

SEMC COMMUNIQUE



December 2023

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) met on 6 December 2023.

The SEMC Chair, Emma Cole, welcomed members and observers to the meeting, including the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, the previous SEMC Chair Dr Ron Edwards and the newly appointed SEMC Deputy Chair, and Mayor of the City of Mandurah, Rhys Williams.

The Minister congratulated Emma Cole and Rhys Williams on their respective appointments as the SEMC Chair and Deputy Chair. The Minister acknowledged Dr Ron Edwards' years of service and expressed his gratitude for the significant role Dr Edwards played as the SEMC Chair, especially in facing the various challenges of the last few years dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and a range of floods and bushfires.

Nick Sloan also acknowledged Dr Edwards' years of service and support to the local government sector on behalf of the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) membership. Dr Edwards thanked the Minister, SEMC members and Nick Sloan for their acknowledgements and wished the new Chair and Deputy Chair well for the future.

The Minister thanked everyone for their work this year, in particular the recovery following the Fitzroy Crossing flood. The Minister acknowledged the work of local government and praised the collaborative work in recovery.

Presentations

High Threat Season Weather Briefing

Todd Smith from the Bureau of Meteorology delivered a presentation on the 2023-2024 High Risk Weather Season outlook. Mr Smith explained that the Bureau works with the Emergency Management (EM) sector by providing the weather intelligence to help make decisions in the preparedness and prevention phase, through to response and recovery. The outlook for 2024 is that the current El Nino pattern will be present during the first quarter 2024 and is likely to cause the weather across Western Australia (WA) to be drier and warmer than average. This will likely result in unusually high summer temperatures which will increase the heatwave and bushfire risk while potentially reducing cyclone activity in the north of WA.

Discussion Items and Outcomes

District Emergency Management Committee and Local Emergency Management Committee Review

In May 2022, the SEMC approved a review into the District Emergency Management Committees and Local Emergency Management Committees (DEMC/LEMC). The objectives of the review were to establish clear roles, responsibilities, functions, and governance for DEMCs and LEMCs in achieving the strategic objectives of the SEMC, to identify improvement opportunities to the governance arrangements and capabilities to increase effective and efficient EM outcomes, and to create a shared understanding of the respective roles and connectedness of the SEMC, DEMCs and LEMCs within the EM sector. Further, it was noted that there is significant synergy between this project and the Local Emergency Management Arrangements Improvement Program, thus a co-implementation model was recommended.

The SEMC noted the DEMC/LEMC Review final report and approved the SEMC Business Unit to conduct targeted consultation with the EM sector on the reports key findings and to report back to the SEMC in May 2024.

Local Emergency Management Arrangements Improvement Program

In early 2023, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and WALGA developed a draft LEMA Improvement Plan through a co-design process that was informed by sector consultation outcomes. This draft plan was validated through further sector testing, with relevant feedback incorporated into the final improvement plan and the implementation approach.

At the SEMC meeting held on 2 August 2023, the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Improvement Plan and implementation approach was endorsed, and a commitment was made to present a LEMA Improvement Program Management Plan.

Implementation of proposed changes to the LEMA process will contribute to meeting the SEMC's strategic objective of a capable sector and capable community, as noted in the SEMC Strategic Plan 2022-25. The SEMC noted the synergies with the LEMA Review and is supportive of a co-implementation approach.

A sector-led approach towards local EM reform is a key underpinning principle of the LEMA Improvement Program implementation. The SEMC endorsed the LEMA Improvement Program Management Plan and allocated funding to deliver Phase 1 and 1B of the LEMA Improvement Program.

State Recovery Arrangements

Recovery is the support of emergency affected communities in the reconstruction and restoration of physical infrastructure, the environment and community, psychosocial and economic wellbeing. Recovery also provides an opportunity to help communities 'build back better' and become more resilient to future disasters.

In WA, the *Emergency Management Act (WA) 2005* legislates that it is a function of local government to manage recovery following an emergency. Where recovery needs are complex and/or the capacity of local government is limited, the State EM Plan and State EM Policy establish a framework for the State Government to provide coordination support, funding and/or resources.

