Government of **Western Australia**
State Emergency Management Committee

State Emergency Management Committee

Season Review Meeting Highlights

10 June 2014

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) met on 10 June 2014 for the second Season Review Meeting. The SEMC noted that considerable improvement has taken place across multiple areas, including communication, interoperability and shared responsibility.

The SEMC also noted the national key themes that emerged from Emergency Management Australia's (EMAs) perspective including:

- challenges of achieving the right balance in public messaging;

- increasing confluence of significant events (heatwave/storm/flood/bushfire);

- increasing complexity on the rural-urban interface—where urban expectations of government capability and assistance interact with rural circumstances and hazards;

- significant reliance on interstate resources—there is also an increasing need for Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) products and services; and

- need to use an integrated approach to planning for the severe to catastrophic range of events.

Significant learnings, improvements and opportunities reported by various relevant agencies were highlighted during the Season Review Meeting, including the key areas listed below.

KEY IMPROVEMENTS

- **Continue Community awareness work (*Are You Ready* Campaign)**

The *Are You Ready* campaign which was run during the summer was viewed as successful in conveying the message of shared responsibility and, together with social media and public messaging services, assisted in improving rapid communication with the public.

The Department of Health (DoH) has also rolled out its Crisis Information Management System (WebEOC) to other health agencies, including St John Ambulance and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Additionally, a new website with public health messaging for heatwaves has been launched, which includes multi-lingual fact sheets.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) reported that community meetings and enhanced community support and welfare through the Community Liaison Unit at incidents have all been well received.

A number of Rural Urban Interface (RUI) exercises - involving the community - have been held in order to raise awareness of the key role that affected communities can play. In addition, the Level 2 RUI training program was delivered to DFES staff, incorporating various strategies and tactics.

The changing nature of community engagement, the use of social media, as well as how to maintain the current momentum, in terms of shared responsibility generated by *Are You Ready* campaign, will all continue to be considered in future community engagement initiatives.

- ## Continue Unified Command work

Further work has been undertaken in relation to unified command in fixed teams with DFES, Western Australian Police (WAPOL) and the Department for Parks and Wildlife (DPaW).

- ## Continued use of the Air Desk at ComCen

In November 2013, DFES and DPaW combined staff into a single joint State Operations Air Desk. The joint Air Desk has proven highly effective in ensuring that aircraft are dispatched according to the scenario.

- ## Risk awareness and prioritisation of prescribed burns

DPaW has demonstrated its capacity to comply with the new ISO 31000-compliant Prescribed Burning Framework and received endorsement by the Office of Bushfire Management (OBRM). DFES has also overhauled its Prescribed Burning Framework to align with ISO 31000 and is in the final stages of gaining the OBRM endorsement.

- ## Focus on arson

In line with a multi-agency approach to the reduction and prevention of arson, the Juvenile and Family Fire Awareness (JAFFA) Program has achieved significant successes which include increased referrals into the program with WAPOL (Taskforce Vulcan) targeting arsonists, recruitment and training of additional JAFFA Support Officers, and development of an educational DVD in partnership with the DoH, WAPOL and DFES.

An evaluation carried out by JAFFA revealed a 97 per cent success rate, with only 3 per cent of children being involved in further unsupervised fire lighting since their involvement in the JAFFA Program after 6 months.

WAPOL indicated that this effort towards the prevention of arson will be continued.

- ## Establishment of State Recovery Controller role

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) reported on the new role of the State Recovery Controller and its involvement in Cyclone Christine, the Parkerville Stoneville Mt Helena Fire and the flooding in Exmouth and Kununurra. A number of improvements were made to the recovery process for the Parkerville Stoneville Mt Helena Fire and the Review of this incident reported favourably on the improvements.

- ## Continue work on loss of essential services

A number of initiatives were undertaken by Essential Services and the community is reporting favorably and is appreciative of the efforts being made by Essential Service providers to restore services as quickly as possible after an incident. The Public Utilities Office (PUO) is working on a number of initiatives including national level fuel supply disruption. There is also increasing recognition of the vulnerabilities around the gas supply during the cyclone season.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ## Community messaging

Community messaging is being used in both a consistent and appropriate manner. However, the need for optimised community awareness regarding risks associated with relevant hazards (such as cyclones and storms) was recognised.

- ### Access permits

The Traffic Management Working Group is examining the use of restricted access permits across all hazards (as used in Victoria). The need for this work is reinforced by the Parkerville Stoneville Mt Helena Fire, in which full road closures meant that residents were not able to return to be with their families and/or defend their homes.

- ### Objectives for recovery

A Recovery Workshop was held in May 2014 to facilitate the establishment of a recovery information sharing and learning capacity in the State. The aim is to ensure that recovery processes continue to evolve and improve in the future. The development of a database which records the experiences of local governments managing recovery processes has been recognised as an important objective.

The use of case studies, including lessons identified, was determined as an effective way to ensure that recovery experiences were documented and shared, and that common issues could be considered at a broader level. Common elements of recovery were identified and a template has been developed for the case studies.

The Western Australian Local Government Association also highlighted the need for continued focus on recovery.

- ### Consider logistics and planning for recovery

The SEMC discussed the importance of examining preparedness for large scale recovery, particularly that it may be useful to test the logistics and planning to mobilise such as accommodation, hospitals, and the interface with local government. It was recognised that Western Australia has recently increased its emphasis on response and mobilisation of resources and has achieved significant success in early suppression and containment.

Other key areas considered for future focus include:

- processes such as determining the conclusion of recovery, setting recovery objectives and assessment of success;
- learnings from recoveries that have occurred over the past 10 years;
- growing the sense of community empowerment with tools such as social media and spontaneous volunteers;
- recognising the needs of multiple incident communities;
- capability and capacity - the way in which resources available for recovery in the community are linked to the way in which government purchases services; and
- consider betterment in terms of asset replacement and what that may mean in terms of reducing the potential for future damage.

PARKERVILLE STONEVILLE MT HELENA BUSHFIRE

The Review report on the Parkerville Stoneville Mt Helena Bushfire was briefly discussed as part of the Season Review and 'what worked well' and the opportunities for improvement are outlined in the report which is available on the SEMC website. The SEMC has also released a communiqué summarising the key outcomes of the report.