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Review of State Recovery Arrangements

Emergency Management Framework

FAQ Sheet

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What are recovery arrangements?

Recovery arrangements are the processes used to organise and coordinate support to communities that have been impacted by a disaster. They include the structures and processes for recovery leadership, decision-making, operations, accountability and funding.

The recovery arrangements for local governments and state agencies in Western Australia are described in Chapters 6 of the State Emergency Management Policy and the State Emergency Management Plan. Chapter 5 of the State Emergency Management Procedure provides supporting information about implementing the arrangements.

Under the recovery arrangements local governments have primary responsibility for managing recovery in their districts (as outlined in section 36(b) of the *Emergency Management Act 2005*) but there are processes for State Government involvement



and leadership when the local government requires additional support and resources because of the scale and complexity of recovery.

Why are the recovery arrangements being revised?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic recovery in 2020 and 2021, Western Australia has experienced several major disasters with complex recovery requirements. These include the Wooroloo Bushfires and Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja in 2021 and the Kimberley Floods 2023. The experience of some smaller events has also shown that local governments may need additional support to manage recovery for their community.

Local governments and state agencies have learnt a lot from these events and made practical changes to how recovery is managed and how the community is engaged in recovery.

The recovery arrangements are being revised to better reflect these learnings and our improved practice. In particular, the amendments will more clearly state the roles and responsibilities of local and State governments, and of recovery leaders, throughout the various stages of recovery.

What amendments are proposed?

Amendments are proposed to the recovery chapters in the State Emergency Management Policy, Plan and Procedure to incorporate current practice and learnings from past recoveries. The major amendments proposed include:

- New State Strategic Recovery Priorities in the Policy providing greater focus on community participation, community resilience and introducing 'build back better' as a priority.
- New arrangements for a planned transition from response-led to recovery-led operations and coordination when response and recovery operations will occur in parallel.
- A new 4-tiered escalation 'Model for State Involvement in Recovery', which is adaptive to community context and capacity and establishes a mechanism for state support in smaller recovery efforts.
- A new *[Event]* Recovery Coordinator position to align with the 'Model for State Involvement in Recovery' and defined responsibilities, powers and accountability of this new position and the two existing positions - State Recovery Coordinator and *[Event]* Recovery Controller.
- Increased flexibility for State-level governance structures to respond to community context, supported by clearer definition of the core role, responsibilities and membership of the State Recovery Domains and State Recovery Coordination Group.

- Clear provisions and requirements for the inclusion of community voice in recovery governance structures and in recovery planning.
- Newly defined role and responsibilities for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services as the lead agency for recovery and the Minister for Emergency Services as lead minister for recovery.
- Clarified responsibility of all state agencies to support recovery within their portfolio area, and assignment of specific functional recovery responsibilities for some agencies.
- Changed responsibility for coordination of public information and communications in recovery to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services from the State Emergency Public Information Coordinator, which reflects recent practice.
- Clarified recovery responsibilities of Hazard Management in initiation of recovery activities during response, preparation of an Impact Statement and planning the transition to recovery.
- Clarified responsibilities for information sharing and reporting for all agencies.

What hasn't changed?

The amendments are focused on updating the arrangements for state government in a recovery. The amendments do not propose legislative changes to the *Emergency Management Act 2005* (WA) or changes to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements with the Commonwealth Government. All existing legislative responsibilities of local government and state government remain in place.

- Local governments remain responsible for managing recovery in their district following an emergency and are required to prepare a recovery plan and nominate a Local Recovery Coordinator.
- Hazard Management Agencies continue to be responsible for initiating and supporting recovery.
- Recovery planning will still be structured into social, built, economic and environment focus areas. However, these will now be known as 'functional areas' instead of recovery environments.
- Local governments and emergency management agencies remain responsible for planning, exercising and training for recovery and undertaking reviews following a recovery.
- Key state-level coordination positions and groups have been retained including the State Recovery Coordination Group and State Recovery Domains.



What do the amendments mean for my community?

A new State Strategic Recovery Priority is proposed to require increased community participation in recovery: “**enable community-centred recovery** by recognising local context and supporting the capacity and capability of community to lead their own recovery and facilitate community participation in recovery planning and decision making”.

The new State Strategic Recovery Priorities also place more emphasis on fostering community disaster resilience and introduce the principle of ‘build back better’.

As a result, communities can expect local and state government to provide them with opportunities to actively participate in needs assessment and in the planning, design and governance of recovery programs and activities, and the identification of priorities for community resilience.

