

SEMC COMMUNIQUE



March 2024

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) met on 6 March 2024.

The SEMC Chair, Emma Cole, welcomed members and observers to the meeting, including Melissa Pexton the newly appointed SEMC Executive Officer. The Chair acknowledged Rick Curtis for his service and expressed gratitude for the significant role Rick Curtis played as the SEMC Executive Officer, especially his ongoing contribution to improve governance, external communication and the Subcommittee Review.

Presentations

Systemic Risk: Emergency Preparedness Report and Climate Change Update

Dr Neville Ellis, Manager of the Emergency Management Climate Change Program, at the Department of Fire and Emergency Services provided an overview of the [2023 Emergency Preparedness Report \(EPR\)](#) and the [Emergency Management \(EM\) Sector Adaptation Plan \(EM-SAP\) Discussion Paper](#). The 2023 EPR reviews trends in emergency management and the adoption of systemic risk, while the EM-SAP Discussion Paper examines climate change as a driver of systemic risk and proposes adaptation actions for the emergency management sector.

The 2023 EPR concludes that over the last decade the WA EM sector has been shifting towards a more systemic risk management approach through efforts to improve connectivity between EM organisations, to expand participation in the EM sector and to improve understanding of hazard specific risks. However, the EPR also concluded that much of this action remains uncoordinated and that there may be opportunity to align these efforts under a common conceptual framework or a strategic direction.

The EM-SAP examines the current and future challenges of adapting to climate change. A Discussion Paper was released in December 2023 for broad consultation and will close on 29 March 2024. Climate change is challenging the way risk is being addressed. It is conceptualised as a systemic risk in so far as it affects all of society and changing the overall risk profile of WA. The Discussion Paper proposes a number of sector-specific adaptation options, a reporting structure for adaptation, and is seeking organisations to self-nominate as either lead or support agencies to drive action.

Taken together, the EPR and EM-SAP provide insight into systemic risks for WA, as well as some of the key implications and challenges for the EM sector.

Risk and Capability Subcommittee Update

Chair of the Risk Capability Subcommittee, Superintendent Antony Sadler, provided an update on the activities of the Subcommittee. Following the SEMC Subcommittee review, the FES Commissioner was appointed Sponsor and new Chair and members appointed. The Lessons Management and Exercising Working Group and Essential Service Network Operators Reference Group were placed under the direction of the Subcommittee.

The Risk and Capability Subcommittee work to reduce the risk and impact of emergencies in WA by supporting the State with an effective emergency risk management framework and practice. The Subcommittee also leads the assessment and development of emergency management capability, responsive to risk.

Discussion Items and Outcomes

State Hazard Plan – Crash Emergency

The State Hazard Plan (SHP) – Crash Emergency provides an overview of arrangements for the management of crash emergencies in WA. The Hazard Management Agencies for crash emergencies are Commissioner of Police, Arc Infrastructure Pty Ltd and Public Transport Authority. The consultation period highlighted stakeholder support for proposed changes including clarity regarding funding arrangements for traffic management during an emergency response and updated roles and responsibilities what are now provided across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The SEMC approved the SHP – Crash Emergency.

State Hazard Plan – Energy Supply Disruption

In accordance with the State EM Policy, each SHP is required to be reviewed every five years. Between 16 and 17 January 2023, the State experienced several severe thunderstorm cells that caused significant and extended electricity supply disruptions for up to 34,000 customers across the Metropolitan, Wheatbelt and Goldfields EM Districts. These power outages also caused disruption to community communications, fuel and water supplies. Due to the need for the continuous improvement, the SEMC approved an extension for the submission of the comprehensive review of the SHP – Energy Supply Disruption to August 2024 to consider lessons learnt from the power disruptions.

Incorporation of the Western Australian Government Pandemic Plan into the State Emergency Management (EM) Framework

In 2022, the WA Government commissioned an independent Review of WA's COVID-19 Management and Response (the Review) to inform future pandemic management and ensure government arrangements are fit-for-purpose. In October 2023, the SEMC noted the Review specifically:

- Recommendation 3: The WA Government Pandemic Plan (WAGPP) should be reviewed by the SEMC at least every five years, including through cross-agency scenario testing.
- Recommendation 4: Each Department should have an agency-specific pandemic plan, developed to sit underneath the WA Government Pandemic Plan, overseen by the SEMC and with guidance from the Department of Health.

The SEMC discussed the proposal to incorporate the Western Australian Government Pandemic Plan (WAGPP) into the State EM Framework and approved a proposal to incorporate relevant parts of the WAGPP into the State EM Policy and State EM Plan and incorporate relevant parts of the WAGPP into the State Hazard Plan for Human Epidemic.

State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity

The SHP – Human Biosecurity provides an overview of arrangements for two hazards:

- The management of human epidemic; and
- The actual or impending release of a biological substance that is capable of causing loss of life, injury to a person or damage to the health of a person, property or the environment.

Collectively, these two hazards are referred to as Human Biosecurity. The SHP – Human Biosecurity was an amalgamation of the previous Westplan – Human Epidemic and the biological component of Westplan – Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear. The Department of Health, in collaboration with the DFES State EM Policy Branch is progressing the periodical

comprehensive review of the SHP – Human Biosecurity. An extension was sought for the comprehensive review of the SHP – Human Biosecurity to ensure that any implications resulting from the implementation of Recommendations 3 and 4 from the Review of WA’s COVID-19 Management and Response are considered in the comprehensive review of the SHP. The SEMC approved an extension for the comprehensive review of the SHP – Human Biosecurity to December 2024.

[Commonwealth Emergency Management](#)

The Australian Government established the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to address increased challenges being faced by all jurisdictions and to strategically consider the future needs of the emergency management system, at the National level. NEMA was established as an outcome of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (RCNNDA). NEMA combines the functions from the National Recovery and Resilience Agency and Emergency Management Australia, to create a single, enduring, end-to-end agency to better respond to emergencies, help communities recover, and prepare Australia for future disasters.

SEMC was advised that there are two forums established to facilitate national collaboration on consistent and enduring strategic issues in emergency management and disaster resilience. These are the National Emergency Management Ministers meeting and the Australian New Zealand Emergency Management Committee. There are two concurrent, independent reviews initiated by the Australian Government, they are the Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements and the Disaster funding Review (Colvin Review).

DFES will keep the SEMC briefed on Commonwealth EM matters, including the relevant reviews.

[SEMC Strategic Planning](#)

With many initiatives complete or nearing completion, and with the expiry of the current Strategic Plan in 2025, it is proposed that the SEMC review its strategic direction in anticipation of the development of a new Strategic Plan. The May SEMC meeting will be a Strategic Planning workshop.

[General Updates](#)

[Disaster Ready Fund](#)

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 Monday, 22 January 2024 and closed on 20 March 2024. DFES is finalising the Western Australian submission to the Commonwealth for consideration.

[2024 Resilient Australia Awards – Call for Nominations](#)

Nominations are now open for the [2024 Resilient Australia Awards](#), a program that celebrates and promotes outstanding initiatives that foster community resilience to disasters and emergencies across the nation. These awards recognise exceptional contributions in seven categories, showcasing the efforts to enhance our collective preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities. This is an excellent opportunity to highlight the incredible work being done across our

organisation and Western Australia. Projects or initiatives must have commenced after 1 January 2022 or demonstrate significant outcomes or enhancements since that date. Nominations close on 31 May 2024. For further details and to submit nominations, please visit the [Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience website](#).

Next Meeting of the SEMC

The next meeting of SEMC will be held on Wednesday, 8 May 2024.

Contact Us

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