TOWARDS A MORE DISASTER RESILIENT AND SAFER VICTORIA

GREEN PAPER: OPTIONS AND ISSUES

State Government
Victoria

The Victorian Government is reforming the State's crisis and emergency management arrangements to create a more disaster resilient and safer Victoria. To determine the most effective arrangements for Victoria, a range of issues need to be resolved. A number of these issues are discussed in this paper; however, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list and the Government is interested in hearing about other matters that may affect Victoria's ability to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from emergency events.

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FOREWORD

The resolve of Victorians has been tested through recent bushfires, droughts and floods. These events resulted in a devastating loss of lives, caused widespread economic loss and destroyed many properties.

However, communities throughout Victoria have come together in the face of such adversity, to support each other to work for a better future. The courage, determination and strength of spirit displayed by affected individuals, communities, emergency workers and volunteers is uplifting and inspiring and is a great credit to all involved.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission *Final Report* identified aspects of Victoria's emergency management arrangements that did not operate as well as they should have when most needed. The recent *Interim Report* of the Victorian Floods Review also identified issues with agencies acting in 'silos' and being stretched beyond their capacity. These reports show our emergency management arrangements struggle when confronted by widespread, intense, rapid onset and/or prolonged events.

Victoria will continue to face natural and man-made disasters, which have the potential to severely disrupt the normal functioning of communities, families and individuals. We need to learn from the findings of the recent reports on the bushfires and floods, and develop an emergency management model that sees all agencies working together to respond effectively to all hazards, regardless of the intensity or scale.

The Government is committed to helping all Victorians build resilience in the face of disasters and recognises that this is a responsibility that must be shared by individuals, households, businesses and communities, as well as by governments.

The individual Victorians who plan for, respond to and assist communities recover from emergencies do a magnificent job. However, their work is often hampered by administration and legislation that does not have a sufficiently strong or clear focus on serving all within the community or achieving a genuine 'all hazards, all agencies' approach.

Victoria's emergency services are heavily reliant on the efforts of thousands of volunteers. Volunteers are pivotal to successful emergency response and recovery. We need to ensure we have the right structures in place to support these hard-working and dedicated groups and individuals.

This *Green Paper* will play an important role in the process to reform Victoria's crisis and emergency management arrangements. In undertaking these reforms, the Victorian Government aims to ensure that Victoria is fully prepared for future disasters and able to recover more quickly from their impacts. Our intention is to build a greater capacity to protect homes, businesses and livelihoods, and to minimise damage to our communities and infrastructure. Most importantly, we want to be much better placed to save lives and to reduce the personal trauma and hardship that can accompany severe emergency events.

These reforms are vitally important to Victoria's future. We encourage all Victorians to be part of this opportunity to make our State a world leader in how we prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Ted Baillieu MLA
Premier

Peter Ryan MLA
Deputy Premier

INTRODUCTION

Victoria's emergency management framework is nearly 30 years old and no longer meets the needs of the State. Our recent experience of natural disasters, including the heatwave and bushfires in early 2009 and the floods in 2010-11, shows clearly that the risk environment has changed in Victoria. Victoria is experiencing more regular and more severe natural events, in line with the global trend.[1] According to research, in 2010 a total of 385 natural disasters killed more than 297,000 people worldwide, affected over 217 million others and caused US $123.9 billion in economic damage.[2]

Victorians are, and will continue to be, at risk from a broad range of natural and human-induced hazards. The CSIRO has predicted that Victoria is likely to see more extreme bushfires, floods, droughts and storm surges.[3] Many communities, and industries and, much infrastructure, are located in areas that are likely to be affected by these severe weather events. It is important that municipal councils, communities and individuals are supported to develop the skills to navigate and mitigate the risks and local impacts of crisis events.

With more extreme events likely to occur, it is more important than ever for Victoria to have effective arrangements in place to manage the risks facing the State and to assist people to be safe in the face of adversity and uncertainty. The findings of both the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and the Victorian Floods Review show that Victoria's existing legislation, policy, governance and operational arrangements for crisis and emergency management need modifying and upgrading to meet the challenges ahead. Victoria manages smaller emergencies relatively well, but needs legislative, administrative and cultural change to break down the organisational 'silos' that inhibit an 'all hazards, all agencies' approach to managing major emergencies.[4]

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1. Regina Below, Femke Vos and Debarati Guha-Sapir, *Moving Towards Harmonization of Disaster Data: A Study of Six Asian Databases*, CRED Working Paper No. 272, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Brussels, September 2010, p. vi.

2. Debby Guha-Sapir, Femke Vos, Regina Below and Sylvain Ponserre, *Annual Disaster Statistical Review 2010: The Trends and Numbers*, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Brussels, May 2011, p. 1.

3. Helen Cleugh, Mark Stafford Smith, Michael Battaglia and Paul Graham (eds), *Climate Change: Science and Solutions for Australia*, CSIRO, Collingwood, 2011.

4. Neil Comrie AO APM, *Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response: Interim Report*, 30 June 2011, p. 28.

Victorian disasters timeline

Year	Event
1934	Yarra Valley floods
1939	Black Friday Fires
1939	Heatwave
1940	Collision at sea – Queenscliff
1943-44	Bushfires
1962	Bushfires – Lara and Dandenongs
1966	Fire – William Booth Memorial Hostel
1969	Bushfires – Lara and Melbourne fringe
1969	Violet town rail collision
1970	Westgate bridge collapse
1971 & 74	Widespread flooding
1977	Fires – Western District
1983	Ash Wednesday fires
1987	Hoddle and Queen Street shootings
1990	Heatwave
1991	Floods
1991	Coode Island chemical storage fire
1993	Widespread flooding
1996	Kew residential services fire
1997	Dandenong Ranges fires
1997	Anthrax outbreak
1998	Longford gas plant accident
2000	Legionnaires' disease outbreak
2002-03	Alpine fires
2003	Melbourne hail storm
2003-04	Avian flu outbreaks
2007	Gippsland floods
2009	Heatwave
2009	Gippsland and Black Saturday Bushfires
2009	H1N1 pandemic
2010-11	Widespread flooding

On 7 February [2009] there was no single person in charge of operational planning, tasking and accountability...This divided responsibility and accountability reflects arrangements in the *Emergency Management Act,* the *Country Fire Authority Act* and the Emergency Management Manual Victoria...This meant that cooperation and coordination were the only viable approaches for managing the emergency on the day, since neither bushfire control agency nor anyone else had pre-eminence over the other in a statutory or practical sense. As a consequence, there was no cohesive and unambiguous leadership structure.

2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, Final Report, *Vol 1, Part 2, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 365*

The Victorian Government has committed to implement all 67 recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and has already made a number of changes to Victoria's emergency management arrangements to implement these recommendations. Nonetheless, while Victoria is now in a much stronger position, significant challenges remain.

In particular, while the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and the Government's response have focused on bushfire management, Victoria's Statewide capacity to deal with all types of hazards remains to be strengthened.

The Government is committed to improving Victoria's emergency management arrangements by focusing on:

> service delivery to Victorians across government and communities;

> building community resilience;

> achieving a genuine 'all-hazards, all agencies' approach; and

> enduring and sustainable change.

In meeting this commitment, it is important that the Government carefully consider all options for reform so that it can put in place the arrangements that will be most effective in positioning Victoria to meet the challenges of emergencies well into the future.

Achieving a more resilient and safer Victoria relies on understanding a complex set of interconnected factors that operate in the Victorian environment. Change in one area will have flow-on impacts for communities, organisations and individuals. Our crisis and emergency management arrangements must be sufficiently agile to adapt to factors including demographic change, increased urbanisation, reliance on technology and social media, the heightened movement of people and goods around the world, and the implications of climate change.

This *Green Paper* is designed to challenge current thinking about Victoria's crisis and emergency management arrangements and to pose provocative questions about the practical options for reform.

This Paper provides:

> an overview of the current legislative and policy arrangements for crisis and emergency management in Victoria;

> a discussion of the international trends in emergency management;

> an analysis of the issues and challenges for Victoria's arrangements; and

> immediate and longer term options for reform, noting that these are not the only options, nor are they mutually exclusive.

This Paper is designed to stimulate community discussion and invite public comments on the proposed policy response. This feedback will be considered by the Government when working through policy options, as will any further issues arising from the final report of the Victorian Floods Review.

This *Green Paper* is an important step in the comprehensive review of Victoria's crisis and emergency management arrangements. It marks the start of a process that will be the first opportunity to effect significant change to these arrangements since 1986, when the current *Emergency Management Act 1986* was introduced following the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires.

After the Government considers feedback on this *Green Paper*, it will produce a White Paper, outlining its response and timetables for action. The White Paper will be released in 2012.

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Need more information?

The *Final Report* of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission is available for reading and downloading at **www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au**

The *Interim Report* of the Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response can be viewed at the Victorian Flood Review website: **www.floodsreview.vic.gov.au**

Although the clear intent of the *Emergency Management Act*, the State Emergency Response Plan and the EMMV is to provide for an 'all hazards, all agencies' approach to emergency management, this has not occurred in reality. In the absence of an effective enabling policy to 'drive' this philosophy, the emergency services agencies in Victoria operate in a siloed structure with each agency focused on legislated obligations to address specific hazards.