The SEMC has previously noted the need for a comprehensive review of recovery arrangements within the broader State EM Framework to provide more scalability, flexibility and clarity for the coordination of State activities in complex recoveries, building on learning from major recoveries following the COVID-19 pandemic, Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja, Wooroloo Bushfire and the Kimberley Flood. DFES has commenced a staged review and anticipates initial recommendations will be presented to the SEMC for formal endorsement in 2024/25. DFES has established a Strategy and Policy team within the Resilience and Recovery Portfolio with carriage of the review of the recovery framework.

The SEMC noted that DFES is leading a review of the recovery governance and coordination arrangements in the State EM Framework, including consideration of the roles and responsibilities of agencies in recovery. The SEMC also endorsed pre-formed roles for leadership and membership of Recovery Domains and the State Recovery Coordination Group, and the inclusion of a Director General Recovery Steering Committee to provide strategic level coordination.

State Hazard Plan – Cyber Security

At the meeting held on 5 December 2022, the SEMC endorsed cyber security being incorporated as a hazard in the State's EM arrangements, and the Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) as the preferred Hazard Management Agency (HMA) for cyber security emergencies. The proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Minister for Emergency Services. DPC, as the preferred HMA, and in consultation with stakeholders commenced preparing a draft State Hazard Plan for Cyber Security for approval by the SEMC. The draft Plan provides an overview of arrangements for the management of cyber security emergencies in WA and contains information on prevention, preparedness, response and initial recovery.

The SEMC noted the draft State Hazard Plan - Cyber Security and noted DPC is preparing a legislative proposal, which will consider (but not be limited to) amendments to the *Emergency Management Regulations 2006* to prescribe Cyber Security as a hazard, and the Director General of DPC as the HMA for that hazard.

State Hazard Plan – Severe Weather

On 7 May 2021, the SEMC approved that the draft State Hazard Plan – Severe Weather be adopted as an interim plan (the Interim Plan). The Interim Plan is an amalgamation of Westplans - Cyclone, Flood and Storm, in accordance with the process to amalgamate similar Westplans and to convert all Westplans into State Hazard Plans. Full consultation of the updated draft was undertaken following the review. DFES completed a detailed review of the Interim Plan and subsequent sector-wide engagement prior to finalising the document. The SEMC approved the State Hazard Plan – Severe Weather and noted the communication and marketing strategy for State Hazard Plan – Severe Weather.

Guideline – All-Hazards Restricted Access Permit System

The SEMC has approved a new All-Hazards Restricted Access Permit System (RAPS) Guideline. The Guideline was developed by an EM sector working group, that included representation from HMAs, Controlling Agencies, local government, WALGA, and St John Ambulance. The Guideline provides a detailed insight into the All-Hazards RAPS, and is intended for use by emergency services, hazard management, controlling, combat and support agencies, local government and private contractors who may be tasked to restrict access during an emergency.

General Updates

WA Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan Discussion Paper (Climate Change)

The WA Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) Discussion Paper went out for consultation with emergency management stakeholders on 13 December 2023. The EM-SAP Discussion Paper supports the development of the EM-SAP, which is one of seven Sector Adaptation Plans required by the Climate Change Bill 2023.

Consultation on the EM-SAP Discussion Paper will close on 29 March 2024. The EM-SAP Discussion Paper consultation is available on the Engage WA [website](#).

State Hazard Plan – Crash and State Hazard Plan – Energy Supply Disruption

Consultations on the draft State Hazard Plan – Crash and the draft State Hazard Plan – Energy Supply Disruption recently closed. Endorsement of the draft plans will be sought from the SEMC

Response Policy Subcommittee in January 2024. If endorsed, the draft plans will be submitted to the SEMC for approval at their March 2024 meeting.

Disaster Ready Fund – Round Two Is Now Open!

The Australian Government has established the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) which will deliver up to \$200 million in funding per financial year for disaster risk reduction and resilience initiatives. The total Australian Government funding is up to \$1 billion over five years from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2028, with funding to be matched by the applicants.

DRF Round Two opened for applications at 9.00am on Monday, 22 January 2024.

The Australian Government has released the DRF Round Two Guidelines. Additional resources are also available on the [NEMA.gov.au website](https://www.nema.gov.au).

If you would like a share of \$200 million of emergency management grant funding for a project that will build resilience in the Western Australian community and prepare for future natural hazard impacts, fill out the [online application](#).

Next Meeting of the SEMC

The next meeting of SEMC will be held on Wednesday, 6 March 2024.

Contact Us

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