

The Emergency Management Act 2004 Review

LGA Submission

January 2024

Introduction

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the State Government's Emergency Management (EM) Act 2004 Review (the Review).

As the peak body for the closest tier of government to communities, the LGA is in a unique position to make contributions to the Review that reflect the broader concerns of local government.

The Review is seeking to identify opportunities to improve the current legislation, ensuring it remains fit-for-purpose and meets evolving challenges. Also, the Review seeks to ensure that South Australia is best equipped to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

The overall intent of the LGA's input into the Review is to advocate for more sustainable emergency management outcomes that seek to:

- Build a greater understanding that shared responsibility does not equate to equal responsibility
- Advocate for the establishment of a South Australian Emergency Management Agency to encourage local government participation in decisions that impact them while reducing the administrative burden of participating in varying state agency committees and sub-groups
- Seek the State Government to adopt community-based emergency management methodologies to build on the collective strengths and capabilities of zones to enhance the overall resilience of South Australia
- Encourage State engagement platforms that can provide greater clarity and understanding for the various levels of government, agencies, communities, and stakeholders in all aspects of South Australian emergency management

The LGA Submission provides responses only to questions in the Discussion Paper that are pertinent to the local government sector.

1. Does the EM Act contain the right objects and guiding principles?

The Australian Emergency Management Arrangements Handbook (updated to reflect legislative changes resulting from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements) highlights that under Australia's constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for emergency management within their jurisdiction. It recognises that all levels of government acknowledge that the impact of some emergencies could be particularly severe or widespread and exceed the capability of a single state or territory. The handbook highlights that dealing with emergencies is not a matter for governments alone. Individuals, families and communities all play a role in determining how well they are prepared for and safeguarded from emergencies and their ability to recover from them. While the current objects and guiding principles in the EM Act are broadly appropriate, there could be barriers experienced at a practical level, including:

- Potential silos, inefficiencies and duplication of work due to the establishment of many separate committees and working groups with little transparency of activities between those groups or the ability to coordinate and monitor work-effort or implementation/embedding of outcomes
- Reduced community engagement in the State's Emergency Management arrangements due to only requiring the promotion of community resilience over inclusive community-based methods.
- Lack of awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of communities due to lack of inclusive community-based engagement methods
- Attributing blame and inappropriately delegating responsibility due to a lack of understanding that shared responsibility for emergency management does not mean an equal responsibility

- Missed opportunities for collaborative approaches in all aspects of emergency management due to delegation of responsibility and lack of resourcing to enable those responsibilities to be effectively carried out.

Given that the *Emergency Management Act 2004* (the EM Act) is the foundation for the framework and principles for co-ordinating activities before, during and after emergencies in South Australia, updating the current objects and guiding principles could be better reflected to include:

- sustainable approaches for South Australia's Emergency Management arrangements
- greater accountability for the State Government as the primary body for emergency management and not an equal weighting of shared responsibility between NGO's, Local Government etc.
- building community inclusivity, wellbeing and cultural awareness into the state arrangements
- working with communities in zone level planning, including their roles in preventing, preparing, responding to and recovering from disasters
- Providing greater clarity regarding the State Government's role in all-encompassing and all scale emergency management work; including how it will work together with key stakeholders such as local government and community

2. Should a definition of hazard be included in the EM Act, and if so, how general or prescriptive should it be and why?

Currently the Act highlights the need to address an 'all-hazards approach' in all areas of emergency management planning, with the State Emergency Management Plan providing greater clarity regarding the definition of a hazard and identifying relevant hazards to South Australia. This approach is appropriate and provides for greater flexibility for reviewing and amending nuances should it be required.

3. Should the references to the “scene” of an emergency be amended to take account of broader emergency contexts?

Given the evolving understanding of cyber emergencies and potentially other larger scale biological emergencies, it seems appropriate to remove reference to a specific scene to include broader emergency contexts.

4. Is there a need for any parts of the SEMP to be given legislative force and protection? If so what elements and what form should this take?

The Australian Emergency Management Arrangements Handbook highlights the importance of partnerships between tiers of government, businesses and industry; nongovernment organisations; community groups; emergency management and volunteer organisations; and communities. Imposing legislative force and protection within the SEMP may have adverse consequences to the need to work better together.