Neil Comrie AO APM, Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response: Interim Report, 30 June 2011, p. 26

PART A: CONTEXT

1. Victoria's current legislative and policy framework

The foundations of Victoria's emergency management arrangements are in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* (the Act), which was enacted following the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983 to provide for the management and organisation of the prevention of, response to and recovery from emergencies in Victoria.[5]

The arrangements created by the legislation were intended "...to provide an integrated framework within which we can seek to manage any event which threatens the life and property of the people of this State".[6] In this way, the Act provides Victoria with the legislative basis for an 'all hazards, all agencies' approach to emergency management.[7]

The key features of the Act include:

> the allocation of responsibility at the State level to a single Minister, historically the Minister for Police and Emergency Services;

> the introduction of the emergency response coordination role, assigned to Victoria Police;

> the concentration of policy advice at the State level in a representative peak council, the Victoria Emergency Management Council (VEMC);

> a requirement to have a State Emergency Response Plan (or DISPLAN) and a State Emergency Recovery Plan;

> the allocation of control of emergency response based on statutory function and/or expertise;

> formalising the role of local government in emergency management planning; and

> the creation in 2000 of the statutory position of Emergency Services Commissioner to set and monitor standards and review and advise the Minister on emergency management.

The Act is supported by the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV), which contains policy and planning documents for emergency management in Victoria. It also provides details about the roles different organisations play in the emergency management arrangements, including identifying control agencies and key support agencies for response and recovery.

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Need more information?

A detailed description of Victoria's current emergency management arrangements and the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* can be found at the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner's website: **www.oesc.vic.gov.au**

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5. Victorian Parliament, Second Reading Speech, *Emergency Management Bill*, 27 March 1986, p. 745.

6. Protection of the environment was subsequently added.

7. 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *Interim Report*, Parliament of Victoria, August 2009, p. 262.

What is an 'all hazards, all agencies' approach?

The principle underpinning the 'all hazards, all agencies' approach is that effective emergency management requires a whole-of-government approach.

The 'all hazards' approach assumes that all emergencies create similar problems and that many of the measures required to deal with emergencies are generic, such as early warning, evacuation, medical services and community recovery. At the same time, the approach acknowledges that many emergencies will require specific prevention, response and recovery measures.

The 'all agencies' approach assumes that all agencies have some role to play in emergency management. While the nature of emergency management will vary from agency to agency, common tasks are likely to include ensuring the continuity of services, protecting the agency's own assets, interests and personnel, and protecting the community and environment from risks.

1.1 Recent developments

In response to the 67 recommendations of the *Final Report* of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the Victorian Government has made – and is continuing to make – changes to Victoria's legislative and policy framework for emergency management. Two key changes so far can be summarised as:

> appointing a Fire Services Commissioner responsible for promoting and leading reform in the fire services to deliver improved operational performance and the capacity for the three fire services (the MFB, the CFA and DSE) to operate as one integrated force to prepare for and manage major fires; and

> publishing the Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework in December 2010. The Framework aims to:

>> develop a shared responsibility for bushfire safety between State and local government, fire services and emergency management agencies, communities households and individuals;

>> improve public awareness of bushfire risk;

>> support and improve local bushfire safety planning; and

>> provide a range of options for individuals to choose from to maximise their chances of survival in a bushfire.

In his Progress Report, the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor was critical of some aspects of the Framework. The Fire Services Commissioner will take these observations into account in his first annual review of the Framework.

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Need more information?

The *Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework* can be downloaded from the Fire Services Commissioner's website:

www.firecommissioner.vic.gov.au

1.2 Interim measures

The Government also plans to introduce legislation later this year to:

> remove the title of 'Coordinator in Chief' from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in recognition of the fact that he or she does not have an operational role, and designate responsibility for coordination of emergency response to the Chief Commissioner of Police. This will be achieved by expanding the Commissioner's role as the State Emergency Response Coordinator in accordance with the Royal Commission's final recommendation 11;

> enable the Chief Officer of the CFA to delegate his or her power to issue fire prevention notices in circumstances where a municipal fire prevention officer refuses or fails to do so after being requested by the Chief Officer in accordance with the Royal Commission's recommendation 54;

> amend the *Victoria State Emergency Services Act 2005* and *Emergency Management Act 1986* to facilitate VicSES' performance of its functions when it is the control agency for the response to an emergency (including simplifying the arrangements for members of other agencies to perform control functions); and

> incorporate a general emergency response responsibility into emergency service organisations (ESOs) legislation to recognise their broader responsibilities in the response to large scale emergencies, in addition to the hazard-specific obligations they are currently assigned.

The Government also intends to take or examine a series of administrative measures in the short term to address some of the identified shortcomings in the current arrangements including:

> the composition and focus of the Victorian Emergency Management Council and its associated planning committees (Option 2 on page 16);

> the potential to develop Incident Management Teams for all hazards responses drawing on people with the necessary skills from across agencies and informed by specialists in specific hazards;

> adapting Level 3 incident control centres and management systems for use in response to natural hazard emergencies other than fires (focusing on those in flood risk zones as a priority); and

> adding a mandatory field in Cabinet submissions on any emergency management impacts of legislation or policies.

2.   Trends and models in emergency management

World-wide developments such as climate change are altering the patterns of natural disasters. Developments in information and communications technology provide greater ability to forecast, prevent and mitigate the effects of disasters. Other global changes, such as economic downturns, have flow-on effects on investment decisions and the emergency management workforce, particularly volunteer availability. Adverse economic conditions may have a negative effect on community cohesion, challenging the disaster resilience of communities. While many of these challenges are global, responses need to be developed locally to suit Victorian conditions.

2.1 Trends in emergency management approaches

Over the past 30 years there has been a substantial increase in the number of and severity of natural and human-induced disasters occurring around the world – more than half of the reported disasters since 1900 occurred after 1998.[8] Disasters are causing greater economic impact and disrupting the livelihoods of unprecedented numbers of people.

Even with the increasing number of disasters, the number of lives reported lost as a result has been steadily decreasing, suggesting a growth in community resilience and capacity to manage hazards.[9] Undoubtedly, this has been supported by changes in approaches to emergency management that increasingly seek to identify vulnerabilities, mitigate risks and empower communities to take responsibility for decisions that affect their lifestyles and livelihoods.

Around the world, approaches to emergency management have evolved to reflect changing threats, community needs and expectations. Post-World War II, the practice was heavily focused on 'command-and-control', delivered top-down by civil defence organisations.

Figure 1: People affected by disasters worldwide since 1900[10]
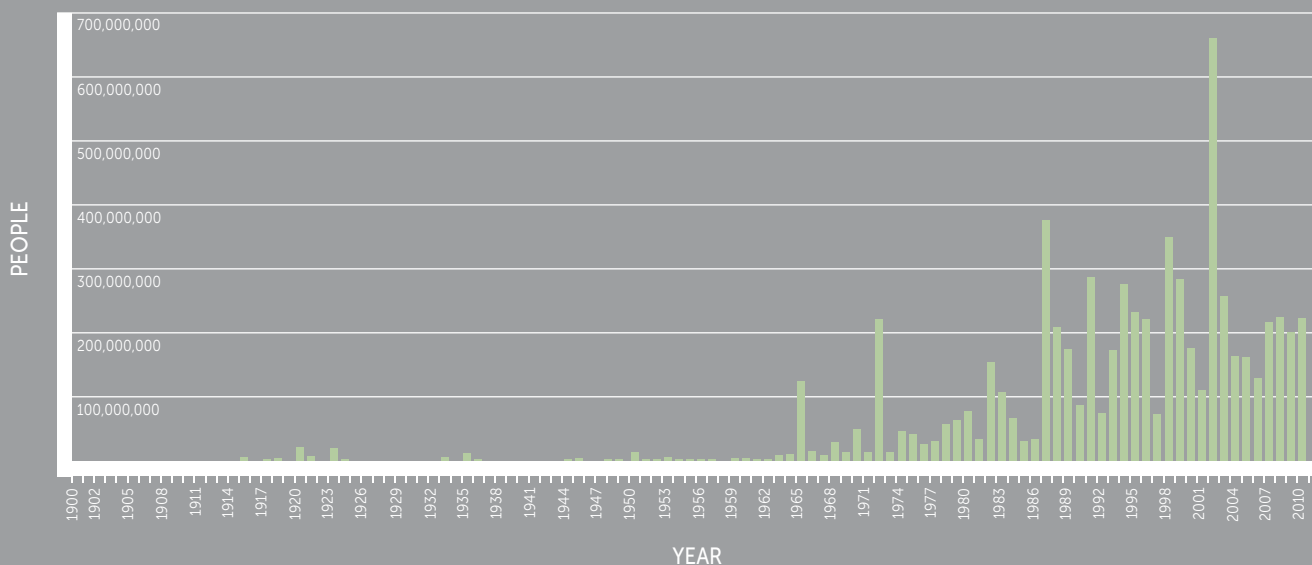
8.   Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, *The International Disaster Database*, August 2011, accessed from www.emdat.be

9.   Ibid.

10.   Op. Cit. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, *The International Disaster Database*, August 2011, accessed from www.emdat.be

Comprehensive emergency management emerged in the late 1970s and identified the need for all agencies to focus on managing all hazards. The comprehensive approach is synonymous with 'PPRR' the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery model. This approach is reflected in Victoria's *Emergency Management Act 1986* as prevention, response and recovery, with planning, preparation, operational coordination and community participation running across all three of these activities.[11] While PPRR has been widely adopted, in practice these phases are not mutually exclusive and do not occur sequentially, and the model does not reflect the growing expectation by communities to be engaged in issues that affect them.

Integrated emergency management is built on the comprehensive approach and seeks to include all stakeholders – vertically and horizontally – in anticipating all types of hazards, assessing and managing capabilities, and undertaking planning, response and recovery activities. This recognises the need to engage with people and organisations at the local level, who are closest to and most affected by hazards. This emphasis on including actors at all levels highlights the need to involve non-government organisations and the private sector.

