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State Emergency Management Framework

Overview of proposed revised recovery arrangements

This summary provides an overview of the proposed revisions of recovery arrangements in the recovery chapters of the State Emergency Management (State EM) Policy, Plan and Procedure.

Topic	Description
State Strategic Recovery Priorities  Reference: Policy section 6.1.9	The amendments introduce four State Strategic Recovery Priorities in the State EM Policy, to replace the recovery objectives in State EM Plan s6.1. The Priorities contemporise the former recovery objectives and incorporate the principle of 'build back better'. The Priorities provide guidance to government about what is important when making decisions about the planning and delivery of recovery operations in WA. The approach of using Strategic Priorities is consistent with the approach adopted in the State EM Policy for Response operations (Chapter 5) which provides for State Strategic Control Priorities. The Priorities have been informed by the National Principles for Disaster Recovery outlined in the Australian Disaster Recovery Framework (October 2022).
Model for State Involvement in Recovery  Reference: - Policy sections 6.1.4, 6.4 & Appendix E - Plan section 6.2.2	The new model introduces a four-tiered framework to guide State involvement in recovery. As the complexity of recovery increases the level of State involvement will escalate. To avoid confusion with the Response Operations categorisation of incidents (Level 1-3), the Recovery Levels are referred to as R1-R4.

Topic	Description
	The model is supported by the Recovery Level Assessment Support Tool (see below) which together, replace the Escalation Factors for Recovery in Appendix G of the current State EM Plan. The State Recovery Coordinator will use the model and tool when assessing recovery complexity and providing advice to the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner on the level of State involvement required for a recovery. The model was successfully trialled in recent recoveries following the Mariginiup Bushfire 2024 and Bunbury Storms 2024 and is similar in principle to approaches used in Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales.
Recovery Level Assessment Support Tool  Reference: • Plan section 6.2.2 • Procedure section 5.6	The Recovery Level Assessment Support Tool has been developed to support the Model for State Involvement in Recovery and assist the State Recovery Coordinator to assess recovery complexity and advise the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner on the State support arrangements required. The tool considers the scale of disruption to community function from the emergency, level of coordination effort required for recovery efforts and capacity and capability of affected local government(s) to manage recovery. The tool will replace the Escalation Factors for Recovery in Appendix G of the current State EM Plan.



Topic	Description
Minister for Emergency Services is lead minister for Recovery  Reference: • Policy section 6.1.5 and Department of Fire and Emergency Services is the lead agency for recovery  Reference: • Policy section 6.1.6 & Appendix A	During the Machinery of Government changes in 2017, the State recovery team was transferred to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, including the function of State recovery coordination and administration of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia (DRFAWA). State recovery as a function, role or responsibility is not defined in the existing State EM Policy however Government has some clear expectations of the function. The proposed amendments will recognise the Minister for Emergency Services as the lead minister and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services as the lead agency for recovery. The Minister for Emergency Services is responsible for overseeing recovery preparedness and operations and providing coordinated cross-government advice on recovery to the Premier and State Government. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services responsibilities include: • maintaining a standing State Recovery Coordinator; • provide coordinated cross-government reporting and strategic advice to government about recovery including strategic risks and issues; • host an Event Recovery Coordinator/Controller and supporting taskforce / business unit as required; and • coordinate monitoring, evaluation and learning activities for recovery. A provision is also included to enable the delegation of some of responsibilities of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to another agency in a specific recovery, where that agency has specific expertise, resources, knowledge or stakeholder networks. For example, the Department of Premier and Cabinet hosted the Covid-19 Controller and Taskforce.

Topic	Description
Greater emphasis on engaging community  Reference: • Policy section 6.1 (State Strategic Recovery Priorities) • Plan section 6.2.2	A new provision has been included that specifically requires local and state governments to engage communities to understand community needs and priorities, and in the planning, design and governance of recovery. This provision is intended to ensure the State Strategic Recovery Priority to 'enable community-centred recovery' is achieved. The amendments do not prescribe a specific engagement model, rather enabling a model to be developed that suits the specific recovery needs of community and local government. Possible options could include convening a community working or advisory group. A similar model, the Fitzroy Valley Flood Recovery Working Group was self-formed by the Fitzroy Valley community themselves during the Kimberley Floods Recovery and was (and continues to be) a powerful voice for the community.
Three phases of Recovery  Reference: • Plan sections Introduction, 6.1, 6.2 & 6.3	The three phases of recovery have been introduced to assist with structuring recovery planning, operations and delivery. This approach is similar to other jurisdictions including NSW and QLD and aligns with the four aspects of emergency management – prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR). The Preparing for Recovery phase occurs before an emergency to improve capacity and capability for recovery. It involves preparing for recovery through the development and maintenance of policies, planning, systems, training and exercising.