It seems appropriate that SA Police and other relevant agencies through alternative legislative arrangements (such as the Fire and Emergency Services Act, Public Health Act, Biosecurity Act) have sufficient arrangements for relevant activities, such as Section 105 notices to reduce fire risk.

5. Should the EM Act include a reference to mitigation? If so, what form should this take?

There could be benefit towards drawing a distinction between prevention and mitigation, based on the Emergency Management Act 2004 Review Discussion Paper. The suggested distinction is that:

The difference between prevention and mitigation is that prevention activities support measures that seek to eliminate the impact or reduce susceptibility of hazards, while mitigation measures accept that the event will occur and seek to reduce the inevitable impact.

Given the identified need for greater and more current data and guidance on appropriate mitigation strategies, the LGA supports referencing mitigation to build greater awareness of relevant materials.

Similarly, there could be benefits in the EM Act providing greater reference to resilience. The current Act only refers to resilience within the objects of the Act to:

to promote community resilience and reduce community vulnerability in the event of an emergency.

Natural Hazards Research Australia defines disaster resilience as the capacity to prepare for, absorb and recover from natural hazards, and to learn, adapt and transform in ways that enhance these capacities in the face of future events. It further explains that disaster resilience arises from many social, economic and institutional capacities and the mix of these capacities in a community conveys how well it is positioned to absorb and adapt to natural hazards. The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience describes disaster resilience as the collective responsibility of all levels of government, businesses, the non-government sector and individuals. It further explains that when these sectors work together with a united focus and a shared sense of responsibility to improve disaster resilience with roles clearly identified, they will be far more effective than the individual efforts of any one sector.

There could be benefits in providing more emphasis and clarity regarding the importance of disaster resilience capacity building.

6. Should there be greater reference to local government in the EM Act? If so, what form should this take?

The 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements highlighted that state and territory governments have primary responsibility – and accountability – for emergency management. And there were no recommendations that this should change.

Local Government is an important stakeholder in emergency management and the current reference is proportionate to the varying capabilities and capacities of councils which reflect the services and priorities of their local communities. Greater reference to local government should include that the responsibility of local government is not equal to the responsibility of State Government who receive the direct resources and training to reflect their primary role in emergency management. When requested, Local Government may provide support to Control Agencies, State Recovery and Support Agencies during emergencies when they are willing, have the capacity and capability to do so, and when it aligns with the activities that they ordinarily undertake and are trained to perform. Over-reliance and unrealistic expectations from state government has the potential to diminish the important role of local government and deliver services provided to their communities, especially those that build and sustain social capital. In recent years, there has been increasing demands placed on local government due to reduction in state government resources, particularly in regional South Australia.

The EM Act should build greater reference to Community Based Emergency Management methods to guide zone level priorities, strengths, opportunities and develop mutual goals and solutions. This includes the need to build relationships and develop locally tailored processes for communities, emergency management agencies, government, business, industry and non-government organisations to participate in decision making processes that affect and include them in solutions.

Through all-encompassing zone planning (prevention, preparedness, response and recovery), the state is better equipped to establish more sustainable emergency management arrangements, better advocate for state resources and funding, understand community desire to participate in disaster planning, response and recovery, leverage existing resources, networks and skills without attributing blame or delegating responsibility to local government.

The EM Act or State Emergency Management Plan needs to provide greater clarity regarding State Government's role in all-encompassing and all scale emergency management work; including how it will work together with key stakeholders such as local government and community. With greater clarity on how the State approaches Emergency Management (for all hazards and all scale emergencies) and with increased emphasis on better end-to-end zone planning, there is no need to place greater reference on local government or any other stakeholder. The strengths of local government can be better leveraged through engagement methods that do not impose duplication of work, resourcing burden, and assuming the responsibility of State Agencies who are under resourced to effectively implement the current State Emergency Management Arrangements. Gaps identified through effective zone planning should also not be placed on local government and the State Government should consider sustainable solutions.

7. Does the EM Act provide too much prescription in relation to the composition and procedures of SEMC?

Australia's National Midterm Review of The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, acknowledges that Australia's disaster risk environment is complex and the recent cascading cycle of disaster and disruption has posed many challenges globally. However, through innovation as the occurrence and intensity of disasters become more pervasive, it is becoming increasingly important that we collaborate, share insights and seek to coordinate efforts to reduce disaster risk. In doing so, we will work towards building more resilient environments, communities and systems within Australia and our region.