The focus in Australia, particularly since the 1990s, has moved to **risk management** and sharing responsibility for community safety. The need to identify, analyse, evaluate, treat and monitor risks is a key feature of the Australian/New Zealand Risk Management Standard (AS/NZS 180 31000:2009). This approach recognises that some hazards cannot be completely eliminated, so they need to be managed to mitigate their potential impact.

Understanding, managing and reducing risks increases a community's ability to withstand and recover from emergencies, thereby strengthening its **disaster resilience**. In 2011, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the *National Disaster Resilience Strategy*. The Strategy highlights that disaster resilience is a shared responsibility and that achieving community and organisational resilience will require sustained behavioural change.

The notion of a **shared responsibility** requires individuals, communities, the private sector, emergency management and support agencies, and all levels of government, to contribute to the management of risk and promoting community safety. It is increasingly recognised that emergency management is a whole-of-government responsibility and not just within the remit of emergency services. In some cases, emergency management is also a function undertaken by industry on behalf of and in partnership with government agencies, particularly in sectors with privatised essential services.

This shared approach goes beyond vesting responsibility in government or emergency service organisations to protect communities, and ensures individuals recognise they are also responsible for making certain decisions that affect their own resilience and wellbeing. The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission emphasised the need for all parties to assume greater responsibility in preventing and managing emergencies.[12] While this review was focused on bushfires, the Commission's observations and findings extend to all hazards.

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Need more information?

The *National Disaster Resilience Strategy* can be viewed at the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet's website:
www.dpc.vic.gov.au

11.   *Emergency Management Act 1986*, s. 4A.

12.   2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *Final Report,* Vol II, Part Two, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 352.

Gippsland's critical infrastructure partnership

With its vast natural resources of coal, oil and gas, the Latrobe Valley is a major source of energy for Victoria. The privatisation of the Victorian electricity industry in 1995 was the catalyst for the creation of a network of private and government stakeholders to come together to address emergency management needs relating to critical infrastructure in the Latrobe Valley. This network, the Central Gippsland Essential Industry Group (CGEIG), includes the Department of Primary Industries, Victoria Police, CFA and VicSES, as well as providers of essential services such as Loy Yang Power, SP Ausnet, ExxonMobil and Gippsland Water.

The CGEIG is a forum where industry, emergency service organisations and government liaise and cooperate on common emergency management and security issues. It provides a framework of shared responsibility to enhance strategic emergency management arrangements and support for the continuity of essential industries. The CGEIG membership covers a breadth of industry and agency expertise that contributes to emergency management planning at municipal and State levels.

The CGEIG has fostered close relationships between emergency services, industry and government, where information is shared to better understand dependencies. Members support each other and work closely together to plan and respond to emergencies such as coal mine fires, floods and industrial incidents that may occur in the Latrobe Valley.
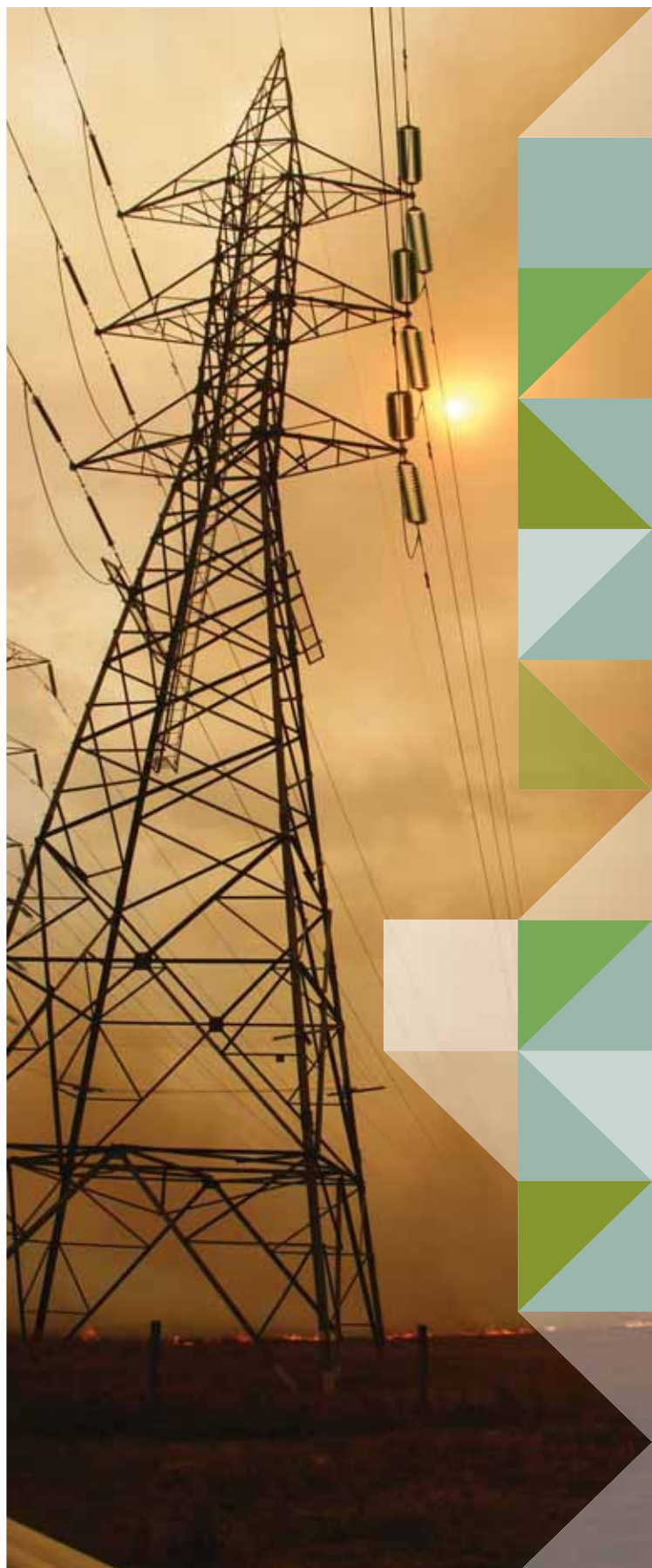
2.2 Other emergency management frameworks

Emergency management frameworks in Australia are built on comprehensive and integrated emergency management models. These emphasise the need for locally-led management of hazards.

There is no international emergency management standard; each country adopts the most appropriate operating structure and model to suit its individual needs:

> New Zealand is recognised as a world leader in its risk management approach to increasing the capability of communities and individuals to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

> The United Kingdom's integrated emergency management model focuses on the six steps of anticipation, assessment, prevention, preparation, response and recovery. This model focuses on the consequences and wider impacts of events rather than their causes.

> Canada uses a comprehensive 'all hazards' system with an integrated risk management framework.

> The United States also adopts the comprehensive 'all hazards' approach.

The experiences of other jurisdictions offer insight into how other models of emergency management operate in different contexts. Traditional models of emergency management that were heavily response oriented no longer meet the level or nature of demands. Around the world, emergency management now involves a shared responsibility to identify and manage risks, to minimise the consequences of hazards and to enable communities to be more disaster resilient. Victoria's approach should draw on these experiences while ensuring that the State's unique circumstances, risks and demands are recognised.

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Question for the reader:

Are there other models of emergency management, or features of other models, that could be adopted and adapted to strengthen Victoria's current arrangements?

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Need more information?

More information about the emergency management frameworks of the countries discussed in section 2.2 can be accessed from the following websites:

New Zealand
www.civildefence.govt.nz

United Kingdom
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience

Canada
www.publicsafety.gc.ca

United States
www.fema.gov

PART B: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

A number of issues must be resolved in determining the reforms needed to deliver emergency management arrangements that will support a more resilient and safer Victoria. Key issues and challenges are discussed in this section.

3. Governance arrangements

The primary purpose of leadership and governance for prevention/mitigation, response and recovery is to:

> reduce the potential impact of risks;

> provide leadership to the community and government agencies; and

> coordinate whole-of-government activities, including media and public information, in the event of an emergency.

3.1 Committees

It is clear that, aside from operational response, a suite of functions need to be performed in emergency management. These are to:

a. resolve emerging and complex cross-department policy issues with whole-of-government implications;

b. oversee prevention/mitigation, response and recovery implementation within existing policy settings;

c. ensure, during an emergency, that broad social, economic and environmental implications are addressed at a whole-of-government level;

d. support the controllers at each tier (municipal, regional and State) in undertaking their functions;

e. support whole-of-government efforts in developing disaster resilient communities;

f. support community relief and recovery; and

g. coordinate recovery and reconstruction after a large-scale event.

In Victoria, there are three types of committees responsible for delivering these functions:

1. whole-of-government decision-making committees;

2. planning committees; and

3. operational committees.

The hierarchy of these committees is illustrated in Figure 2 and the first two types of committee are discussed in more detail below. Municipal level planning is discussed in section 5. This section also considers the governance arrangements for emergency management bodies, ministerial responsibility under the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and workforce management.

Concern has been raised that these committees have overlapping roles and responsibilities, or the roles have not been undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation or plans.

