



# Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Review

Discussion Paper  
June 2022



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# Acknowledgements

The project acknowledges the funding contributions of the Commonwealth Government's Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP) and State Government funding through All West Australians Reducing Emergencies (AWARE), and in-kind contributions from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).

This project is delivered in partnership with the WA Local Government Association (WALGA).

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May 2022

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

This discussion paper was prepared on the lands of the Beeliiar Noongar people.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the State Emergency Management Committee recognise the traditional custodianship of the Noongar people, and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations across the State. We acknowledge their rich culture and ongoing relationship with the land and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

## Disclaimer

This discussion paper has been prepared by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) on behalf of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) for consultation purposes only.

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# Purpose

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to invite thought and consideration of the current issues with LEMA and potential opportunities to improve the process. It is not intended for public distribution but will be provided to key stakeholders to facilitate the consultation process.

The LEMA review is a significant opportunity to reshape the current Local Emergency Management Arrangements and improve processes, so they better fit with the changing landscape of emergency management, as well as ensure they are fit-for-purpose, contemporary, scalable, and sustainable.

It is acknowledged that emergency management is complex, with many layers, roles, and responsibilities. The principle of 'don't do more: do differently' means during this review, priority will be given to exploring ways to do things differently, more simply and to leverage existing processes, rather than adding more layers and complexity.

The LEMA review will see WALGA and the SEMC Business Unit work together with key stakeholders to identify issues with LEMA, and to investigate and develop options for streamlining the LEMA process. Consultation will be shaped so that it helps with the design of new approaches, rather than only identifying the problems.

## LEMA Review

During this review, every suggestion is welcome, and all options are on the table – this could include adapting the current LEMA model through to legislative reform of the EM Act.

### Outcome of the LEMA Review

At the completion of the LEMA review, a LEMA Improvement Plan –including an implementation plan – will be developed. The Improvement Plan will identify opportunities to:

1. Support local governments and communities to develop fit-for-purpose, contemporary, scalable, and sustainable LEMA.
2. Improve community and stakeholder knowledge of, and engagement with, LEMA with an aim to enhancing community preparedness and resilience.
3. Streamline process for documentation, approval, and updates to reduce costs and time and encourage currency.
4. Improve the effectiveness of the LEMA as a communication tool.
5. Identify options for increasing participation in LEMA in communities that are not currently engaged in planning for emergencies.

The Implementation Plan will outline the processes and resources necessary to make the proposed changes, such as legislative change, policy change, or development of new reporting processes.

## LEMA review activities

The LEMA review will consist of the following key activities:

1. Undertake consultation and engagement with relevant state government agencies including Hazard Management Agencies (HMA) and local governments to obtain feedback to inform the LEMA review.
2. Prepare a draft consultation and recommendations report.
3. Consider the design of pilot projects or exercises to test new LEMA approaches with local governments.
4. Develop a LEMA Improvement Plan that includes an implementation plan.

# Background

Local government is for all Western Australians and works for the benefit of local communities. It is known that good connections between local governments and community organisations results in a better response in an emergency.

Local governments assist state government agencies by providing advice and resources to manage emergencies and undertake their responsibilities during an emergency in close cooperation with, or directly supported by, state government departments and other agencies.

The community looks to state and local governments to keep them well-informed before, during and after an emergency.

This specialised knowledge and experience of local and state governments will be invaluable for the LEMA review, as emergency management in WA is a coordinated operation. Multiple organisations and all levels of government work together to maintain community safety and increase resilience against emergencies and disasters.

A finding from the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee inquiry into Emergency Services Legislation in Western Australia in 2002<sup>1</sup> found that without the active and willing involvement of local authorities, Western Australia is unlikely to have a world class emergency management system.

The key features of world's best practice in emergency management are:

- a relevant and responsive emergency management organisation
- competent and detailed planning at all levels of government
- interdepartmental/ interagency cooperation
- civic leadership
- a capable and current legislative and regulatory framework.

In WA, the Emergency Management Framework is a suite of legislation, policy, plans, procedures, guidelines, and a governance structure to facilitate effective management of emergencies. This framework aligns to and complements international, national, and state frameworks and policies including the Sendai Framework<sup>2</sup>, National Strategy for Disaster Resilience<sup>3</sup> and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework<sup>4</sup>.