On 1 September 2022, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was established as the nation's first end-to-end response, recovery and resilience agency. NEMA's 2022-23 Annual Report indicates that it has enabled a single, enduring, end-to-end agency to better respond to emergencies, help communities recover and prepare Australia for future disasters. NEMA's function is to develop, lead and coordinate the Commonwealth's approach to emergency management, including the support of activities relating to preparedness, response, relief, recovery, reconstruction, risk reduction and resilience for all hazard emergencies and disasters. NEMA provides national leadership and strategic coordination across all levels of government and sectors. Complementing NEMA, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) leads emergency management in Victoria by maximising the ability of the emergency management sector to work together and to strengthen the capacity of communities to plan for, withstand, respond to and recover from emergencies. EMV supports the Emergency Management Commissioner to lead and coordinate emergency preparedness, response and recovery across Victoria's emergency management sector in conjunction with communities, government, agencies and business. EMV is an integral part of the broader emergency management sector and shares

responsibility with a range of agencies, organisations and departments for ensuring the system of emergency management in Victoria is sustainable, effective and community focussed.

Under the current Act, SEMC is a committee that is established and holds broad functions and powers, including to provide leadership and maintain oversight of emergency management planning in the State. The State Co-ordinator has overall responsibility to manage and co-ordinate response and recovery operations. Given the occurrence and intensity of disasters are becoming more pervasive, placing overall responsibility within a committee or one co-ordinator role does not set South Australia up for current and future emergency management needs.

The South Australian Government should consider establishing a leading state emergency management agency that takes responsibility for the end-to-end needs of South Australia. This body can complement the roles and responsibilities of SEMC and the State Co-ordinator by developing all-encompassing emergency management methods, aim to reduce duplication of work between emergency services, other control agencies, functional support groups, NGOs and other bodies; and undertake zone planning (inclusive of PPRR) based on community emergency management methods; and assist in providing evidence for greater funding and resourcing measures. Ideally, the proposed standalone agency would be clearly visible to the public with a brand that builds confidence and promotes engagement within the emergency management sector.

8. Does SEMC have the appropriate functions and powers?

Given recent events, such as the River Murray Flood, COVID-19, and the Black Summer Bushfires, and increase in concurrent and cascading events, the ability to rely on interstate and international support for large-scale disasters may become more challenging.

To set South Australia up for complex, compounding and cascading disasters, relying on a committee to provide the right level of leadership, guidance and clarity may no longer be appropriate.

Considerations should be given to an independent and dedicated South Australian Emergency Management Agency that can complement NEMA, SEMC, the State Co-ordinator and State Recovery Co-ordinator with their respective roles and build a more sustainable community-based emergency management approach for South Australia.

9. Should the EM Act provide that SEMC (or some other body/position) has an assurance function or are the current arrangements appropriate?

The current arrangements are based on top-down approaches and future work should consider the need to undertake stronger all-encompassing zone planning using community-based emergency management approaches to ensure they are addressing the needs of the zones. Ideally state level planning should complement the needs of the planning undertaken by the zones.

The EM Act Discussion paper notes that previous considerations for other styles of bodies to be too costly to design and implement. The establishment of a South Australian Emergency Management Agency should be viewed as a mechanism to build State Resilience and reduce the overall cost of disasters. It should also be viewed as an innovative way to address the State's primary responsibility for emergency management in South Australia.

Under the current arrangements, there is minimal accountability to ensure that Hazard Risk Reduction Leaders, Control Agencies and other relevant bodies have appropriate and effective plans in place that

are regularly tested and reviewed. With many plans and committees, there are limited resources dedicated to develop, contribute, assure and test arrangements. Additionally, the current assurance process is onerous and places more process for agencies with limited resourcing. The current arrangement exposes the State Government to increased risk exposure, through outdated or ineffective plans that don't address community needs. Establishing an independent, resourced and dedicated South Australian Emergency Management Agency could provide effective end-to-end zone planning. Identifying the needs of zones and communities could enable tailored, all-hazard plans to be developed including sustainable solutions.

There is a strong need to consider more sustainable solutions for the current climate, and the future climate and without proper resourcing and accountability, the South Australian State Government will be exposed to increased risk.

