plan
- State Emergency Management Procedures
- State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity
- Relevant State Support Plans and emergency management guidelines.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Arrangements is to:

- outline the Whole-of-Government pandemic arrangements and how these intersect with existing health planning frameworks and public health;
- outline the roles and responsibilities of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) for the event of a pandemic across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery;
- describe how the WA pandemic arrangements are supported by national arrangements to ensure a coordinated and effective management of outbreaks across jurisdictions; and
- align with the State Emergency Management (EM) Framework.

1.2 Audience

The audience for the Arrangements includes government agencies, public authorities and other organisations within the WA community that have roles and responsibilities before, during and after a declared epidemic or pandemic event.

2.0 State Governance Arrangements

2.1 Hazard Management Agency

In Western Australia, the Hazard Management Agency (HMA) for human epidemic is the Director General as the Chief Executive Officer, Department of Health (DoH) as prescribed under regulation 22 of the *Emergency Management Regulations 2006*.

The Chief Health Officer (CHO) is a medical practitioner designated by the Minister under the *Public Health Act 2016 (PH Act)*, who performs functions outlined in the PH Act and in emergency management, under the *Emergency Management Act 2005 (EM Act)* who may undertake roles or responsibilities delegated by the HMA.

Through the Department of Health, the HMA is responsible for the *State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity*, which outlines WA's approach to preventing, preparing for, responding to, and initiating recovery from human epidemics. Under this plan, the emergency management arrangements are set out within the geographic boundaries of Western Australia (WA), for human biosecurity emergencies. *The Infectious Disease Emergency Management Plan* is an internal DoH document outlining how the WA health system will respond to infectious disease emergencies, including pandemics.



2.2 Emergency Management Arrangements

If a whole-of-government response is required in WA, during a pandemic, DPC will collaborate closely with the Hazard Management Agency under the **State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity** and assume whole-of-government responsibilities as outlined in Appendix 1.

If a State of Emergency is declared under the **EM Act 2005** or a Public Health State of Emergency is declared under the **PH Act** in response to a pandemic, the agency arrangements outlined below will apply (see Table 1 and Figure 1):

AGENCY/ROLE	KEY ACTIONS/RESPONSIBILITIES
Hazard Management Agency (Director General as the Chief Executive Officer, Department of Health)	The HMA alerts the State Emergency Coordinator (SEC) when a situation escalates to a pandemic with the potential for multiple consequential hazards. This may trigger consideration of an emergency situation or state of emergency declaration.
State Emergency Coordinator (SEC)	The SEC, in consultation with the Minister for Health and Minister for Emergency Services, recommends the establishment of the State Emergency Coordination Group (SECG).
State Emergency Coordination Group (SECG)	The State Emergency Coordination Group has the following functions – (a) to ensure the provision of coordinated emergency management by public authorities and other persons; (b) to provide advice and direction to public authorities and other persons to facilitate effective emergency management; (c) to liaise between emergency management agencies and the Minister.
Minister for Emergency Services	If an emergency is of such a nature or magnitude that extraordinary measures are required to respond effectively the Minister may make state of emergency declaration. If a state of emergency is declared, a State Disaster Council is established.
State Disaster Council	Chaired by the Premier; supported by the Director General of DPC. Functions include liaising with State Government and SECG, providing prompt and accurate advice, supporting Government and SECG, and liaising with the Australian Government
Premier/Security and Emergency Committee of Cabinet (SECC)	The Premier may establish the SECC to provide Ministerial-level oversight of the pandemic arrangements. The SECC may operate alongside an SDC, make key Executive Government decisions that may take effect before Cabinet endorsement, and coordinate with the Australian Government on measures such as border controls, quarantine, and exclusion strategies.

Table 1. Arrangements for WA EM governance in a pandemic.