Figure 2: Leadership and governance arrangements for emergency management

Cabinet

Security and Emergencies Committee
Ministers

Minister

Central Government Response Committee
Senior Officials

Victoria Emergency Management Council
Chair: Minister

Victorian Emergency Management Council
Coordination Group

Prevention/Mitigation Planning Committees
(State Fire Management Planning Committee, State Emergency Mitigation Committee)

State Emergency Response Planning Committee
State Response Coordinator (Chief of Police)

State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee
State Recovery Coordinator (Executive Director, DHS)

Support and specialist committees with overlapping roles and responsibilities

KEY

Strategic decision-making committees

Prevention/mitigation planning committees

Response planning committees

Recovery planning committees

Reporting/accountability lines

3.2 Whole-of-government decision-making committees

In Victoria two whole-of-government bodies, neither of which is mandated in legislation, deal with all emergencies throughout the phases of prevention/mitigation, response and recovery:

1. **The Security and Emergencies Committee of Cabinet** (SEC) is the Victorian Government's decision-making body where an extreme emergency event (including a terrorist incident) requires whole-of-government portfolio coordination. The committee is chaired by the Premier and comprises an additional nine Ministers, including the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

2. **The Central Government Response Committee** (CGRC) is a senior officials group established to support the SEC. It is responsible for coordinating the whole-of-government departmental response to emergencies in Victoria that have, or may have, an extreme impact or that have impacts cutting across departmental responsibilities. The committee is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and comprises representatives of each department at Deputy Secretary level, a Deputy Commissioner from Victoria Police and the Department of Human Services (DHS) Recovery Coordinator. The CGRC was initially called together to 'respond' to a major incident (the Longford Gas crisis) in 1998. It now has ongoing strategic oversight for policy development for all hazards, including natural disasters, pandemics, animal diseases and security issues.

Despite these standing arrangements, when faced with some large-scale emergencies successive Victorian Governments have responded by establishing alternative governance arrangements. Concerns have been expressed that this has led to unclear lines of authority and decision-making. However, there is general acknowledgement that additional governance arrangements may be required in the event of large-scale emergencies and should be facilitated, provided such arrangements include clear accountability lines and clear mandates that do not duplicate existing structures.

Victoria's use of a Ministerial and a senior officials' forum for whole-of-government decision-making is consistent with international practice in a number of countries, such as New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom. However, reform may be required to ensure that these bodies function effectively and that there is no perceived need to establish alternative arrangements following a large-scale disaster. In any reform option, the type of senior officials included and the level of Ministerial involvement will be informed by the scale of the event and its social, economic and environmental consequences.

? Questions for the reader:

What are the best arrangements for resolving emerging and complex cross-department policy issues that have whole-of-government implications?

What are the best arrangements for ensuring, during an emergency, that broad social, economic and environmental implications are managed at a whole-of-government level?

3.3 Policy advice and planning committees

Under the *Emergency Management Act 1986*, policy advice at the State level is assigned to a representative peak council, the Victoria Emergency Management Council (VEMC).[13] The VEMC's role is 'to advise the Coordinator in Chief (currently the Minister for Police and Emergency Services) on all matters, including the coordination of activities of government and non-government agencies, relating to the prevention of, response to and recovery from emergencies'. This broad remit covers function (b) and aspects of functions (a) and (c) (described in section 3.1) and has required the VEMC to have a broad membership, which has limited its effectiveness.

Concern has been raised that there is some overlap with the role of the SEC, which was established after the VEMC and has a wider remit, and that the VEMC's relationship with the CGRC is unclear. However, the VEMC does provide a reporting line to the Minister for the various planning committees that report to it. The VEMC was introduced following the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires to address a gap in the State's policy capabilities. It could be argued that this reporting role is part of the 'normal' business of government and does not need to have a specific statutory basis.

Under the current legislative arrangements, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services is required to arrange for the preparation and review of a State Emergency Response Plan and a State Emergency Recovery Plan. The Response Plan requires the Chief Commissioner of Police as State Coordinator for Response to coordinate the activities of agencies with roles or responsibilities in relation to emergency response. Recovery planning is the responsibility of the State Recovery Coordinator (an Executive Director in the Department of Human Services).

> **?** **Question for the reader:**
>
> What are the best arrangements for overseeing preparedness for response and recovery implementation?
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> Is there a continuing need for VEMC, and if so, what should its role be?

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13. *Emergency Management Act 1986* (Vic), s 8.

3.4 Accountability for prevention and mitigation

While the State Emergency Response Plan and State Emergency Recovery Plan include some elements of preparation for response and recovery activities, they do not cover the broader emergency management elements of planning for prevention and mitigation of risk, as well as response and recovery.

Many activities of government contribute to prevention and mitigation of the risk and impact of emergencies. Some of these are specific to emergency management (for example, fuel reduction burning and the construction of flood levees), while some may have broader objectives (for example, land use planning).

Increasingly, risk-based planning and mitigation measures are recognised as critical to minimising the impact of emergencies and increasing resilience. This has been acknowledged in numerous recent inquiries and reviews.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommended a range of measures to mitigate the risk of bushfires that are currently being implemented by the Victorian Government and the fire service agencies.

The *Interim Report* of the Review of the 2010-2011 Flood Warnings and Response noted: "The future challenge is to not only ensure that Victoria's emergency service organisations are equipped and trained to respond to emergencies but also to minimise the risk to life and property as far as possible".[14]

The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* also recognises that risk-based planning and mitigation are critical to increasing disaster resilience, recommending that "emergency management planning should be based on risk and be integrated with strategic planning of government and communities. It should consider risks and risk treatments across the social, built, economic and natural environments."[15]

As part of the Fire Services Reform Platform program, the Fire Services Commissioner will overhaul fire planning arrangements between fire service agencies and will integrate these arrangements with broader emergency management planning.

The Emergency Services Commissioner is assigned a limited role under the Act for overseeing or setting standards for prevention of emergencies.[16] Similarly, emergency risk management planning is only mandated in the legislative framework in relation to the resources at councils' disposal.[17] While the VEMC has established the State Emergency Mitigation Committee, this sub-committee has not been given any strategic direction about its role.

Option for consideration

Option 1 Accountability for prevention/mitigation planning could be improved by assigning responsibility to a designated role, consistent with the current arrangements for recovery and response planning. For example, this responsibility could be an extension to the existing legislated role of the Fire Services Commissioner or a specific role could be created. (Longer term)

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Question for the reader:

How can we improve accountability for prevention/mitigation planning and thereby support whole-of-government efforts in developing disaster resilient communities?

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14. Neil Comrie AO APM, *Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response – Interim Report, p 8.*

15. Accessed from Council of Australian Governments, *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience,* 13 February 2011, www.coag.gov.au, p3.

16. See *Emergency Management Act 1986*, s. 21 C(1)(c). This responsibility is constrained to ESTA and VicSES.

17. See *Emergency Management Act 1986*, s. 20 (2)(a) and (b).

The Coordinator in Chief is authorised to establish such committees 'as are necessary to ensure comprehensive and integrated emergency management'.[18] A number of VEMC sub-committees with responsibility for planning have been established by the Coordinator in Chief pursuant to this power. For example, a State Fire Management Planning Committee has been established, amongst others. Most of these committees are listed in Part 5 of the EMMV.

Below the level of the State Emergency Response Planning Committee and the State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee, there are a large number of support and specialist committees with overlapping roles and responsibilities. It is sometimes unclear which committee has charge of which issues. The result is unclear accountabilities, and ineffective planning and advice. There are opportunities for streamlining these committees. For example, it may be appropriate to mandate that only three committees should report to VEMC (or its successor): the State Emergency Response Planning Committee, the State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee and a new committee focused on Prevention/Mitigation (possibly a restructured State Emergency Mitigation Committee). Committees and sub-groups that still need to exist could then report to one of these committees.

Option for consideration

Option 2 Policy advice and planning committees could be rationalised so that only three planning committees report to VEMC (or its successor) and any additional committees and sub-groups report to one of these three committees. (Immediate term)

? Questions for the reader:

How can we create a more coherent and accountable committee structure that delivers all of the functions identified in 3.1 as being necessary in an emergency?

How do we ensure sub-committees and working groups provide appropriate products or services and that their continuation is warranted?

The remaining committees and sub-committees could then be given clearer accountability and reporting lines. This option could follow a similar process to that recently agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to reduce the number of Standing Councils and introduce limited-life Select Councils. These new arrangements also tighten the relationship between COAG and these councils by requiring them to have their work program endorsed by COAG and to provide an annual report to COAG, which includes an overview of decisions made by the councils.[19] Similar arrangements could be introduced for Victoria's emergency management committees.

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18.   *Emergency Management Act 1986*, s 9.

19.   Council of Australian Governments, COAG Communiqué: 13 February 2011, Australian Government, February 2011, Attachment C.

3.5 Operational committees

The membership of committees involved in planning and preparation is not necessarily the same as that needed to manage response and recovery. Therefore, when an emergency occurs, emergency management teams (EMTs) are established at the activated tiers (in section 3.1 (d)). This means that during an emergency, the incident has an EMT, the region has a REMT and the State tier has an SEMT, while government continues to work through the SEC and the CGRC.

Discussion of governance arrangements to support community relief and recovery and to coordinate recovery and reconstruction after a large-scale event can be found in sections 4 and 5.

3.6 Governance of emergency management bodies

The current legislative and administrative arrangements for emergency service organisations (ESOs) reinforce a 'silo' approach to emergency management. Changing governance structures could assist in improving service delivery.

