



**SEMC**  
STATE EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

# Western Australian Emergency Management Capability Framework

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Developed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services State Capability Team on behalf of the State Emergency Management Committee, 2023

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## Acknowledgment of Country

The State Emergency Management Committee 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, their cultures and to Elders past and present.

# From the SEMC Chair

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**Dr. Ron F Edwards**

Chair, State Emergency  
Management Committee

Over recent years, large-scale emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Tropical Cyclone Seroja, and multiple bushfire events have tested the resilience of Western Australians. Our response to these challenges has highlighted the strong capability of the emergency management sector and the resilience of our communities.

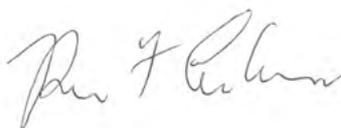
As Chair of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) since 2017, I am proud to have led the development of the Western Australian Emergency Management Capability Framework (the Framework). The Framework was first developed in 2014, to enable the analysis of our capabilities and to guide emergency management across the State. Since its development our emergency management landscape has undergone significant change. As a society we are moving toward a warmer and more interconnected world, and facing emergency management challenges beyond those previously experienced.

I am pleased to present this revised Framework which has matured and developed to reflect these new challenges and the dynamic emergency management landscape with which we must work within. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services and SEMC have partnered to ensure the Framework supports the State to meet the challenges of the future. Drawing on ever-evolving best practice, and aligned with national approaches, the Framework provides a common language for the Western Australian emergency management sector to identify, assess and develop its capabilities.

The Framework is designed to be used by anyone who has a stake in reducing the likelihood, impact, and consequences of an emergency event. It describes the capabilities required to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, and identifies the elements required to deliver them.

I acknowledge the emergency management sectors' support in contributing to the development of the Framework and embracing the opportunity to further our collective emergency management capabilities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron F Edwards', written in a cursive style.

**Dr Ron F Edwards**

Chair, State Emergency Management Committee

# 1. Introduction

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The Western Australian (WA) Emergency Management Capability Framework<sup>1</sup> describes the capabilities we need to effectively manage large scale emergencies. It has been developed to enhance our collective resilience to emergencies, and to assist decision makers across all aspects of emergency management to identify the capabilities and capacities required to reduce the likelihood, impact and consequences of emergencies, regardless of their type or severity.

## Emergency Management Context

Globally, disaster risks are increasing faster than our ability to prepare for them<sup>2</sup>. Climate change, population increase, and the growing interconnectedness of our global society mean that emergency managers now face unprecedented challenges.

Australia has experienced significant emergencies over recent years. From the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019-2020, to unprecedented flooding, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian communities have been devastated by emergencies of a scale and complexity not previously experienced.

Developing the capabilities of the emergency management sector, as well as the broader community, to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, is recognised in WA as essential for increasing our overall resilience to emergencies. A capability-based framework of emergency preparedness was first employed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) in 2012. Since then, the framework has become the foundation document in the assessment and development of the State's emergency management capability.

This updated framework reflects evolving emergency management best practice. It is informed by key developments in emergency management literature and policy, both across Australia and internationally. The framework has been designed to complement WA's State Emergency Management Framework, and to be consistent in its design with other jurisdictional frameworks, notably the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework<sup>3</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> Development of this framework has been informed by the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework, Victorian Preparedness Framework, and the New South Wales Capability Development Framework, as well as relevant literature and international and domestic emergency and disaster risk reduction frameworks.

<sup>2</sup> UNDRR (2022). *Global assessment report on disaster risk reduction 2022. Our world at risk: Transforming governance for a resilient future.* Geneva.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Home Affairs (2018). *Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework: A guideline to develop the capabilities required to manage severe to catastrophic disasters.*



**Capability: Our collective ability to undertake prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities to reduce the impact of emergencies and to create a better prepared, more resilient and safer State<sup>4</sup>.**

**What is Capability?**

Capability, in a general sense, can be defined as having the qualities to affect a desired outcome. In the context of emergency management, capability is defined as: *a collective ability to undertake prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities to reduce the impact of emergencies and to create a better prepared, more resilient and safer state<sup>4</sup>.*

While all of us have capability to reduce emergency risks, capability is strongest when we work together to leverage the collective ability of others. Improving how we work across sectors (community, government, business, volunteers) and across scales (local, regional, state and national) is essential for managing emergencies of the scale and complexity we must now face.