## WA Emergency Management Framework<sup>5</sup>

The arrangements for Emergency Management are defined in the *Emergency Management Act 2005* (the EM Act) and the *Emergency Management Regulations 2006* (the EM Regulations).

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) was established under the EM Act with responsibilities to advise the Minister on emergency management arrangements and preparedness, engage and coordinate across all sectors to minimise the effects of emergencies and manage communications, develop, and coordinate risk management and prepare Emergency Management Policies and Plans. The SEMC works across all hazards defined in the EM Act and prescribed in the EM Regulations.

The SEMC has oversight of the Emergency Management Policy (EM Policy), Plan, Procedures and Guidelines:

- [State EM Policy](#) – provides a strategic framework for emergency management in the State and identifies roles and responsibilities of emergency management agencies and other public authorities
- [State EM Plan](#) – documents the agreed Western Australian EM arrangements to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from hazards

<sup>1</sup> [Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, Emergency Services Legislation in Western Australia, Report No. 2 2002](#)

<sup>2</sup> [What is the Sendai Framework? | UNDRR](#)

<sup>3</sup> [National Strategy for Disaster Resilience | Knowledge Hub \(aidr.org.au\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [National Disaster Risk Reduction \(homeaffairs.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Emergency Management \(semc.wa.gov.au\)](#)

- [State EM Procedure](#) – supports the effective implementation of the State EM Policy
- [State EM Guidelines](#) – informal instructions designed to provide detailed assistance to EMAs in undertaking their role by proposing specific methods for conducting activities.

These documents outline the roles of emergency management districts and District Emergency Management Committees (DEMC) and local arrangements, including Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMC) and LEMA.

## LEMA

Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) are the collection of all emergency management strategies, plans, agreements, and other documentation applicable to the local government district. In an emergency any of this information can be utilised depending on the circumstances.

In late 2019 SEMC approved a sector-led review of LEMA requirements and responsibilities.

This review was driven by reports from across the local government sector that highlighted current LEMA inclusions, processes for development and effectiveness are overdue for review to determine whether they are fit-for-purpose.

There is a need to consider other approaches that may better build, support, and communicate emergency management capability.

# Current Local Emergency Management Arrangements

Local governments are significantly involved in emergency management via State policy and legislation. This involvement allows for a greater degree of local ownership and provides access to local knowledge.

As outlined in section 36 of the EM Act, local governments are required to prepare and maintain LEMA. LEMA are the collection of all emergency management strategies, plans, agreements, and other documentation that detail prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery for a local government district. It outlines the emergencies that are likely to occur, defines roles and responsibilities, resources, and facilities within the community, as well as recovery arrangements.

Local governments must ensure that LEMA are consistent with the EM Policy and Plan, State Hazard Plans and State Support Plans and once endorsed by their Council deliver a copy of LEMA, and any amendments, to the SEMC as soon as is practicable after they are prepared. State Emergency Management Procedure 3.8 outlines the process for developing and reviewing LEMA.

Further, they must ensure LEMA are reviewed and tested in accordance with SEMC procedures and keep a copy of LEMA at the local government offices, making them available for inspection, free of charge, by members of the public during office hours.

## Issues with LEMA

Some issues that local governments have reported about LEMA to date include:

- Due to size, maturity, competing priorities and resources, some local governments struggle to complete LEMA.
- The planning that goes into creating the LEMA is often of more value than the final document.
- Preparation is onerous.
- Often the most useful parts of the LEMA are the contact lists and asset registers.
- Needs to focus more on the local government community, resources, and contacts, rather than a template completion exercise.
- A requirement for LEMA to be publicly available often results in an information issue, as the public version can end up being heavily redacted.
- Current process has become more about compliance with legislation, rather than increasing community resilience.
- LEMA needs to build local level capacity to respond in a way that best suits the community (rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach).
- Work is often duplicated within local government.
- Current reporting is based on compliance and does not capture shared resourcing arrangements between local governments.

## Key stakeholders and consultation

A project steering group has been established to act in an advisory capacity, provide expert input and review documentation. The steering group includes representatives from DFES, WALGA and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

It is anticipated the steering group will meet at key points in the review.

During the consultation phase of the review, meetings will be held with key stakeholders from state government emergency management agencies<sup>6</sup>, a representative range of local governments of various sizes, locations, maturity and resources, District Emergency Management Advisors (DEMAs), and other individuals involved in the LEMA process.