A spectrum of approaches has been suggested for improving the governance of Victoria's emergency management bodies, ranging from merging ESOs to improving coordination through existing structures. These approaches include ways to allow each agency to maintain its identity while achieving the 'all hazards, all agencies' objective. Evidence before the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission provides a useful reminder of the risks associated with amalgamation, stating that:

> *"The evidence from the research into the effects of corporate mergers and takeovers is [...] clear: more than half of them fail in terms of value creation, and many end up exacerbating rather than erasing the tribal identities and 'silo mentalities' of the constituent parts they sought to remedy."*[20]

Options for consideration

Option 3 Establish a single emergency services board to oversee all ESOs that report to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. (Longer term)

Boards are typically responsible for an organisation's overall performance, setting corporate strategies and formulating policy. Currently the Victoria State Emergency Service (VicSES), the MFB, the CFA, Ambulance Victoria and the Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority (ESTA) each have their own boards, reporting to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. This option would require each of the ESOs to be accountable to the one body and promote greater cross-agency collaboration. (Longer-term)

Ambulance Victoria needs separate consideration, because it is both a health service and a response service.

? Questions for the reader:

Is a new structure required to govern emergency service organisations?

Is a single board the most appropriate oversight body for all ESO functions, including VicSES, the fire services, currently reporting to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and ESTA?

How should the Emergency Services Commissioner (ESC) or Fire Services Commissioner (FSC) be incorporated into such a board, if at all?

How should the emergency response component of Ambulance Victoria be considered?

20.   Professor Paul t'Hart, *Organising for Effective Emergency Management*, Submission to the Royal Commission on the Victorian Bushfires, School of Politics, Australian National University, 13 April 2010.

Option 4 Establish an umbrella body for all ESOs. This body would be responsible for overseeing and working with all emergency service organisations to ensure they are better integrated and deliver an even higher quality service to Victorians. (Longer term)

This umbrella body could extend the remit of the Fire Services Commissioner to cover non-fire services (including VicSES) or could play a broader leadership role in the sector, coordinating the emergency management activities of government departments, local councils, NGOs and private sector organisations. This body could also amalgamate the corporate functions of ESOs (such as human resources and legal functions) while leaving their operational command structures in place.

South Australia's Fire and Emergency Services Commission offers a possible model that largely maintains the structure and functions of each emergency service it supports, while Western Australia's Fire and Emergency Services Authority offers another model that consolidates a number of corporate and operational responsibilities in one body.

If option 4 were to include Ambulance Victoria, it would need to manage the complexities of Ambulance Victoria's funding model (partially self-funded) and its role in delivering non-emergency patient transport.

? **Questions for the reader:**

Is there merit in the idea of an umbrella body for all ESOs?

If so, what powers should be given to an umbrella body?

How should the Emergency Services Commissioner (ESC) or Fire Services Commissioner (FSC) be incorporated into such a body, if at all, or relate to such a body?

3.7 Ministerial responsibility under the Act

While Victoria Police has an overarching coordination role for emergency response and the Department of Human Services has a similar role with respect to relief and recovery, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services is the primary Minister with responsibility under the *Emergency Management Act 1986*. While the Minister's portfolio covers the principal response agencies, it does not cover all agencies and departments that have roles to play in prevention/mitigation and recovery. For example, land use planning and building codes, which play as critical a role in community safety as the work of emergency service organisations, are not within the Minister's portfolio responsibilities.

Under section 17A of the Act, the Minister is responsible for ensuring the preparation and review of a State Emergency Recovery Plan. In reality, the majority of departments and agencies have a role to play in relief and recovery. Yet, outside the context of particular emergencies, relief and recovery has not been given due attention across government. Given the complexity and number of players involved in relief and recovery, it may be appropriate to assign responsibility for relief and recovery to a specific Minister, separate to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. This dedicated focus would provide greater ownership of and accountability for the delivery of relief and recovery services in the aftermath of an emergency.

Option for consideration

Option 5 Assign responsibility for relief and recovery to a specific Ministerial portfolio, separate to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services portfolio. (Immediate term)

? Questions for the reader:

Is it desirable to, and how can we, reflect the shared, whole-of-Victorian government responsibility for emergency management in legislation or through other accountability mechanisms?

Should a specific Ministerial portfolio, separate to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services portfolio, be assigned responsibility for relief and recovery under the Act?

3.8 Workforce management

Crisis and emergency management is recognised increasingly as a whole-of-government responsibility and not just the purview of ESOs. Not all agencies in control of hazards are ESOs (see section 4) and a number of government departments have significant prevention/mitigation, response and recovery responsibilities. Concern has been raised that not all departments incorporate emergency management into core business. In addition, at times of major emergencies, some departments need assistance so that relevant staff can be freed up to focus on response or recovery. Workforce planning needs to better account for the reality of whole-of-government responsibility for crisis and emergency management. It needs to consider resourcing and occupational health and safety issues while supporting the efficient movement of Victorian Public Service (VPS) staff between agencies/departments to provide 'surge' capacity and support in emergencies.

? Questions for the reader:

How do we (through administration or legislation) enable VPS staff to respond flexibly to large-scale emergencies?

Surge capacity in times of crisis

Government agencies must be able to meet rapid increases in demand for their services that may arise from an emergency. During such times, demands for some services and administrative duties will decrease, while others will increase.

To support a surge capacity across the Victorian Government, in July 2009 the *Public Administration Act 2004* was amended to include emergency provisions for mobilising the public sector workforce.

The Premier can now declare an emergency under the Act. This delegates emergency powers to the heads of public sector agencies to assist in managing their workforces in responding quickly and effectively to the emergency. These emergency powers include the ability to:

> assign any duties to employees;

> require employees to perform duties within another public sector body or at a place other than their usual place of work; and

> direct employees to not report for duty.

4. Statewide capacity to deal with large-scale events

Victoria's emergency management agencies deal with incidents every day, from car accidents to chemical spills to storms, floods and fires. Emergency services are well practised in responding to these incidents and usually deliver a very effective service to Victorians. However, the State has also faced large-scale emergencies in its history, including the Black Friday bushfires in 1939 and the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983. More recently, the 2009 Gippsland and Black Saturday bushfires and 2010-11 floods have tested the capacity of individual agencies and the State to respond to large-scale, sustained and complex emergencies.

No emergency management system will ever be able to deal with every contingency. As with any area of service delivery, the Victorian Government and local governments must invest a finite amount of money wisely to manage an appropriate level of risk. As leadership and organisational experts Arjen Boin and Paul t'Hart point out: "effective crisis planning manages public expectations by acknowledging the inherent trade-offs of crisis management".[21]

Victoria needs a sustainable emergency management framework that can effectively deal with everyday incidents and be well placed to deal with large-scale emergencies. This section examines the key challenges that large-scale emergencies present and the State's capacity to meet them.

21.   Arjen Boin ad Paul t'Hart, "Organizing for Effective Emergency Management", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol 69 No.4 , 2010, p. 360.

4.1 Who is in charge?

As outlined in section 5, control of each major emergency hazard is assigned to an agency or government department in the State Emergency Response Plan, consistent with the legislative requirements. Allocation of control responsibility is based on statutory responsibility and/or expertise in the particular hazard causing the emergency.

This arrangement works well for 'routine' incidents: for example, the MFB will be responsible for responding to a house fire in urban Melbourne and VicSES will be responsible for responding to the flooding of a creek. Many such incidents involve a multi-agency response: for example, a single vehicle accident on a rural road may involve Victoria Police, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) or VicSES and Ambulance Victoria. Generally, emergency service organisations coordinate their respective roles well in responding to such situations.

However, these arrangements are tested in a large-scale and complex emergency. Emergencies of this nature ignore geographic and jurisdictional boundaries. Response to them may also exceed the capacity of the control agency, especially in the case of smaller agencies with fewer resources such as VicSES. In relation to the 2010-11 floods, the Victorian Floods Review *Interim Report* observed that:

> *"Despite the commitment and professionalism of those who fulfilled various roles for the Victoria State Emergency Service (VicSES) during these floods, it must be said that there is compelling evidence that the VicSES was simply overwhelmed by the size and protracted nature of the floods."*[22]

In commenting on control arrangements, the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission found that "continued reliance on cooperation and coordination to achieve unity of purpose is inadequate and was found wanting on 7 February"[23] and recommended establishing the role of Fire Services Commissioner. This role now works across the three fire services and assumes the role of State Controller for major bushfires, irrespective of where they occur.[24] This casts the control of a major emergency event as not only incorporating the tactics of responding to a hazard (a major bushfire in this instance), but as a strategic management role that encompasses preparedness and response.

? Question for the reader:

Is the current form of allocating control responsibility adequate? Can it be adapted to address any shortcomings? Is a new model required?

How can we resolve conflicting resource priorities where there are multiple simultaneous emergencies?

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22. Neil Comrie AO APM, *Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response: Interim Report*, 30 June 2011, p. 4.

23. 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *Final Report*, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 374.

24. 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *Final Report*, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 381.

Teamwork delivers Australia's largest medical evacuation

As Cyclone Yasi threatened to wreak havoc on northern Queensland in February 2011, thousands of people were urged to evacuate. A decision was made to relocate more than 330 hospital patients and nursing home residents from Cairns to medical facilities in Queensland's south.

Coordinating the evacuation of patients, some extremely ill, required teamwork between emergency services, health agencies and the Australian Defence Force. The relocation of such a significant number of patients in Brisbane also required precise organisation and coordination to ensure that normal day to day operational demands continued to be met.

The huge task fell to a team of more than 50 paramedics, 20 firefighters, 30 SES volunteers, 30 Queensland Health staff, airport staff and personnel from the Royal Australian Air Force who worked around the clock.

Rod Sheather, Queensland Ambulance Service Far Northern Regional Operations Director, said the evacuation was handled extremely well: "The teams from all the agencies worked well together and effectively moved hundreds of people to safer ground".

The February 2011 medical evacuation from Cairns was the largest in Australia's history and illustrates how a large-scale event can require a coordinated, statewide response that requires teamwork and cooperation across different agencies.