**About this Framework**

Core capabilities are arranged in this framework across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR). The arrangement of core capabilities across PPRR is consistent with the *Emergency Management Act 2005*, as well as emergency management roles and responsibilities outlined across the State Emergency Management Framework.

Each core capability represents a set of actions to be undertaken or outcomes to be achieved before, during or after an emergency to lessen its impact. It is important to note that:

- many of the core capabilities are applicable to other areas of PPRR and should be interpreted accordingly, and
- PPRR activities are considered here to be linked in a cycle of continuous improvement.

Each core capability is underpinned by five capability elements<sup>5</sup>. These can be considered inputs which, through their combination, determine the capacity to deliver and sustain a capability. Deficits in any one of these elements will reduce the ability of emergency management agencies and/or the State to deliver core capabilities. Emergency managers must therefore consider the sufficiency of capability inputs to deliver and sustain core capabilities against a given level of risk.

**CAPABILITY** ▶ Our collective ability to undertake prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities to reduce the impact of emergencies and to create a better prepared, more resilient and safer State.

**CAPACITY** ▶ The extent to which the capability elements (people, resources, governance, systems and processes) of capability can be sustained before, during and after an emergency.

<sup>4</sup> Definition is consistent with ISO 22325 and with the State Emergency Management Committee’s vision to create ‘a better prepared, more resilient and safer State.’

<sup>5</sup> Capability elements are consistent with the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework.

# 1. Introduction

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## State Capability Principles

Emergency management in WA is underpinned by a common set of principles<sup>6</sup>.

These principles promote understanding and inform development of emergency management capability across the sector:

- a risk management approach
- shared responsibility for resilience
- all-hazards approach
- graduated approach
- all-agencies coordinated and integrated approach
- continuous improvement
- community engagement
- integrated information management.

## Audience and Uses

This framework has been designed to be used by anyone who has a stake in reducing the likelihood, impact and consequences of an emergency. It is equally applicable at State and local levels, noting that not all core capabilities are applicable to each individual organisation. The framework should therefore be adapted for users' specific purposes.

It is envisaged that this framework will provide a common language for the assessment, development, and evaluation of emergency management capability. This includes:

- assessment of capability maturity, gaps and thresholds
- development of core tasks and capability targets
- capability testing and exercising
- capability evaluation (e.g., lessons management, review, and assurance activities).

The consistent implementation of this framework will enable clear insight into the State's current level of capability, as well as identification of priority areas requiring further development.



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**This framework will provide a common language for the assessment, development, and evaluation of emergency management capability.**

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<sup>6</sup> See State Emergency Management Policy, Appendix B Emergency Management Principles.

# 2. Western Australian Capability Development Model

The Western Australian Capability Development Model shown below in [Figure 1](#), outlines the process for identifying and developing capabilities to manage emergencies.

Figure 1



## 1. Identify and Assess Risks:

Undertake a systematic process for understanding emergency risks and their prioritisation. Includes assessment of current and future risks, as well as those associated with specific hazards, concurrent and cascading events, and systemic disaster risks.

## 2. Understand Capability Requirements:

Identify the capabilities required to lessen the likelihood, impacts and consequences of an emergency, and the capacity needed to sustain a required level of capability over time. Also includes identification of capability gaps and opportunities for capability development.

## 3. Enhance and Develop Capabilities:

Enhance capacity to deliver core capabilities to a desired level over a sustained period of time. Includes investment in capability elements (e.g., training, financial investment, development of plans and policies, etc.) and leveraging the collective ability of others (e.g., fostering partnerships, establishing memorandum of understandings, coordinate roles and responsibilities, etc.).

## 4. Evaluate Capability Development:

Evaluate whether capabilities and capacity are sufficient to manage emergency risks and identify opportunities for improvement.

# 3. Capability Elements

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The five capability elements<sup>7</sup> below underpin each of the core capabilities outlined in this framework. It is the availability, application and coordination of these elements that ultimately determine whether a core capability can be delivered at a desired level of capacity.

## CAPABILITY ELEMENTS

### People

The required number of trained and skilled people across communities, government, and business working together to perform emergency management activities.

### Resources

The physical equipment and assets needed for effective emergency management. Includes, but is not limited to, information technology (IT) and communications equipment, protective equipment, consumables, fleet and transport, as well as facilities and infrastructure.