10. Should the position of Commissioner of Police (or person acting as Commissioner) be the only person who can hold the role of State Co-ordinator?

Given the role of SA Police as the Coordinating Agency, it seems appropriate that the Commissioner of Police retains the responsibility of State Co-ordinator to ensure a balanced and pragmatic response to emergencies. While there is merit for SA Police to consider contingency planning, it seems appropriate that the Commissioner of Police has a responsibility to ensure that persons undertaking an Assistant or delegated role, should meet the requirements to be competent of holding the responsibilities. This should not be a matter for the Emergency Management Act and instead an internal management process for SA Police.

11. Should there be any change to who has the power to declare an identified major incident, major emergency or state disaster?

The current arrangements are appropriate. While the power to declare has been used more frequently over the past few years, the State Co-ordinator only exercises this power when it is required to do so. Given this and the role of SA Police as the Coordinating Agency, it seems appropriate that this power remains with the Commissioner of Police.

12. Should there be any changes to the permitted duration of declarations, the extension arrangements or processes relating to this? Why or why not?

Given the evolving nature and understanding of disasters, there is a reasonable argument that the State Co-ordinator should be able to have some discretion for the length of duration of a declaration. Potential biosecurity outbreaks, pandemics, cyber incidents and earthquakes could reasonably result in the need for longer duration of declarations. This would reduce the administrative burden on the State Government but would be important to keep the community informed throughout the duration of declaration.

13. Would it be desirable for there to be a new class of declaration that supports the scaling up and down of emergency messaging? If so, should it be based on a State of Alert model, or another alternative?

In 2022, the LGA engaged an independent consultant to review the LGFSG to update its LGFSG Plan. During this review, it was highlighted that the modes of operation and activation triggers in the LGFSG Plan did not provide the flexibility sought by some council stakeholders. There could be strong benefits to the state setting out appropriate models for all agencies to follow in a consistent measure. In order to complement any outlined model, the state should consider what actions it would expect of its emergency management partners and design appropriate communication methods for amplification.

In addition to this, there could be strong benefits to having a centralised messaging system that considers all the messages of key state agencies. Currently, during periods of heat and fire risk, messaging may come from multiple agencies (the BOM, CFS and SES) making it potentially ambiguous and confusing for emergency management partners and community.

A transition period may have been beneficial when the risk of COVID-19 was reducing. In the absence of a state notification process at that time, the LGA found it challenging to identify appropriate exit strategy measures as the lead of the LGFSG. If there had been a transition period process, the LGA could have complemented the state's process and guidance methods.

The LGA agrees that a State of Alert would have been useful in the lead up to the 2022-2023 River Murray flood, to enable greater resourcing to be deployed during the preparation phase. This was arguably the most resource intensive phase of the flood and impacted councils undertook significant preparation activities with limited physical resources from the State. Introducing a new type of declaration to facilitate scaling up of resources in these types of situations should be considered.

14. Should the temporary (section 25) powers from the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 be reinstated to the EM Act?

There is a reasonable argument that these should be considered within a revised EM Act. It should be considered as to whether these powers might be required for other emergencies, such as a biosecurity outbreak.

15. Should the EM Act make it clear that the State Co-ordinator is able to take advice from any source the State Co-ordinator considers appropriate?

The State Co-ordinator should consider advice from relevant subject matter experts and any other body they deem appropriate to make an informed decision.

16. Should section 25 (3) of the EM Act be amended to remove the need to consider advice, if this is implicit in the role and function of the State Co-ordinator? Or should the reference to the Chief Public Health Officer be amended to the Chief Executive of the Department (for Health and Wellbeing)?

The guiding principles of the current Act include the need to reflect the collective responsibility of all sectors of the community and they recognise that effective arrangements require a co-ordinated approach. Therefore, it would be reasonable that the State Co-ordinator should consider advice from relevant subject matter experts and any other body they deem appropriate to make an informed decision. There does not appear to be clear reason for stipulating this within the Act, depending on future amendments to the guiding principles. The decision-making process may be better placed within SA Police's existing frameworks.

18. Should there be any specific requirements attached to written directions, such as the requirement to brief Members of Parliament or to publish information or advice in connection with a written direction?