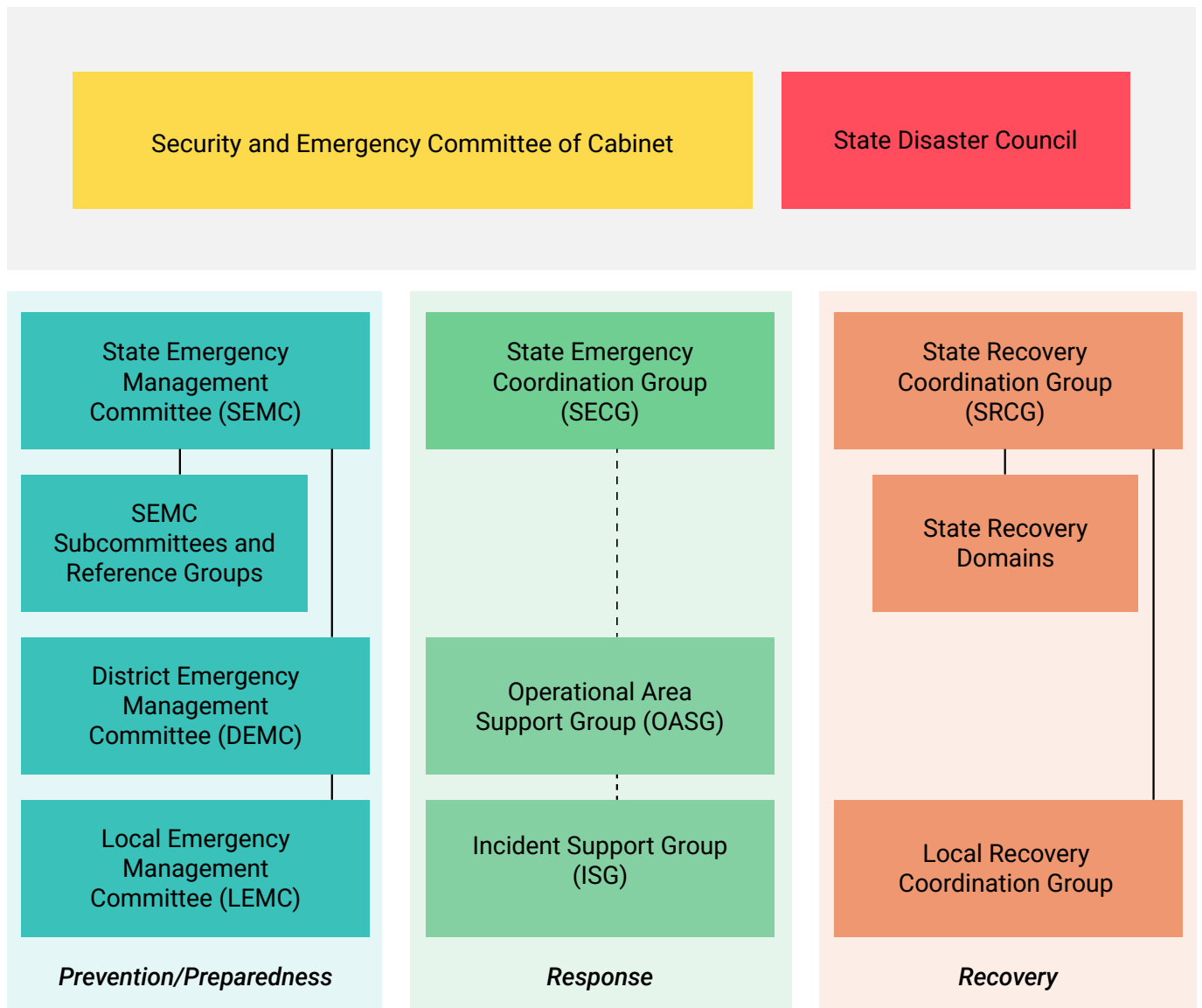


Figure 1. Arrangements for WA EM governance.



3.0 National Governance Arrangements

Australia has well-established governance structures at both national and state levels of government to oversee and respond to emergencies, including human epidemics and pandemics. During a major epidemic or pandemic, the ***Emergency Response Plan for Communicable Disease Incidents of National Significance Plan***, would be activated, enabling coordinated action led by state and territory health authorities to manage the situation.

In Australia, as a pandemic increases in scale and complexity and is declared an incident of national significance, national and interjurisdictional coordination increases. This involves engagement from State Premiers and Territory Chief Ministers, and their respective first minister departments. Governance arrangements including roles and responsibilities may need to be adjusted to reflect the nature, complexity and impacts of the event.



A pandemic requires coordinated action across multiple agencies and jurisdictions, underpinned by national collaboration and guided by critical health advice, illustrated in Figure 2. The National Coordination Mechanism (NCM), is coordinated by the National Emergency Management Agency, bringing together all levels of government and industry to address significant events requiring cross-sector coordination. An NCM may be activated to support Australia’s pandemic response and reports directly to the National Security Committee of Cabinet. National Cabinet may be convened to deliver a coordinated national response to a pandemic. It is chaired by the Prime Minister, includes all jurisdictional Premiers, and is supported by the first ministers departments.