### Governance

The enabling factors that emergency management operates within including legislation, funding, authorising environment, emergency management arrangements, doctrine and policy.

### Systems

The systems that are used to deliver emergency management outcomes. Includes, but is not limited to, IT, management systems (e.g., financial, infrastructure, and assets), learning and development, workforce management, workplace health and safety, quality control, arrangements that enhance cross-sector resilience, and incident management systems such as the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS).

### Processes

Documented or undocumented ways of delivering emergency management such as risk management, continuous improvement, information flow, capability and capacity planning.

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework and the Victorian Preparedness Framework.

# 4. Core Capabilities

Western Australia has 25 core capabilities for emergency management. These are arranged across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR). Core capabilities and their relationship to the capability elements are shown in [Figure 2](#).

Where possible, core capability definitions have been adapted from the Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework and other jurisdictional frameworks to enhance national consistency. Definitions have also been informed by relevant State and national policies and plans, scholarly literature, and subject matter experts.

Definitions of PPRR are those endorsed by the SEMC<sup>8</sup>.

## 4.1 Prevention

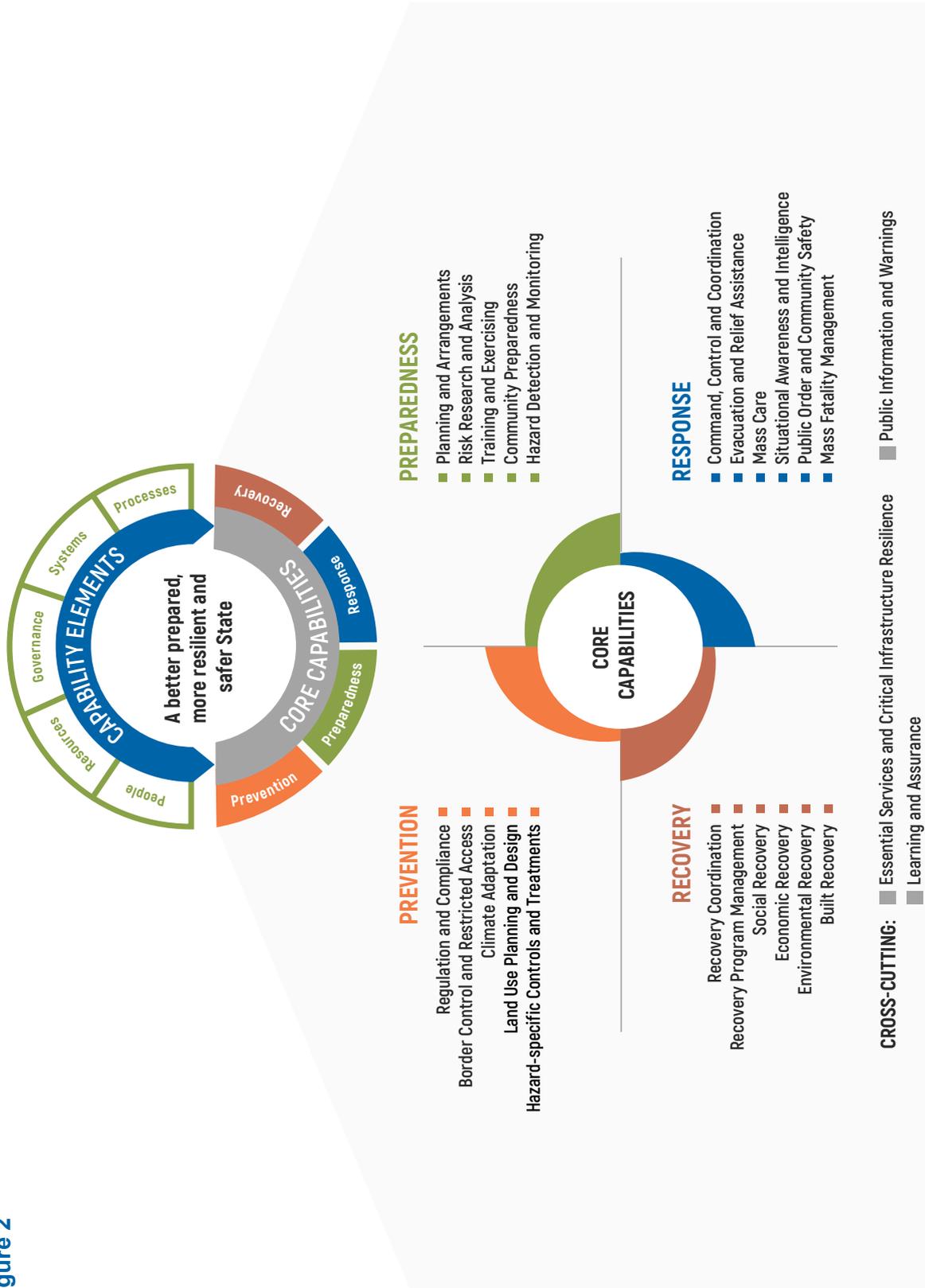
**The mitigation or prevention of the probability of the occurrence of, and the potential adverse effects of, an emergency.**