The arrangements do not provide a specific model for community engagement but require the local government and/or [Event] Recovery Coordinator or Controller to design and implement a model that best suits each community. Some examples might include:

- inviting community members and stakeholders, including local business and industry representatives, to participate in Local Recovery Coordination Group, local recovery working groups and, where appropriate, State Recovery Domains
- establishing a community recovery working or advisory group
- utilising existing community networks, groups and representative organisations as a way for community engagement and advice
- engaging local community leaders to act as advisors or facilitators of engagement between government and community e.g. cultural and/or community navigators.

What do the amendments mean for local government(s)?

The responsibility of local government to manage recovery remains unchanged. However, the amendments will provide greater clarity for local government about when and how the State Government will become involved in a recovery and what type of support can be expected. The new state-level recovery arrangements will provide faster activation and support for local government.

The amendments recognise that local government are best placed to understand their local community recovery needs and provide leadership for the community’s recovery journey. However, with the increasing complexity of emergencies and recoveries, local



governments may not always have the capacity and capability to manage recovery on their own.

The amendments provide a scaled approach that can support and enable local governments to manage recovery within their existing strengths and capabilities. Even when the complexity of a disaster exceeds the capacity and capability of local government and the State assumes primary responsibility for coordinating recovery, the local government still has a role to:

- coordinating local-level recovery activities
- advising and contributing to state-level recovery planning, implementation and monitoring processes
- facilitate community engagement
- advocate for the community.

When appointed the *[Event]* Recovery Coordinator or Controller will work in close partnership with local government to support these outcomes.

What do the amendments mean for state agencies?

Reviews of past recoveries have identified that many agencies do not understand their responsibility to support the recovery of communities. Accordingly, they do not have plans, resources or trained personnel to assist when needed. The new arrangements provide more clarity about these roles and responsibilities which should assist agencies to plan for this capability.

The amendments clarify that all state agencies have a role to support WA communities in recovery within existing portfolio and responsibilities. This means that agencies may be asked to assist in a recovery by providing staff, subject matter experts, technical advice, information and/or data to support the assessment of recovery needs, planning, reporting and public information and communication. Agencies are also expected to use best endeavours to plan, manage, administer and/or deliver 'business as usual' portfolio programs and projects to assist with recovery efforts where reasonable and practicable.

Some state agencies have been assigned specific key recovery functions and responsibilities. This includes membership of State Recovery Coordination Group and the State Recovery Domains.

The amendments also recognise the role of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services as the lead agency for recovery with the responsibility for overseeing recovery preparedness and recovery operations and providing coordinated cross-government advice to Government. This amendment reflects the State Governments



recent investment in DFES's capacity and capability for recovery coordination, governance and administration.

What do the amendments mean for Hazard Management Agencies and Controlling Agencies?

Hazard Management Agencies (HMA) have a legislative function to support recovery (s4(3) of the *Emergency Management Act 2005*) however there is limited detail in the Emergency Management Framework about what this involves. The proposed amendments will clarify HMA responsibilities across all recovery phases. This includes ensuring recovery activities are initiated and coordinated during the response and early recovery phase and planning the transition from response-led operations to recovery-led operations. It is expected that recovery arrangements in State Hazard Plans will need to be updated to better reflect these responsibilities.

A HMA may delegate some/all of these tasks to a Controlling Agency, however the HMA remains responsible for ensuring the obligations and requirements have been met.

How will my feedback be used?

Your feedback will be shared with DFES and the State Emergency Management Policy Branch. All feedback will be considered, however it is not always possible or appropriate to address or incorporate all feedback and comments. Further consultation and marketing may be required to obtain support for the new content and amendments.

Please contact SEMC.PolicyLegislation@dfes.wa.gov.au if you would like more information on how your feedback is addressed.

Can I share the draft recovery chapters?

The draft recovery chapters have been created to be shared with EM stakeholders and advisory groups. Please ensure the draft documents are not shared with the greater public or published on a public website as it has not been approved by the SEMC for further dissemination.

Do I need to submit feedback through the website?

Submitting your feedback through engagewaem.com.au/recovery, greatly assists with the consolidation and analysis of the consultation feedback.

Please contact the DFES State EM Policy Branch if you have any concerns using this website. We may be able to provide a word version of the survey to assist with the preparation of your responses before your submission. In addition, the survey allows for additional documents to be uploaded to your submission where required.