During fast paced or sudden onset disasters such as a bushfire or earthquake, it may not be reasonable to add more requirements within the Act. Under the current Act, the State Co-ordinator has a function to provide adequate information to SEMC when a declaration is made. Under the current Act, SEMC has a function to provide advice to the Minister in relation to the operation of the Act and the management of emergencies in the State.

19. Should the EM Act provide for a separate position of State Recovery Co-ordinator, and if so what role, functions and reporting arrangements should it have?

Identifying a separate position of a State Recovery Co-ordinator could provide benefits by creating greater responsibility for the state to ensure that their responsibility for ensuring recovery is coordinated is achieved. The functions of the position should include the management and co-ordination of recovery operations in accordance with the Act and SEMP, work collaboratively with the State Co-ordinator to implement early recovery strategies, provide SEMC with information regarding recovery operations, and support recovery planning within zone and state levels.

The Australian Disaster Recovery Framework highlights that recovery begins at the same time as response and the formal transition from response/relief to recovery (and from recovery to mainstream services) should be planned, cohesive and well-timed. The State Recovery Co-ordinator should ensure that recovery begins at the same time as response (and not wait on a formal handover from the Control Agency) and recovery planning is based on the nuances of the emergency event and community needs, is coordinated and inclusive of all stakeholders. Outside emergency events, the State Recovery Co-ordinator should be ensuring recovery planning is being undertaken, relationships are established and recovery leaders identified and trained.

The State Government has primary responsibility to ensure recovery occurs in an emergency. However, in recent events there have been several examples where undefined thresholds have not been met resulting in an uncoordinated recovery, placing strains on local government. To support councils, the LGA developed a Guide to Recovery which highlights that councils are committed to supporting their communities in recovery. If council does decide to coordinate recovery, they will need to determine how they will resource their recovery efforts, how they can manage impacts on their regular services and whether they need to appoint internal roles to oversee recovery efforts.

However, councils are not mandated to lead community-coordinated recovery and they may not have relevant expertise, skills or experience. If a council does not have the capacity to resource recovery efforts, they are not required to undertake this role. In this case, another council, organisation or individual may take on this role if they have capacity. Alternatively, recovery could be uncoordinated. Ultimately, the State is responsible for ensuring recovery is coordinated.

Recent events such as the Eyre Peninsula Flooding from ex-tropical cyclone Tiffany, the Cherry Gardens Fire, the Keilira Bushfire, and the Middleton Flooding demonstrated that when a Control Agency or the Coordinating Agency does not approach Recovery when the emergency begins or provide coordinated support, it puts communities at risk of further harm. Throughout some of these events, the State Government shifted their responsibilities to local councils who did not have the knowledge of what was required, capacity or capability to coordinate recovery.

Replicating Victoria or NSW recovery models by attributing more responsibility to local government should not be a solution for South Australia as they do not take into considerations the nuances of South Australian dynamics such as the dispersed population, particularly in regional South Australia. Data from [Profile ID](#) states that in 2022 South Australia has an Estimated Resident Population (ERP) of 402,970 for Regional SA, with a population density of 0.41 persons per square km. In comparison, 2022 ERP for Regional NSW is 2,862,995, with a population density of 3.63 persons per square km and for Regional VIC is 1,590,226, with a population density of 7.31 persons per square km. As such, regional South Australian Councils are limited in their capacity to take on additional responsibilities of the State Government. Local Government are key stakeholders and must be engaged in the Recovery process, but the State Government cannot discharge its responsibility to coordinate Recovery regardless of the size and scale of disaster.

During the River Murray Flood Recovery efforts, there were systematic challenges potentially deriving from lack of accountability, insufficient resourcing, and/or ineffective planning and engagement with zones prior to the disaster. The State Recovery Co-ordinator should be resourced to take greater accountability of South Australian Recovery needs for disasters of any scale, including greater planning regarding social connections, strengths and vulnerabilities to better place them to ensure a coordinated recovery.

20. Are recovery powers sufficient, and if not, what powers should be included? Should recovery powers be subject to an extension process, similar to the existing powers under section 25?

Greater emphasis should be placed on community-based emergency management planning, to have zones ready and more resilient to be faced with disaster. Bringing together zone communities to design relevant activities and actions when faced with disaster can help alleviate common challenges and place less demand on all tiers of government.