Topic	Description
	The Response and Early Recovery phase covers the period during and immediately after an emergency (usually days to weeks but may extend longer depending on the nature of the hazard). As per the current arrangements, early recovery activities are initiated and coordinated by the Hazard Management Agency and then transitioned to the local government (or State Government depending on the circumstances). Activities in this phase focus on mitigating the immediate impacts and alleviating suffering and distress, determining the level of state support required and establishing recovery governance structures. The Recovery Operations phase commences when responsibility for recovery has transferred from the Hazard Management Agency. This aim of this phase is to address recovery needs and assist the community restore a stable level of function across the four functional areas of social, built, environment and economy. Activities in this phase include recovery needs assessment, community engagement, planning and implementation of recovery programs, as well as monitoring and evaluation.
Responsibilities of Hazard Management Agency  Reference: • Policy section 6.2 & 6.6 • Plan section 6.2.1	Hazard Management Agencies have an existing legislative function to initiate and support recovery. The proposed amendments provide more clarity as to these responsibilities which include planning and preparing for recovery, ensuring early recovery activities are commenced and planning the transition between response-led and recovery-led operations. In some circumstances, the Hazard Management Agency may delegate some responsibilities to another Controlling Agency. Hazard Management Agencies should update the recovery arrangements in State Hazard Plans to better reflect these responsibilities and other amendments to the framework.

Topic

Description

Transition between response and recovery



Reference:

- Policy section 6.2
- Plan section 6.2.1

The proposed amendments will reduce the emphasis on an Impact Statement as a 'trigger' for transition of responsibility for coordinating recovery from the Hazard Management Agency to the local or State Government.

The new process will better accommodate complex emergencies where there is no 'hard finish' of response and prolonged emergencies where response and recovery occur concurrently for extended periods of time.

In a R1 and R2 recovery, the transition arrangements must be agreed with the local government(s) before responsibility of recovery coordination is passed from the Hazard Management Agency to local government.

In a R3 and R4 recovery the Hazard Management Agency, local government(s), State Recovery Coordinator and where appointed an Event Recovery Coordinator / Controller, must jointly prepare a written transition plan.

Requirement for an Impact Statement



Reference:

- Policy section 6.2.2
- Plan section 6.2.1
- Procedure section 5.3

The current wording setting out the requirements for an Impact Statement requires amendment to improve clarity and avoid confusion.

The amendments will clarify that an Impact Statement is required in all Level 2 and 3 incidents, unless an exemption has been granted by the State Recovery Coordinator.

The State Recovery Coordinator may grant an exemption if there are no impacts to the social, built, environment or economic functional areas which require recovery activities. When deciding whether or not an Impact Statement is required, the State Recovery Coordinator must consult the local government(s).

An Impact Statement will not be required per se following a Level 1 incident. However, if there are impacts that are expected to result in recovery activities then the State Recovery Coordinator may direct that one is completed. This may occur following a request from the local government.