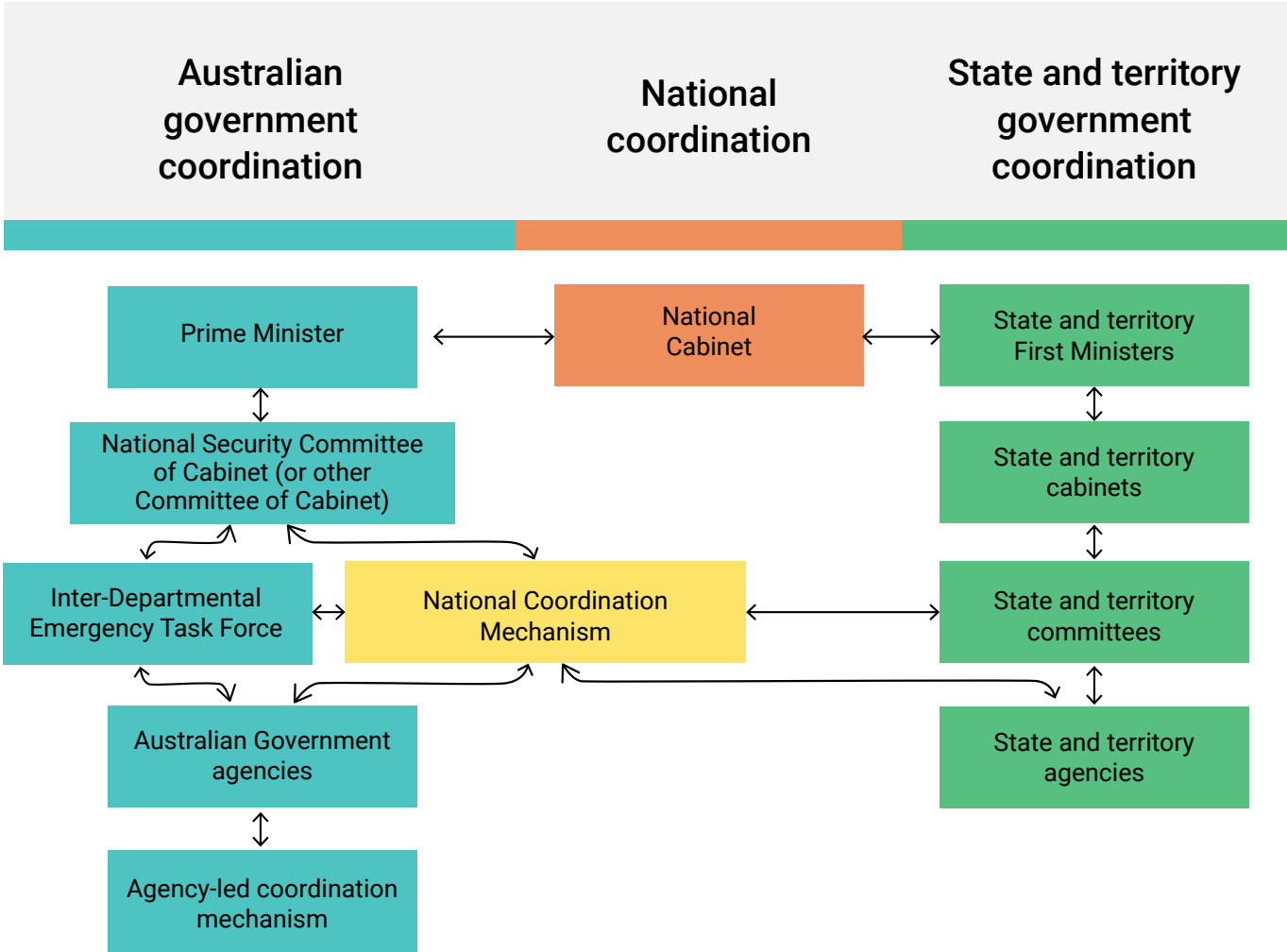


Figure 2. National and State Mechanisms to support decision making.

The Australian Government is responsible for managing Australia’s international borders, while the State Government may set surveillance and management arrangements for WA’s borders with other States and Territories.