CORE CAPABILITY	DESCRIPTION
Regulation and Compliance	Monitor, investigate and enforce regulations as prescribed in relevant legislation and regulations to mitigate emergency risks. This also includes educating stakeholders on regulatory and compliance requirements.
Land Use Planning and Design	Employ land use planning and design to limit future vulnerabilities and losses in areas of existing and new development. Includes risk-informed land use decision making, and adherence to building codes and industry standards in the construction of infrastructure, buildings and housing.
Border Control and Restricted Access	Manage the movement of people, animals, goods, and products to limit the introduction or spread of disease, pests and hazardous substances or materials. Includes import and export controls, travel restrictions and protocols, border controls, inspection, and quarantine.
Hazard-specific Controls and Treatments	Identify, prioritise, and implement hazard-specific risk controls and treatments. Examples include planned burning, establishment of liaison networks and industry groups, minimising single points of failure, and community education programs.
Climate Adaptation	Anticipate and pre-emptively manage climate-related risks and adapt the emergency management sector to support climate-resilient development. Includes identification of climate risks and adaptation opportunities, investment in climate-resilience and low-carbon development, and alignment with relevant policy instruments (e.g., Western Australian Climate Policy).

<sup>8</sup> See SEMC Glossary. <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/state-emergency-management-em-glossary>

# 4. Core Capabilities

Figure 2



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## 4.2 Preparedness

### Preparation for response to an emergency.

CORE CAPABILITY	DESCRIPTION
Planning and Arrangements	Undertake a systematic process for engaging stakeholders in the development of useable and scalable strategic, operational, and/or tactical level approaches for managing emergencies. Includes arrangements for interagency and interjurisdictional resource sharing and assistance.
Community Preparedness and Resilience	Empower community leaders and stakeholders to enhance local-level emergency management preparedness and resilience. Includes partnering with communities to build local emergency management skills, knowledge and ability to take action; provision of program support and funding for planning and resilience-building initiatives; preparing relevant engagement plans to reach groups within the community whose circumstances may create barriers to obtaining information, understanding instructions, or reacting to an emergency; and provision of insurance information.
Risk Research and Analysis	Undertake or review research to inform planning for immediate and long-term risks and their management that threaten to impact the WA community, economy and environment to inform strategic decision-making. Includes analysis of risks associated with specific hazards, systemic disaster risks, and credible future conditions (including climate change), encompassing all components of risk (i.e., hazards, exposure, and vulnerabilities, including physical and social dimensions).
Hazard Detection and Monitoring	Detect and monitor threats within and beyond WA to inform pre-emptive action. Examples include public hotlines, remote sensing, and modelling and forecasting.
Training and Exercising	Provide appropriate training for personnel with emergency management roles and responsibilities. Includes the exercising of pre-established systems, plans and arrangements to ensure their functionality, as well as the skills and capability of relevant personnel.

## 4. Core Capabilities

### 4.3 Response

The combating of the effects of an emergency, provision of emergency assistance for casualties, reduction of further damage, and help to speed recovery.