Topic	Description
New State-level coordinator position – Event Recovery Coordinator and Clarified responsibilities, powers and accountability of the three state-level coordinator positions  Reference: • Policy section 6.5 • Procedure section 5.5 (appointment)	The updated arrangements clarify the responsibilities and reporting arrangements for the State Recovery Coordinator and for a Recovery Controller or Coordinator where one has been appointed for a specific recovery event. Under the new Model for State Involvement in Recovery, the State Recovery Coordinator will provide overall coordination of state-level recovery activities in R1 and R2 level recoveries, including setting the strategic direction and coordinating funding proposals. In more complex R3 and R4 recoveries, an event-specific Recovery Coordinator (R3) or Controller (R4) will be appointed. These positions will assume responsibility for coordinating state-level recovery activities from the State Recovery Coordinator and have greater 'powers' than the State Recovery Coordinator to advise/recommend the priorities, approach and resources of state agencies. Unless the Minister or Premier determines otherwise, these positions will generally report to the Minister for Emergency Services via the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner. Similar event-specific coordinator positions were successfully trialled in recent recoveries with the appointment of the Kimberley Floods Recovery Coordinator and Covid-19 Recovery Controller.
State Agencies – general duty and functional recovery roles  Reference: • Policy section 6.7 & Appendix F	The updated arrangements confirm the responsibility of all state agencies to support recovery activities based on their portfolio areas of responsibility and/or expertise. The State Recovery Coordinator and [Event] Recovery Coordinator/Controller may also request agencies to assist with information, data and expertise. All state agencies involved in the delivery of recovery programs will be also required to facilitate data sharing and contribute to whole of government recovery reporting. The amendments will also assign some agencies with specific functional roles on the State Recovery Coordination Group, State Recovery Domains and to assist with specific recovery activities such as clean up and temporary accommodation.



Topic	Description
Membership and responsibilities of State Recovery Domains and State Recovery Coordination Group  Reference: • Policy section 6.8 • Procedure section 5.1 & 5.2	The amendments clarify the responsibilities of the State Recovery Coordination Group and State Recovery Domains and assigns some agencies with specific functional roles on these groups. These arrangements are already in place informally and worked successfully in recent recoveries. Having these arrangements in place will facilitate faster activation of the groups and enable early recovery planning. The Departments of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Water and Environmental Regulation and Communities will be assigned as Chairs of the State Economic, Environment and Social Recovery Domains respectively. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services will chair the Built Domain. These agencies will also form the core membership of the State Recovery Coordination Group along with Department of Treasury, Department of Finance and Department of Premier and Cabinet.
Executive Government Forum  Reference: • Policy section 6.8.8	Where there are complex policy issues or matters in a recovery event that require additional strategic oversight and direction by the executive level of government, the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner may refer an issue or matter to an existing cross-government executive forum (e.g. the Public Sector Leadership Council) or convene a Chief Executive Officer-level forum. A similar forum was utilised successfully in the Kimberley Floods Recovery and is also used by Queensland.

Topic

Description

Public information and communications



Reference:

- Policy section 6.11

The proposed amendments will update public information and communications arrangements to match current practice - coordinated by DFES in capacity as the lead agency for state recovery and not the State Emergency Public Information Coordinator.

All state agencies are required to consult with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services before releasing information.

This is similar to the arrangements in place during response operations where public information and communications is managed by the Incident Controller and will ensure that it is managed and disseminated in a timely, accurate and credible manner and in accordance with requirements under the joint WA – Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Transition from recovery arrangements to business-as-usual service delivery



Reference:

- Policy section 6.13
- Plan section 6.3.3

Local and State Government recovery arrangements should be de-escalated or stood down when recovery services can be delivered through business-as-usual operations of the local and state government and extra-arrangements are no longer required.

It is important the transition process is planned and managed in a coordinated and orderly fashion to ensure there are no gaps in service delivery for the community.

The State Recovery Coordinator is responsible for planning and coordinating the de-escalation of state involvement from R3/R4 to R1/R2 as the need for state recovery coordination arrangements diminishes.

Topic	Description
Amendment to terminology from 'recovery environments' to 'functional areas'  Reference: Plan – Introduction	The current arrangements refer to 'recovery environments of social, built, natural and economic' to assist with organising planning and design of recovery activities. To avoid confusion with the terminology for the State Environment Recovery Domain, the four areas have been renamed as 'functional areas': - The social functional area focuses on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, including safety, security and shelter, health and psychosocial wellbeing. - The built functional area focuses on physical infrastructure, including essential services, commercial and industrial facilities, public buildings, assets and housing. - The environment functional area focuses on land-based, aquatic, coastal and marine ecosystems, and environmental values that are of cultural, local and/or national significance. This area includes the management and disposal of waste and management of environmental health issues. - The economic functional area focuses on the economy (local and state-level), including jobs, businesses and industries. The scope of the four standing State Recovery Domains aligns with the scope of the four functional areas.