4.0 Advice to agencies, organisations and business

To strengthen pandemic preparedness, state government agencies should follow the Treasurer's Instruction outlined in the *Treasurer's Guidance Handbook*, located in section 2.3 Risk Management Framework, which requires all WA Government agencies to conduct regular reviews of crisis management and business continuity plans to ensure readiness for potential disruptions.

WA businesses and organisations are also encouraged to consider the potential impacts of a pandemic in their business continuity planning. A pandemic may reduce workforce availability, including staff essential to maintaining critical functions, and may disrupt the supply of materials, services and subcontractor support. Demand for services may vary, fuel and energy supplies may be interrupted in some areas, and the movement of people, imports and exports may be restricted or delayed by quarantine measures within Australia and internationally.

4.1 Maintenance of Government Services

A pandemic may place additional pressure on WA public sector organisations, including higher levels of staff absence. Public sector employers should adopt a pragmatic and precautionary approach to managing these absences, prioritising the health and safety of individuals, the broader workforce, and the public community.

The Public Sector Commissioner may issue instructions or advice outlining further measures to support public sector employers in addressing pandemic-related workforce issues. These measures will be evidence-based, reflect agency needs, be authorised by the **Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA)**, the Government, or Premier's Circular 2025/16 as appropriate, and will be developed in consultation with employers, central agencies and unions where required.

Any instruction will be clearly communicated to CEOs and agency human resources and employee relations contacts. Circulars are published on the WA Government website under 'Government Sector Labour Relations Circulars', while Commissioner's instructions and related materials are published under 'Public Sector Commission'.

4.2 Whole-of-Government Arrangements for Remote Aboriginal Communities

Western Australian remote aboriginal communities face unique challenges during a pandemic given their remoteness, fragile infrastructure and significantly higher burden of underlying disease, including chronic illness. State Government agencies should engage with these communities in a culturally safe and respectful way to ensure effective planning, communications and support is provided. Consistent health messaging from the Hazard Management Agency, culturally appropriate engagement, stream lined decision making and a rapid mobilisation of resources should be prioritised.

State Government needs to maintain up to date information on remote Aboriginal communities, including community infrastructure, population and contact details to enable the State to respond quickly in a pandemic. State Government agencies should strengthen partnerships with remote Aboriginal community leaders and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector including Aboriginal Medical Services to ensure that responses and decisions are informed by local knowledge and tailored to community needs and delivered in an appropriate manner.



4.3 National Stockpiles

In the event of supply chain shortages, agencies may request priority assistance for the supply of critical goods or services. The WA Government will assess and prioritise requests with the greatest need and advise the Department of Treasury and Finance of these priorities. The Department of Treasury and Finance will then work with agencies and whole-of-government suppliers to support the delivery of these priorities.



The Australian Government Department of Health manages the deployment of equipment and medication from the National Medical Stockpile, while the WA Department of Health oversees the coordination, distribution and use of the State Medical Stockpile and the National Medical Stockpile located in Western Australia.

The Australian Government coordinates the National Emergency Management Stockpile (NEMS) capability which includes:

- an Australian Government owned stockpile of emergency goods
- the NEMS standing offer panel
- strategic partnerships with other national emergency response and humanitarian aid capabilities.

NEMS has been designed to provide reliable and readily deployable resources to support communities affected by disasters. States and territories seeking access to NEMS resources must apply through the Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN).