CORE CAPABILITY	DESCRIPTION
Command, Control and Coordination	Establish and maintain command, control and coordination structures and required resources that appropriately integrate emergency responders and critical stakeholders and support the execution of core capabilities, including operational communications.
Situational Awareness and Intelligence	Develop a shared understanding of present and forecasted emergency conditions through the collection and analysis of multiple data sources and the communication of their meaning. Includes data collection from various sources, application of analytical methods, and generation of intelligence products that support informed decision-making.
Evacuation and Relief Assistance	Coordinate the evacuation of displaced or higher risk people to appropriate evacuation centres. Includes community liaison and provision of incident-specific information to impacted community members, the provision of essential services that meet physical, psychosocial and cultural needs of affected people, financial hardship assistance, and the reunification of family separated by an emergency. Provisions to support the evacuation of animals are also considered.
Public Order and Community Safety	Undertake activities that provide for the safety and security of affected persons and first responders. Includes restricting access to affected locations, managing traffic flow, provision of security personnel and/or services.
Mass Care	Provision of pre-hospital and hospital services for the effective management of a high volume of casualties resulting from an emergency. Includes the triage, treatment and distribution of patients across the health system, and the provision of various services including health, psychological, aged, pharmaceutical and disability care.
Mass Fatality Management	Provision of fatality services, including search, recovery, victim identification, and repatriation. Also includes the timely notification of family or relevant others (including the return of personal effects), bereavement support, and sharing of fatality data to relevant emergency management agencies.

## 4.4 Recovery

**The support of emergency-affected communities in the reconstruction and restoration of physical infrastructure, the environment and community, and psycho-social and economic wellbeing.**

CORE CAPABILITY	DESCRIPTION
Recovery Coordination	<p>Develop and coordinate activities that build systems and structures to prepare agencies and communities for future disaster recovery events.</p> <p>Coordinate activities across the sector that assist communities to re-establish a sustainable and resilient level of functioning after an emergency over the short, medium, and long-term. Recovery coordination is underpinned by the principles of community-led recovery and disaster risk reduction. Includes assessing community needs; community and stakeholder engagement; coordination of services, resources, and works; management of spontaneous volunteers and donations.</p>
Recovery Program Management	<p>Manage a program of works to assist the restoration of the social, economic, environmental and built environments after an emergency. Includes the development, delivery, evaluation, and adaptation of interconnected projects in consultation with affected communities and relevant stakeholders.</p>
Social Recovery	<p>Respond to the needs of the community through the provision of services that enable individuals, families and communities to re-establish a sustainable and resilient level of functioning after an emergency event. This includes services that promote or provide safety, security, shelter, health, and psychosocial wellbeing, as well as the re-establishment of those elements of society necessary for wellbeing.</p>
Economic Recovery	<p>Support the return of economic and business activities (including food and agriculture) that restore individual livelihoods and the economic sustainability of impacted communities.</p>
Environmental Recovery	<p>Undertake works that return the natural environment (e.g., water, air, land, soil, plants, and animals) to an acceptable condition and that restore environmental values.</p>
Built Recovery	<p>Undertake works that restore and stabilise parts of the built environment affected by an emergency. Includes the reconstruction or repair of residential and rural properties, maintaining activities in non-affected areas, works that enable effective response and recovery efforts (including waste management), and restoring services to affected areas.</p>

## 4. Core Capabilities

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### 4.5 Cross-cutting

These core capabilities sit across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

CORE CAPABILITY	DESCRIPTION
Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure Resilience	Ensure the provision and/or restoration of essential services and critical infrastructure before, during and after an emergency. Includes compliance with relevant regulatory frameworks; planning, risk assessment, and implementation of controls; monitoring and response functions; information sharing and communication; investment and other activities that contribute to sector resilience; restoration of impacted services.
Learning and Assurance	Support continuous improvement through the collection, analysis, application and review of learning experiences from events (including response and recovery), exercises, programs and reviews. Includes application of lessons management and assurance functions to support institutional and sector-wide learning.
Public Information and Warnings	Provide timely, targeted, and tailored information and warnings that enable individuals, communities and businesses to make informed decisions, take protective action, and reduce the potential impacts and consequences of an emergency before, during and after an event.

# 5. Towards a Better Prepared, More Resilient and Safer State

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Western Australians have long worked together to meet the challenges of the times. However, as emergency management challenges continue to grow in scale and complexity, we must continue to improve how we work together to deliver a better prepared, more resilient and safer State.

The common application of this framework across the sector will provide a shared language for understanding, assessing and developing our capabilities, and better enable us to leverage our collective strengths to keep Western Australians safe.

Being prepared to manage emergencies is an ever-evolving task. Meeting the challenges of today does not necessarily mean we are prepared to meet the challenges of a hotter, more interconnected, and increasingly extreme future. Understanding our capabilities and their limitations, as well as what we can achieve when we work together, is a crucial first step for preparing for an uncertain future.



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