25. Are any changes needed to the offence provisions in the EM Act?

There should be a review of the legislation to ensure there is consistency of powers and that those powers are appropriate for the service, irrespective of the emergency.

27. Do the employment protections for volunteers need to be strengthened? Should there be a remedy attached to these provisions?

Given the importance of volunteers in the state's emergency management arrangements and need to provide protections in the Act, the State Government should consider the decline in volunteering and how this will impact on the current emergency management arrangements. The [University of Sydney 2022 report](#) into the decline highlighted the traditional importance of volunteers in supporting Australia's crisis resilience, building community networks and mobilising community resources. With significant downturns in volunteering the current South Australian emergency management arrangements will continue to decline in sustainability. The State should consider its primary responsibility for emergency management for South Australia and invest in new concepts of community emergency management approaches to ensure undue burden is not placed on all tiers of government.

Solutions should not be purely government-centric, they need to be adaptable to changes in society resulting in less time to contribute to traditional volunteer models and identify how spontaneous volunteers can be effectively utilised. Leveraging existing strengths and passions of local communities can better leverage local resources, build greater community engagement with emergency management, and actively participate in matters that are important to them. Positive examples already include the [CFS Farm Fire Unit Project](#) and how the CFS can better collaborate with members of the community to deliver advantageous outcomes.

There are concerns in regional South Australia about the ability to effectively respond to emergencies due to the downturn in traditional volunteers and an ageing population. There are concerns that with increased tourism and reduced capacity to fulfil the current arrangements, the State Government is exposing itself to risk with the inability to effectively manage their overall Emergency Management responsibility.

Through the review of the EM Act, the State Government should consider more sustainable solutions that don't place increased demand on already-stretched local government resources and for the ability to volunteer more flexibility and engage proactively with community and other stakeholders to develop end-to-end plans.

31. Should the EM Act provide an explicit mechanism to facilitate the mobilisation of the public sector workforce when additional support is required to assist in responding to and recovering from emergencies?

To set South Australia up for complex, compounding and cascading disasters, there should be greater flexibility to draw upon the mobilisation of the public sector to fulfil the State's responsibilities in

emergency management. Recent challenges in mobilisation of the public sector for the River Murray Flood placed increasing demand on local government. While local government has an important role in supporting the response and recovery from emergencies, the primary responsibility remains that of the State Government.

Any explicit mechanisms should not impose additional barriers to mobilising the public sector and should seek to provide greater clarity on the role of the State Government during emergencies.

32. What future threats may not be able to be adequately managed by the EM Act and what changes would be needed to address this?

Levee Management

Levee management across state government, local government and private land has been unclear for many years which led to urgent action having to be taken in preparation for the 2022-2023 River Murray floods. This remains unclear following the floods and a mechanism to clarify roles and responsibilities is needed.

Waste Management

Local government experience in the 2019/20 bushfire season was that this was a serious issue and there was some community expectation that councils would be responsible for waste management. However, this responsibility should rest with the State Government and be guided by clear policies and procedures.

In addition, the Royal Commission Report Recommendation 20.1 *Debris clean-up arrangements* noted that:

Governments should create and publish standing policy guidance on whether they will or will not assist to clean-up debris, including contaminated debris, resulting from natural hazards.

The LGA's response was to support the recommendation to provide greater clarity. The SEMP makes Green Industries South Australia the lead agency in the *Disaster Waste Management Capability Plan 2018*. This is appropriate.

Waste management continues to be an issue for South Australian communities during emergencies with contaminated waste being dumped in public spaces, which increases public safety risks. The State Government should consider methods to increase accountability on relevant state agencies to prepare for waste management issues, including establishing their own panels to swiftly respond to waste management needs.

Climate Change and resilience building

Climate Change in Australia highlights that South Australia is already experiencing the impacts of climate change and that the climate is projected to continue to change into the future.

The Act and subsequent plans should take greater account regarding climate change and how South Australia can build resilience into current and future arrangements. Groups such as Adapt West and Resilient East have provided valuable input into building resilience.

Inability to resource Emergency Management Arrangements

Ability to resource the current Emergency Management Arrangements continue to present challenges through duplication of work, inter-government state agencies, changes to volunteering dynamics,

reduction in State Government employees in regional SA, economics and climate change. The State Government should consider how the Act could support greater sustainability and how the State Government can be more accountable for its primary responsibility in emergency management.