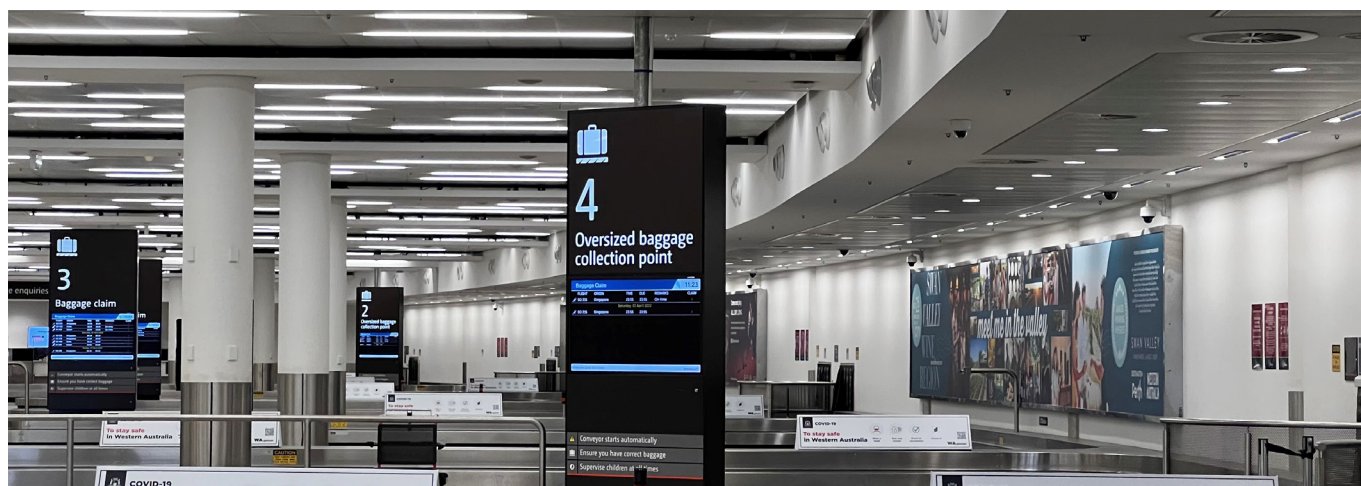
In Western Australia, a formal request for assistance to the Australian Government is submitted by the State Emergency Coordinator to activate the COMDISPLAN.

4.4 Border Control and Quarantine Arrangements

Enhanced border surveillance may be introduced in WA when there is a significant human epidemic, including an actual or impending pandemic. This will involve the activation of relevant plans by the Australian Border Force and Department of Health.

The Department of Health undertakes preparedness activities to support Australian Government quarantine arrangements, and these activities are outlined within the State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity.

Western Australians are encouraged to consult the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Smartraveller website at www.smartraveller.gov.au for up-to-date international travel advice and restrictions.



4.5 Financial Assistance Measures

During pandemic response or recovery activities, WA public sector agencies are initially expected to absorb associated costs within their existing budgets. If emergency management agencies cannot meet these costs, alternative funding arrangements may be considered in line with the State Emergency Management (EM) Policy section 5.12 and the State EM Plan section 5.4.

Where agencies are unable to absorb these costs, they may apply for supplementary funding. ***Treasurer's Instruction 302 – Supplementation of Appropriations*** outlines the relevant process and is available in the Financial Administration Bookcase. Early and ongoing engagement between the affected agencies and the Department of Treasury is essential when pursuing these arrangements.

Public sector agencies should identify potential additional cost pressures during the preparedness phase and plan appropriately.

4.6 Economic Impacts

During a pandemic the Australian Government may consider activating a range of social services and economic relief measures to stabilise households, workers and small businesses. At the national level, this may include utilising social service and financial relief programs primarily delivered through the Centrelink and the Australian Tax Office. The WA Government may complement these initiatives by offering household bill relief, targeted business assistance packages, and other forms of financial support designed to support the local economies.

Economic impacts will not be evenly distributed with industries such as transport, hospitality, tourism, and small business vulnerable to disruptions when movement is restricted or supply chains are interrupted. At the same time, demand for frontline and essential services, such as healthcare, policing, emergency services and critical government functions can typically increase. Some government services may experience reduced activity if staff mobility is restricted or if operations are redirected to support the public health response.



State Government agencies should plan for longer wait times, operational delays, and disruptions to schooling and education delivery. Agencies may also face additional costs associated with:

- pandemic support programs
- increased procurement in the health sector
- service delivery delays
- reduced revenue for fee-based agencies, and
- the operational demands of managing the pandemic response.

5.0 Public Information

Communities threatened by or experiencing the impacts from a pandemic have an urgent and vital need for information and direction.

Under the State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity, the Hazard Management Agency (HMA), is responsible for the public information function.

The public information function during emergencies includes:

- management and dissemination of appropriate information to the media to meet news needs and broadcast information and instructions to the public
- management and dissemination of appropriate information and instructions to the public immediate before, during and after an emergency through various other means, such as 'emergency imminent' alerting systems, the internet, social media, public meetings, public information lines, alerts and warnings, and other mechanisms, systems or tools.

5.1 State Emergency Public Information Coordinator

The State Emergency Public Information Coordinator (SEPIC) is appointed by the State Emergency Coordinator (SEC). This position is currently the Western Australian Police Force Director of Media & Corporate Communications, who provides strategic oversight of the State's public information arrangements for emergencies, in partnership with the Public Information Reference Group.