Queensland Department of Community Safety, "Teamwork the key to historic evacuation", Emergency Magazine, June 2011, p. 24

Not all emergencies are natural disasters such as bushfires or floods and not all are focused on a particular place. Some require highly specialised expertise not found in emergency service organisations or are closely aligned with the core responsibilities of a government department. Examples of control arrangements for other types of hazards include:

> The Department of Health is the control agency for human influenza pandemics, such as the H1N1 pandemic of 2009.

> The Department of Primary Industries is the control agency for animal diseases, such as the 2007 Equine Influenza outbreak.

> The Department of Transport is the control agency for marine pollution, such as an oil spill.

> Victoria Police is the control agency for terrorism, such as a bombing or siege scenario.

A truly 'all hazards, all agencies' framework needs to be able to deal with these types of emergency scenarios, balancing specific knowledge and expertise with the capacity to effectively respond to a large-scale, complex and potentially protracted situation. Planning for some events and hazards, such as terrorism and pandemics, is also covered by national arrangements.

? Questions for the reader:

How can control arrangements be strengthened while ensuring sufficient flexibility to respond to a multitude of different hazards?

Are human and animal health emergencies qualitatively different to natural disasters? What specific arrangements need to be in place to deal with them?

4.2 Coordination and control

As well as assigning control agencies, Victoria's emergency management arrangements identify support agencies for specific hazards. In addition, any agency can be called upon to provide support if required. Events such as the 2009 Gippsland and Black Saturday bushfires and 2010-11 floods saw a large number of agencies engaged in response and recovery efforts.

Victoria Police has an overarching coordination role for emergency response and the Department of Human Services has a similar coordinating role with respect to relief and recovery. These coordinating roles are "responsible for bringing together agencies and resources to ensure effective response to and recovery from emergencies".[25]

The presence of separate control and coordination streams has both benefits and drawbacks. By having a coordination agency separate to the control agency, a controller may be better able to focus on their primary tasks, while the coordinator ensures that the control agency is effectively managing the incident. However, separate lines of control and coordination could lead to confusion about who is 'in charge' and accountable for an emergency situation.

While the Government has taken action to improve emergency response arrangements, through the appointment of a Fire Services Commissioner and the introduction of measures to improve agency interoperability in areas such as communications and training, more needs to be done to improve Victoria's ability to deal with disasters and major emergency events.

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25.   Government of Victoria, Emergency Management Manual Victoria, Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner, January 2011, p. 3-20.

Options for consideration

Option 6 Eliminate the legislated response coordination role from Victoria's emergency management arrangements. Under this option, response coordination duties would be the responsibility of the control agency and implemented across agencies through existing State Emergency Management Teams. This would simplify and streamline lines of authority and accountability. (Medium term)

Option 7 Extend the remit of the Fire Services Commissioner. This option would extend the responsibility of the Fire Services Commissioner to encompass response to all major natural hazards. The role would continue to foster cooperation across agencies and perform the role of State Controller for incident response to all major natural hazards. Under this option, consideration would also need to be given to assigning overall responsibility for response to other kinds of hazards, such as outbreaks of disease or terrorist attacks. (Medium term)

Under this option, emergency service organisations could retain their day to day command structures and roles. Specialist agencies could also continue to be the controllers for relevant hazards.

Option 8 Include an operations function in an umbrella body. This option would build on the governance options presented in section 3. An operations function would form part of an umbrella body, alongside corporate functions. This function would be led by a Chief Operations Officer, who would assume the role of State Controller for all major emergencies. (Longer term)

4.3 Scalable arrangements

Victoria has a three-tiered control/coordination structure, based on the scale of an incident:

Planning	Response and recovery	Tier
State	State	3
Regional	Regional or Area of Operations	2
Municipal	Incident	1

This approach is based on the principle that most incidents will be handled at the incident level, but that emergency management arrangements need to be able to 'scale-up' to address larger situations. Movement from one tier to the next is determined by the control agency, rather than against predefined external triggers.

State-level control arrangements can be put in place before an emergency event and, for natural hazards, are usually activated on the basis of severe weather forecasts. In the event of extreme emergencies 'likely to constitute a significant and widespread danger to life or property', the *Emergency Management Act 1986* includes a provision to declare a State of Disaster, which provides the Minister for Police and Emergency Services powers to direct government agencies to restrict movement in disaster zones and use any property considered necessary to respond to the emergency.[26] A State of Disaster has never been declared in Victoria.

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26.   *Emergency Management Act 1986*, s 24.

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission discussed the merits of declaring a State of Disaster as a way of 'sharpening the focus' of agencies and sending a clear signal to the community that a severe emergency had occurred.[27] In response to the Royal Commission's recommendations on declarations, the Department of Justice is reviewing the *Emergency Management Act 1986* with a view to introducing a graded scale of emergency declarations.[28]

> **?** **Questions for the reader:**
>
> When should emergency response escalate to a higher level?
>
> What actions and powers should emergency declarations lead to?

Option for consideration

Option 9 Introduce a graded scale of emergency declaration that triggers movement to a higher tier of control, provides direction to agencies to scale-up their level of response and provides guidance on how individuals and communities should act in response to a threat or emergency. This scale could be similar to South Australia's graded model of major incident, major emergency and state of disaster.[29] (Medium term)

Such an approach could also allow for the creation of a suite of generic powers required to respond to an emergency, rather than such powers being located in agency legislation and applicable only in the context of specific hazards.[30]

Emergency declarations could also trigger the provision of certain relief and recovery assistance, as currently occurs in Queensland and New South Wales.

27.   2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *Final Report*, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 86-87.

28.   Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor, *Progress Report*, Parliament of Victoria, July 2011, p. 64.

29.   2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *Final Report*, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 86-87.

30.   See e.g. *Emergency Management Act 2004* (SA), s. 25.

4.4 Preparing for large-scale and complex emergencies

Victoria's emergency services have acknowledged the need for more multi-agency training exercises. Like most organisations in the public and private sectors, current training is focused on 'typical' scenarios – expected events that occur frequently and test core competencies. However, extreme emergencies give rise to a range of unexpected issues "for which there is no full precedent, and for which there is therefore no fully developed action script".[31]

Cooperation between agencies needs to occur at all times, including through training and exercises, to ensure they can effectively respond to a large or sustained emergency, or multiple emergencies. While joint training and exercises have increased in recent years, and a State Emergency Training and Exercise Strategy Committee has been established, Victoria lacks a cohesive 'all hazards, all agencies' training and exercises regime designed to rehearse for large-scale complex emergencies.

Better integrated preparedness by agencies could also deliver efficiencies, as different agencies tap into the skills and training programs of their counterparts, rather than maintaining completely separate regimes.

> **?** **Question for the reader:**
>
> What is the best way to ensure emergency management agencies are prepared for unusual, large-scale and complex or multiple events?

Options for consideration

Option 10 Introduce common training and exercise programs for large-scale and complex emergency events. This would involve large-scale and complex scenarios to test both core competencies and response to less frequent, but high impact, events. Importantly, all emergency services, departments, agencies and local governments would participate.

Emergency services and government departments would maintain their own training regimes where necessary, but would seek to integrate training and exercises with other agencies wherever possible. (Medium term)

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31   Herman Leonard and Eliot Snider, *Organizing Response to Extreme Emergencies*, Submission to 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, April 2010, p. 6.

4.5 Relief and recovery

The 2009 bushfires and 2010-11 floods challenged Victoria's relief and recovery arrangements. Both events required significant immediate relief efforts (such as establishing relief centres and providing food and shelter), a range of early recovery services (such as clean-up and temporary accommodation) and a long-term recovery focus (including reconstruction and economic recovery).

Local governments have been particularly challenged by the scale of these events, with some smaller councils unable to meet significant service and budget requirements without external support.

Differing approaches to relief and recovery governance were taken for these two events. For the geographically concentrated but highly destructive bushfires, the Victorian Bushfires Reconstruction and Recovery Authority was established, assuming a number of key recovery responsibilities and championing the needs of fire-affected communities. For the more dispersed and economically disruptive floods, a Secretaries' Flood Recovery Group, chaired by the Secretaries of DPI and DHS, was established, coordinating the programs and activities undertaken by each Victorian Government department.

These models each have strengths and weaknesses in addressing relief and recovery needs, and each was developed for the specific circumstances of the bushfires and floods. A more permanent governance model for large-scale emergencies could support governments at all levels, communities and the private sector in preparing for relief and recovery.

The system of relief and recovery is complex, particularly in large-scale events when both Commonwealth and State programs operate. Victoria's recent experiences suggest that there needs to be a standing relief and recovery portal that can be established immediately following a large-scale emergency so that local government, affected communities and individuals have easy access to information online. The current website established by DHS for the 2010-11 floods could be the model for this.

Option 11 Develop a standard model for large-scale relief, recovery and reconstruction. This model would have consistent governance structures, but with flexibility built in to account for the circumstances of the event. This model could be based on the Victorian Bushfires Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, Secretaries' Flood Recovery Group or elements of both, and adopt the best practices of interstate or international models. Timely and accurate impact information would be critical to determining when to implement such a model. (Medium term)

? Questions for the reader:

What is the most appropriate model for managing relief and recovery in major emergency events? What lessons do recent bushfire and flood experiences have for future relief and recovery?

How do we ensure Victoria has an appropriate relief and recovery model that covers everyday incidents and can scale up to deal effectively with large-scale and complex emergencies across all hazards?