The South Australian community should not be expected to understand the nuances of the South Australian Emergency Management Arrangements and the varying places to seek information. South Australia would greatly benefit from a trusted Emergency Management Agency that can provide clear guidance and leadership, be a single point of truth for Emergency Management information, oversee all activities and reduce administrative burden.

Many elements of the existing structure managed by committees and separate agencies poses considerable duplication of work, including:

- Inconsistent or duplication of training between agencies and varying application of roles and responsibilities
- No synergies between ZEMC's and ZEST's
- Multiple funding applications for similar work
- Expectation to participate in large amounts of committees and documentation reviews

With a single point of truth, the community benefit from greater clarity and key stakeholders would benefit from shared information, training and resources, greater collaboration and transparency.

Local Government contribution to Emergency Management should be proportionate and the State Government should consider how they can provide greater resourcing to its arrangements so that communities and councils are not exposed to greater harm, such as increased financial risk, reduction in local services and increased rates due to taking on an unequitable balance of responsibility.

Mental health and wellbeing

All elements of Emergency Management in South Australia need greater account of mental health and wellbeing for first-responders, emergency management community and local communities. SA Emergency Management arrangements should identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of communities and include them in the decisions that impact them.

New and emerging risks

The current Act does not provide good assurance for how the State will address new and emerging risks. For example, with the establishment of the South Australian Space Industry Centre there should be engagement with this industry for guidance on potential risk exposure from space debris and solar flares and if this should be included as an emerging risk to South Australia that would be required to be managed under the South Australian Emergency Management Arrangements. Establishing an independent South Australian Emergency Management Agency could place more accountability on the state with identifying, researching and providing guidance to SEMC regarding potential threats.

35. Please provide any other comments about the EM Act.

Zone Emergency Management Committees

The current Act refers to the establishment of Emergency Management Zones and the establishment of a management committee for local planning for the Zone. There have been broad concerns about the suitability and effectiveness of the Zone Emergency Management Committees (ZEMC's) and it is unclear how they interact with Zone Emergency Support Teams (ZEST's), Resilience and Recovery. In addition, the Emergency Management Zones are not used consistently amongst Control Agencies. Broadly, the accountability and responsibility for relevant solutions to risk and management of the

committees is being discharged to local councils, with increasing expectations from varying state government agencies for councils to take on more that is proportionate to their role in emergency management.

There should be consideration for:

- The need for end-to-end Zone Planning by an independent agency (currently ZEMC's sit with the SES and devalues their role as key stakeholders for managing hazards and response)
- Whether reference to Emergency Management Zones is required within the Act, or if better placed within a revised SEMP that provides greater clarity on their purpose
- How greater accountability can be placed on the responsibility for preparing, reviewing and maintaining Zone Plans without placing additional burden on local government
- The need to ensure management of the committees provides great value, brings together all stakeholders, facilitates robust discussion and greater accountability for actions from state government
- Sustainable structures that reduce time and financial burden through many segmented committees

Summary

- Overall, the current complex arrangements are unsustainable with all tiers of government struggling with resources.
- The current concepts around shared responsibility can often result in lack of clarity regarding accountability and often result in attribution of blame without sustainable solutions.
- Throughout recent years, many projects involving local government and NGOs have highlighted that they need additional funding and clarification to derive better outcomes.
- The management by committees and subcommittees provides many missed opportunities for meaningful programs that provide benefit to not only emergency services, but also all partners in South Australian Emergency Management and also creates red tape for meaningful outcomes.
- Without support from the State Government to establish a leading body to drive fulltime leadership for all aspects of emergency management (PPRR and all hazards and inclusive of community) the State continues to expose itself to increased risk of not fulfilling its responsibility in emergency management.
- The review of the EM Act should take these considerations into account and ensure the State adapts the objects and guiding principles of the Act to establish sustainability for the emergency management sector.
- The primary responsibility of Emergency Management belongs to the State Government and support from Local Government should not be an equal weighting, with local government being seen as an important stakeholder.
- The South Australian Community should be afforded an Emergency Management Agency that can provide clear and consistent information, without the additional burden of understanding the nuances of government.
- The South Australian Emergency Management Arrangements need greater weighting on building resilience and greater planning for all phases of emergency management that is inclusive of community strengths and needs.