When required, the SEPIC activates the whole-of-government public information response arrangements, under the State Support Plan – Emergency Public Information.

5.2 Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Under the State Support Plan – Emergency Public Information, when requested by the SEPIC, DPC is responsible for:

- monitoring information released through electronic and print media and supplying relevant material to the HMA and other emergency management agencies to support the emergency response
- disseminating media releases issued by the SEPIC to the media as required.

If directed by the Government of the day, DPC may be designated as the lead agency to undertake a central coordination role for whole-of-government communications during a pandemic. This may include, where required, coordination of critical government information provided to the community through the WA.gov.au digital platform, or its future equivalent.

6.0 Department of the Premier and Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities

DPC provides advice to the Premier and Cabinet, including the Security and Emergency Committee of Cabinet (SECC), and supports strategic arrangements and engagement for any significant state and national emergencies that require Premier and Cabinet level involvement. These responsibilities are outlined in the State Emergency Management (EM) Policy, State EM Plan and the State EM Procedure, as part of the State EM Framework. A detailed summary of the roles and responsibilities is included at Appendix 1.



7.0 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Summary of DPC's Roles and Responsibilities in the State EM Framework

Role

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) is responsible for providing advice to the Premier and Cabinet, including the Security and Emergency Committee of Cabinet (SECC) and for supporting strategic arrangements and engagement for any significant State and national emergencies that requires Premier or Cabinet level involvement.

DPC undertakes the roles and responsibilities of the first ministers' departments described in national emergency management arrangements including but not limited to:

- Australian Government Crisis Management Framework
- National Counter-Terrorism Plan (NCTP)
- Australian Government Biosecurity and Agricultural Response Plan (AUSBIOAGPLAN)
- Emergency Response Plan for Communicable Diseases Incidents of National Significance
- Power System Emergency Management Plan
- Cyber Incident Management Arrangements
- Australian Cyber Response Plan (AUSCYBERPLAN)

Responsibilities

Preparedness

- Develop and review strategic arrangements for any significant State and national emergencies that requires Premier or Cabinet level involvement.
- Provide advice to the Premier and Cabinet on significant security and emergency matters that may require a State of Emergency Declaration, establishment of a State Disaster Council and/or national coordination.
- Provide policy advice and support to the Security and Emergency Committee of Cabinet (SECC) in relation to SECC's preparedness and response functions.
- Provide a representative from the WA Government to national emergency management committees including but not limited to:
 - Australia – New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC)
 - Australia – New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC).
 - National Cyber Security Committee
- Provide a representative to the State Emergency Management Committee, relevant subcommittees and working groups.

- Coordinate and contribute to whole-of-government exercises to enhance State preparedness for significant State and national security and emergency events.
- Works with Commonwealth and state and territory first ministers' departments on emergency management issues to promote cross-jurisdictional consistency and collaboration.

Response

- Provide advice and administrative support to the Premier upon the establishment of a State Disaster Council.
- Provide advice and support to the Security and Emergency Committee of Cabinet (SECC) in relation to SECC's response functions.
- Provide strategic whole-of-government communications support for significant State and national emergencies when required.
- Activate the State Crisis Centre, if required under the NCTP.
- Provide a representative to the State Emergency Coordination Group, as required.
- Provide a representative to the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM), as required.
- Facilitate collaboration between State agencies, public authorities and key stakeholders for any significant State and national emergencies.
- Coordinate and communicate the outcomes of whole-of-government after-action reviews, as required.

Recovery

- Provide information and strategic advice to the Premier, the State Recovery Coordination Group (SRCG), and relevant committees and sub-committees of Cabinet on the progress of whole-of-government recovery activities following emergencies.
- Provide advice to the Premier on the appointment of an Event Recovery Controller, as required.
- Coordinate with Commonwealth and state and territory first ministers' departments where national coordination of recovery is required.
- Provide a representative to the SRCG, as required.
- Provide a representative to the standing Economic State Recovery Domain, as required.
- Contribute to whole-of-government strategies for recovery following a significant emergency, and where requested provide assistance in the specific recovery functional areas assigned within the State EM Policy Appendix F:
 - Supporting economic recovery, business and industry
 - Restoring essential services and housing in remote Aboriginal communities
 - Supporting State agencies in the development of funding cases for recovery programs.

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past and present.