5. Service delivery performance

Attributes of best practice service delivery

> Responsive, timely and pro-active

> Accessible and approachable

> Well-informed and informative

> Integrated, collaborative, breaking down cultural barriers

> Professional

> Adequately resourced – with personnel and equipment

Volunteers and staff representing local units or brigades of services such VicSES and the CFA are how most members of the public directly engage with emergency service organisations (ESOs). Municipal councils also play a role in building the capacity of their local communities to prevent and mitigate hazards, and respond to and recover from emergencies.

There is a growing expectation that communities will receive a high standard of service when interacting with these organisations. There is also an expectation that ESOs will prepare for and have the capacity and capability to respond to both small, everyday events, as well as large, protracted and complex emergencies. Scaling-up to respond to larger emergencies requires connected systems and processes that enable agencies to work together.

Emergency service volunteers and staff undertake their duties professionally and with integrity. Yet sometimes, what is expected of these personnel exceeds what their organisations are capable of delivering.

The Victorian Government would like to overcome the barriers that prevent communities from receiving the highest possible level of service, especially at times when these services are most needed. This requires a coordinated, 'all hazards, all agencies' approach that breaks down barriers between agencies. In addition, the capacity and capability of agencies needs to reflect their expected roles and responsibilities.

Considering the needs of at-risk groups in emergency management planning

A project to enhance emergency management planning for people with disabilities is being piloted in three local government areas in Victoria.

The Inclusive Emergency Management Project is a partnership between Whittlesea, Nillumbik and Wellington Shires, DHS, DH, Victoria Police, VICSES, CFA and Red Cross, and is being led by Leadership Plus, a disability support organisation.

People with disabilities and their carers were consulted about factors that are likely to place them at higher than average risk and affect their ability to respond in an emergency. Their feedback enabled councils to enhance their Municipal Emergency Management Plans by including strategies that consider the needs of people with disabilities. Councils also used this information to integrate emergency management into existing accessibility policies.

The project assisted councils to undertake more comprehensive emergency planning, taking into account a broader range of needs of the more vulnerable in the community. It has also built relationships between emergency management agencies and the disability sector.

No one agency or entity at any level, whether it be federal, state or local, has the length or the breadth of talent and expertise. We must work together. Law enforcement, quite simply, is only as good as its relationships.

Robert S. Mueller, "Responding to Terrorism" Speech by the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2001

5.1 Capacity of emergency service organisations

Emergency service organisations have strengthened efforts to engage with communities. This assists with raising awareness of hazards, identifying at-risk groups and enabling programs and efforts to be targeted accordingly. A community-led approach to service delivery needs to be supported with the right systems and processes. Victoria's emergency management system should allow personnel to carry out their expected roles and, most importantly, ensure members of the public receive the highest possible level of service from agencies in an emergency.

Option for consideration

All agencies need to have the capacity and capability to undertake their expected emergency management roles effectively in all situations.

Option 12 There are currently some roles and responsibilities in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and EMMV that would benefit from review to ensure that they appropriately reflect agency capacity and community expectations. (Medium term)

5.2 Coordination between and within agencies

As detailed in section 4, hazards and functions are divided amongst agencies and each agency has its own legislation, organisational hierarchy, training programs, operational processes and resources. For example, Part 7 of the EMMV identifies control agencies for specific emergencies under section 15(1) of the Act. These control agencies include Victorian Government departments as well as ESOs. There are also nine pieces of legislation on Victoria's statute book dedicated to ESOs. To some extent, this causes agencies to operate in 'silos' and leads to breakdowns in processes, procedures and communications. There is also confusion and inconsistency within and between ESOs and other agencies about their expected roles and responsibilities.

Organisational issues can limit the ability of those on the ground to perform their roles effectively. The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission found the operational response to the 2009 bushfires was hindered by differences between agencies' systems, processes and procedures.[32]

These obstacles make it difficult to achieve the desired 'all hazards, all agencies' approach to emergency management.

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32.   2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *Final Report Summary*, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 18.

Options for consideration

There needs to be greater coordination and integration of ESOs and government departments to improve service delivery and achieve the 'all hazards, all agencies' objective. Better coordination between agencies can optimise the use of resources, minimise gaps and avoid duplication, and deliver a greater return on investment.

Option 13 Undertake a review of the current legislation to determine if consolidating all emergency management-related legislation and ESOs under the one act would reduce 'silos' and streamline arrangements. The obstacles to inter-operability may not be solely legislative, so a review could also determine the extent to which legislative change could improve Victoria's emergency management arrangements. This review should consider all legislation relating to emergencies and should not be restricted to traditional emergency service disciplines. (Immediate term)

Option 14 Introduce a central procurement program to coordinate equipment and services purchases by ESOs across Victoria to build a Statewide, rather than agency-centric, capability. Currently, each agency determines its own resourcing requirements and purchases equipment accordingly. While each ESO is specialised, there is some equipment that is obtained by all agencies, such as radios, vehicles and administrative equipment. The current arrangement does not consider what equipment is held by other ESOs in the same area, creating the potential for duplication and unnecessary expenditure. A central procurement model could also standardise what equipment and software is used, which would allow for greater inter-operability between agencies and make skills more transferable across agencies when required. (Medium term)

> **?** **Question for the reader:**
>
> What are other possible options for improving inter-agency coordination and delivering a high standard of service?

Option 15 Where appropriate, ESOs could be co-located in the same building. Currently, each agency has its own space for operations, with only a few examples of co-location, such as in Lorne, where the CFA and VicSES are co-located, and Diamond Creek, where Victoria Police, the CFA and Ambulance Victoria operate together. Co-locating government services has proven to be an effective model to improve coordination between agencies and reduce administrative costs. The suitability of incident control centre locations would also need to be considered as part of this model. While co-location may not be suitable for all situations, it may suit smaller regional areas and should be fully considered in agency planning. (Longer term)

MFB and Ambulance Victoria working together to save lives

2011 marks the eleventh year of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board's Emergency Medical Response (EMR) program. Firefighters trained in emergency medical procedures and equipped with leading-edge pre-hospital medical response equipment are called out with Ambulance Victoria crews to attend cardiac arrest and other life threatening 'priority zero' cases.

EMR calls now account for approximately 14 per cent of all calls attended by firefighters in Victoria's MFB regions. MFB crews responded to 4,472 medical calls in 2010/11. Critical minutes have been cut from the response time to cardiac arrest cases in the metropolitan fire district since the EMR program was instigated. Access to early defibrillation and skilled initial care is helping to improve survival rates, with over 140 lives saved to date as a direct result of the EMR program.

The success of the MFB EMR program demonstrates how the community can benefit from partnership and coordination between agencies to optimise emergency resources.

5.3 A common operating picture

To respond effectively to emergencies of State significance, all agencies must have a common operating picture, although the contexts in which they operate and the decisions they make are different. Ministers and senior officials need to have a common frame through which to view the situation, determine what actions departments and agencies should take to support the emergency response or recovery (including considering the activation of specific powers), assess where the effort is going and measure progress against where it needs to go.[33]

Access to the right information, in the right form, at the right time is critical to coordinated operations and effective decision-making. Currently, a wide variety of assessment material is produced across government and through different control and coordination centres that lacks consistency and rigor, reducing its value to decision-makers.

Government also needs accurate and timely impact assessments to plan both short- and long-term recovery. At present, the way in which this information is collected and collated makes it difficult for State and local government to respond effectively to community needs. The Fire Services Commissioner is leading work to resolve some of these issues.

Options for consideration

Option 16 Mechanisms for improving the current situation include: developing an agreed template (data attributes) for data requirements between departments; an agreed process for information sharing; agreed mechanisms for sharing impacts across multiple IT platforms; and a coordinated communications plan across departments and agencies to inform the Victorian public about the impacts of the incident. (Immediate term)

Option 17 In addition, it may be appropriate to allocate responsibility for the collation and dissemination within Government and emergency service organisations of a common operating picture to a single source. (Immediate term)

Option 18 To assist the development of a common operating picture, all emergency management agencies could adopt the same regional boundaries across Victoria. (Immediate term)

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission highlighted the need for agencies responding to the same emergency to use the same district boundaries. Considerable work has been done to better align boundaries in regional Victoria; however, these are still not consistent across all agencies with emergency management responsibility. Operationally, having separate boundaries inhibits coordination with other organisations and creates confusion about which unit of an organisation is responsible for certain areas. Common boundaries have the benefit of bringing agency representatives together at various forums, which enables networking, and building important relationships and trust required for effective joint-agency planning, response and recovery.

?

Questions for the reader:

The Government is proposing to put in place by December 2011 new templates, processes and training for a common operating picture for emergencies.

Are there specific mechanisms that could be introduced to improve the collection, collation and dissemination of information regarding the assessment of impacts in emergencies?

Should responsibility for the collation and dissemination of a common operating picture be allocated to one body? If so, which body is the most appropriate?

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33.   Patrick L. Stevens and Mark T. Smith, *A Proposed Framework for Managing Catastrophic Incidents*, Mission-Centred Solutions Inc., Colorado, 6 April 2011, p. 9.

Satellite imagery aids high level decision making

Heavy rainfall occurred across most of Australia between November 2010 and early February 2011, causing extreme flooding across eastern Australia, particularly in Queensland and Victoria. During the flood emergencies, Geoscience Australia provided satellite imagery and derived mapping information to support the emergency response and recovery efforts.

More than 600 satellite images covering flood-affected areas were sourced from satellite imagery archives around the world, satellite downlink stations in Australia, international space agencies and overseas commercial imaging satellite operators. Geoscience Australia was able to provide over 75 maps and 25 flood extent products based on the data received by emergency service agencies across Australia. These products were used for many applications including briefings, emergency response deployment, early impact assessment, guiding Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) payments and redeployment of government services such as child care facilities.