### Consultation – what we need from you

The primary purpose of engagement during the LEMA review is to first understand the current situation thoroughly – to hear experiences, issues and ideas and receive feedback from local governments and other key stakeholders – and then co-design in collaboration, so initiatives are developed in response to the identified issues.

The following dot points are intended to provide options for consideration and prompt discussions.

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<sup>6</sup> Emergency management agencies incorporate HMAs, combat agencies and support organisations.

## Options for consideration

### Process considerations

- What information should a LEMA contain so it is useful?
  - How do we introduce synergies and efficiencies into the LEMA process?
  - Is there an opportunity to leverage the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) process for LEMA planning and/or reporting?
  - How do we capture best practice to inform better policy and practice alignment, so the process is not just compliance and 'box ticking'?
  - How do we introduce assurance and continuous improvement (lessons learned) into LEMA? Further, is there a way to introduce incentives for local governments who are compliant with LEMA and show evidence of incorporating lessons learned into LEMA?
- What are local government annual timeframes, and how does this fit in with LEMA?
  - What other reports do local governments currently prepare for the State – is there duplication?
  - Could LEMA be leveraged from existing data, procedures, and reporting?
  - Could the LEMC Annual Report be used as a reporting mechanism for new/updated/reviewed LEMA throughout the year?
  - Could the LEMC Annual Report include a section on assurance and lessons management?

### Emergency management considerations

- Are LEMA used in an emergency?
- What are the current identified gaps in an emergency?
- How can emergency information and work undertaken by local governments be given more prominence on their websites?
- How do we ensure LEMA is widely shared so the community and EM agencies knows what to expect and how to act in an emergency?
- Would it be useful for emergency management agencies to access the LEMA via a secure central website?

### Reporting considerations

- A 'complete LEMA' may not be a completed template; it could be the completion of all requirements but undertaken through different purposes. Consider how this can be reported to the SEMC.

### Other considerations

- Is legislative change necessary? If so, what needs to change?
- How do we make sure that everyone in the community can access the information from LEMA, regardless of language, ability or location while acknowledging data privacy and sensitivity? For example, could an accessible or simple English version of the LEMA be developed as part of a local government's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)?
- LEMA recognises the principles of community-leadership and that response should be driven from as close to the community as possible. Local involvement has been complicated over time by regulations, technology, and resourcing arrangements, so how do we link and develop the LEMA and networks to enable local leadership?
- LEMA devolves many responsibilities for local governments for planning, response, and recovery, but as many local governments are small, they have limited capacity to cope with the consequences of a major disaster and recovery needs. How can we address these capability gaps through current district and state arrangements?

With these points in mind, can we normalise emergency management by integration into local government business as usual, and aligning with to day-to-day operations? Streamlining existing planning and reporting requirements could reduce duplication and the potential of non-compliance of LEMA.

## Project delivery

The LEMA review project consists of the following phases:

### Stakeholder management April - May 2022

- Establish a steering group of key stakeholders and hold first meeting

### Discussion paper April - June 2022

- Undertake research, preliminary engagement and desktop scanning to develop a discussion paper that will guide the consultation phase

### Consultation July - September 2022

- Engagement with identified state and local governments for feedback on LEMA

### Review and reporting November 2022

- Draft consultation and recommendations report

### Design December 2022 to February 2023

- Design pilot project or exercises to test new LEMA approaches with local governments

### Next steps June 2023

- Approval of LEMA Improvement Plan and Implementation Plan



## Related projects

As noted under options for consideration, attention should be given to how other local government processes, reporting and legislative requirements can be streamlined into the LEMA. The benefits of doing this will allow local governments to reduce the time spent on preparing reports, documents, and data to fulfil their obligations and requirements and decrease duplication.

### State Risk Project – Local

In 2013 the SEMC initiated the State Risk Project, which was designed to build a comprehensive and consistent understanding of the risks faced at state, district, and local levels.

The local level phase of the project commenced in 2017, with local government participation and support for the project being very strong.

The local level component of the State Risk Project (SRP) aims to:

- Help local governments to understand their risk.
- Assist local governments to complete the emergency risk management (ERM) process as required by existing policy.
- Allow the State to gain a comprehensive understanding of current risks at the local level.
- Provide information to enable future mitigation at all levels which will reduce the future cost of disasters.

Local governments that have completed a compliant ERM process can use their risk registers as supporting documents when applying for mitigation funding.

Methodology and tools to assist local governments in mitigating assessed risk are currently under development.

The local level phase of the State Risk Project is anticipated to be completed at the end of 2022.

### Annual and Preparedness Report Capability Survey

Each year, the DFES State Capability Team conducts the Annual and Preparedness Capability Report Survey on the behalf of the SEMC.

The survey is sent to 170 organisations that comprise the Western Australian emergency management sector, including all local governments.

The survey assesses capability in line with the SEMC's Capability Framework. This includes assessing 23 capability topics relevant to local governments, including recovery, evacuations, impact assessment, among others

Information collected through the survey provides local governments insight into their emergency management capabilities, such as strengths and areas in need of improvement, year-on-year comparisons, and how they are tracking compared with other local governments of a similar size and population.

Data from the survey also informs the annual Emergency Preparedness Report, which is provided to the Minister for Emergency Services, as well as various other products, including individual local government capability summary reports.

## Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework<sup>7</sup>

Integrated planning and reporting gives local governments a framework for establishing local priorities and to link this information to operational functions.

Three key stakeholders are involved in the development of an integrated plan: the Council, the community and the local government administration led by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Council, community, and administration each has a unique role and responsibilities for the development of effective and sustainable integrated plans for the local area and reporting on the progress of those plans.

A successful integrated planning and reporting process will deliver a:

- Strategic Community Plan that clearly links the community's aspirations with the Council's vision and long term strategy
- Corporate Business Plan that integrates resourcing plans and specific council plans with the Strategic Community Plan
- clearly stated vision for the future viability of the local government area.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines provide a process that aims to:

- ensure community input is explicitly and reliably generated
- provide the capacity for location-specific planning where appropriate
- update long term objectives with these inputs
- identify the resourcing required to deliver long-term objectives
- clearly convey long term financial implications and strategies.

The framework:

- recognises that planning for a local government is holistic in nature and driven by the community
- builds organisational and resource capability to meet community need
- optimises success by understanding the integration and interdependencies between the components
- emphasises performance monitoring so that local governments can adapt and respond to changes in community needs and the business environment.

### Legislative requirements

All local governments are required to produce a plan for the future under section 5.56 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

The *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* provide a brief outline of the minimum requirements to meet this obligation, which includes the development of a Strategic Community Plan and a Corporate Business Plan.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/strengthening-local-government/integrated-planning-and-reporting>

# Comprehensive Review of State Emergency Management Arrangements Roles and Responsibilities

Emergency Management in Western Australia relies on a broad network of emergency management stakeholders to carry out the roles and responsibilities assigned within the *Emergency Management Act 2005* and *Emergency Management Regulations 2006*.

The roles and responsibilities of these agencies and organisations are referenced across the supporting suite of emergency management documents, including:

- State Emergency Management Policy
- State Emergency Management Plan
- State Hazard Plans
- State Support Plans.

The State Emergency Management Policy Branch has initiated a review to confirm if these roles and responsibilities are accurately reflected across the suite of emergency management documents. The review also aims to assist stakeholders to identify their roles and responsibilities as they are currently spread across various documents.

Consultation to support the review will be undertaken in two phases (commencing in 2022), including:

**Phase 1:** consultation with officers, agencies or entities with roles and responsibilities currently identified in the State Emergency Management Framework. Other stakeholders may be contacted if their roles and responsibilities cross multiple hazard or support functions. Agencies will be invited to review their current roles and responsibilities and where required, submit their amendments.

The State Emergency Management Policy Branch will then consolidate any proposed amendments to the suite of emergency management documents that arise from Phase 1 of the consultation.

**Phase 2:** broad consultation with the emergency management sector on the proposed amendments to the suite of emergency management documents.

The findings of the LEMA review will be used to inform this project. It is noted that further consultation with local governments may be required as part of the roles and responsibilities review.

## Relevant legislation

[Local Government Act 1995](#)

[Emergency Management Act 2005](#)

[Bushfires Act 1954](#)

[Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998](#)

[Public Health Act 2016](#)

[Planning and Development Act 2005](#)

[Environmental Protection Act 1986](#)

[Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2007](#)



SEMC supported by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services