Extract from David Hudson and Norman Mueller, "Satellite imagery assists flood emergency response and recovery", AUSGEO News, Issue 102, June 2011, pp. 1-2
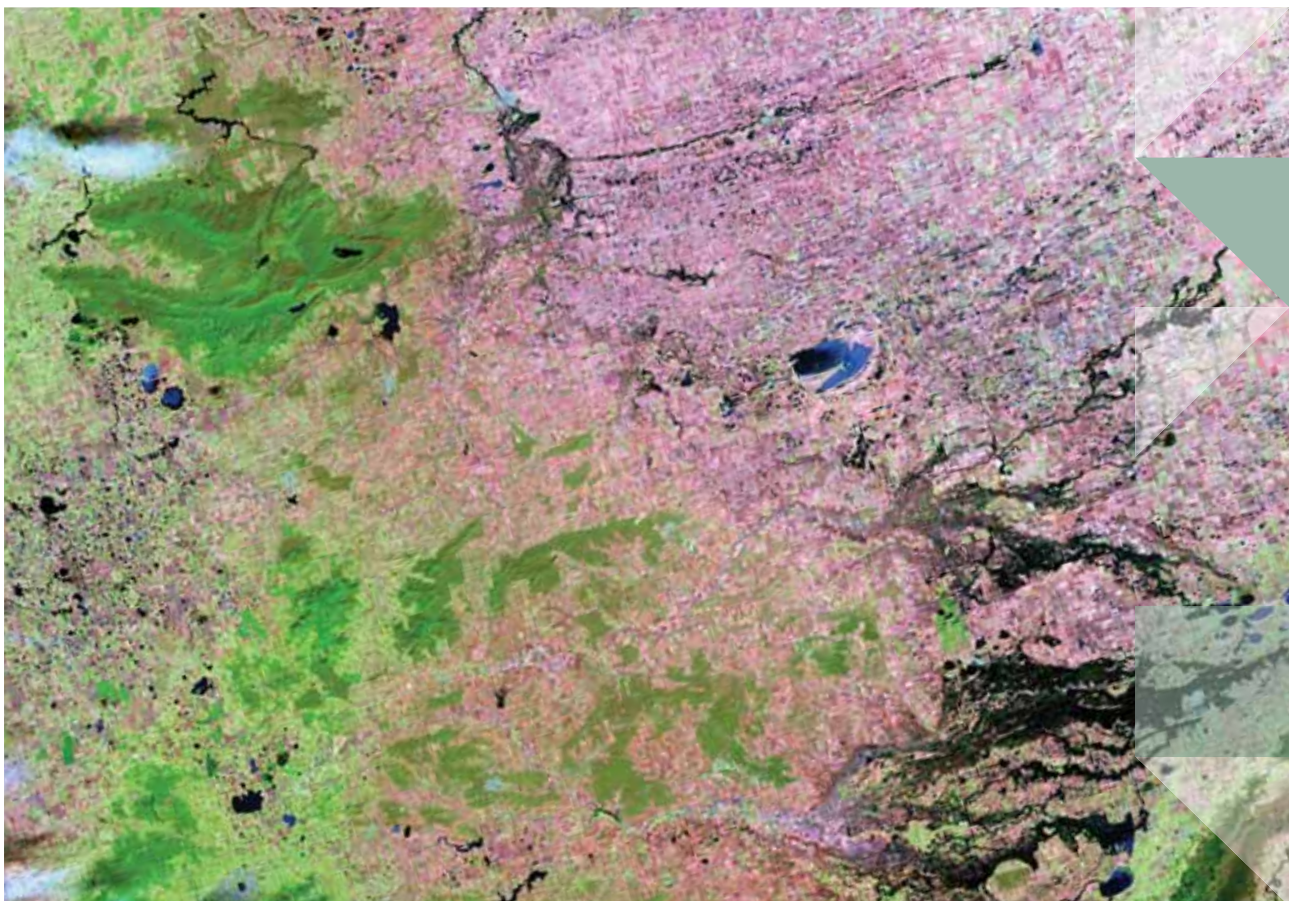
5.4 Relief and recovery

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for coordinating emergency relief and recovery. Coordination of recovery from emergencies is complex, as it needs to be community-driven and cover immediate relief, early recovery and long-term recovery. A holistic recovery should meet the challenges in the social, built, natural and economic environments. This requires coordination of all levels of government, affected communities, the private sector and non-profit organisations.[34]

Victoria's arrangements need to ensure there is adequate capacity and capability to deliver a high standard of service to those recovering from emergencies. The 2010 Auditor-General's report on the role of DHS in recovery identified confusion over responsibility for predictable issues, which caused delays for those affected.[35]

As discussed in section 4, ad hoc recovery management structures (such as reconstruction authorities, flood taskforces, etc) have been established to promote a whole-of-government approach to recovery from large-scale events. If the role of DHS is to coordinate recovery, the department should have the capacity to lead relief and recovery in all types of emergencies. This includes the ability to escalate recovery coordination for large-scale and protracted events.

Options for consideration

Option 19 A position of Recovery Controller could replace the current Recovery Coordinator role within DHS. This position would have greater authority to lead relief and recovery across all levels of government, non-government agencies and affected communities. This would enhance leadership, provide a greater ability to oversee the efforts of all organisations and overcome gaps in service delivery. (Medium term)

Option 20 As identified in section 3, responsibility for relief and recovery could become part of a new umbrella body. This would consolidate emergency prevention/ mitigation, response and recovery functions. This would also clarify responsibility for, and assist with, coordinating the recovery functions delivered by other agencies. (Longer term)

Option 21 Enhance preparedness for relief and recovery through the establishment of a permanently-staffed dedicated recovery unit. Currently, all personnel responsible for coordinating recovery after an emergency undertake this function as an adjunct to their full-time roles. This can lead to staff working outside their usual areas of expertise, which may impede the recovery effort. For example, while DHS recovery staff are adept at supporting the human services portfolio, they have been challenged when trying to coordinate recovery of the built, natural and economic environments. Having a team dedicated to planning and preparing for relief and recovery would build the profile and expertise of staff, and establish relationships within and outside government that are vital when coordinating recovery. (Medium term)

34. Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council, *National Principles for Disaster Recovery,* Australian Government, 2008.

35. Victorian Auditor-General's Office, *The Department of Human Services' Role in Recovery,* Auditor-General, Melbourne, October 2010, p. 40.

5.5 Capacity of municipal councils

The increasing responsibilities placed on municipal councils does not mean they have the capacity or capability to fulfil all these obligations. Legislatively, municipal councils are responsible for local level planning and fire prevention activities – in reality, they undertake a much wider range of emergency management responsibilities. This includes providing financial and in-kind support to VicSES units on a voluntary basis.

There is a strong view in some sections of the Victorian community that a more sustainable State and local government emergency management funding model needs to be developed. Changes since Victoria's current emergency management arrangements were put in place, such as municipal council amalgamations and the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering, have meant that councils have to make do with less.

The Victorian Floods Review *Interim Report* identified the limited capacity of municipal councils to undertake their prescribed roles during large scale and protracted events, as well as a lack of municipal flood plans, despite communities being located on flood plains or having a known flood risk.[36]

? Questions for the reader:

What should be the role of municipal councils in emergency management?

What is the best way of clarifying this role relative to the roles of other agencies?

Options for consideration

Local councils need to have the capacity and capability to undertake their expected roles effectively in all situations.

Option 22 The responsibilities placed on municipal councils do not reflect their capacity and what is expected from their communities. The staffing model for supporting municipal councils' emergency management functions should be reviewed. The legislation should better define municipal councils' roles, recognising that the emphasis should be on prevention/mitigation and recovery. Aligning arrangements with councils'

capacities will also emphasise the key principle that effective emergency management is a shared responsibility and requires the efforts of all. (Immediate term)

Option 23 Where it is identified that municipal councils do not have the capacity to undertake their emergency management responsibilities, the Victorian Government could step in to provide leadership in identifying gaps and allocating resources. This would be most beneficial during a large-scale emergency, where municipal council resources are likely to be severely stretched in supporting the recovery phase. This partnership could be included in revised legislation, along with different mechanisms, such as establishing a joint standing taskforce with responsibility for managing response and recovery. (Medium term)

Option 24 Where municipal councils do not have the capacity to maintain appropriate emergency planning, planning could be undertaken at the sub-regional, rather than municipal, level.[37] This could be delivered through the creation of a sub-regional entity made up of a number of councils. The entity could be overseen by a Board comprising the Chief Executive Officers of the participating councils. This would free up resources and ensure emergency plans are in place. Regardless of resource capacity, such clustering or sub-regional arrangements may yield other benefits in planning and engagement with State agencies. (Medium term)

The Fire Services Commissioner's work on 'landscape fire strategy' is an example of work being undertaken at the sub-regional level. This model is applied where a high bushfire risk area reaches over more than a single municipality or extends across an area within a municipality, but does not necessarily align with a regional plan.

? Questions for the reader:

How should the Victorian Government assist municipal councils fulfil their emergency management responsibilities?

Are there legislative, administrative or cultural impediments to local governments working more closely together and sharing resources for prevention/ mitigation, response and recovery?

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36.   Neil Comrie AO APM, *Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response: Interim Report*, 30 June 2011, pp. 20-21.

37.   This is already possible under section 19 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* but not used extensively in practice.

5.6 Accountability and standards

Victoria's Emergency Services Commissioner (ESC) is responsible for establishing and monitoring standards in relation to a limited number of ESOs, and is employed under Part 3 of the *Public Administration Act 2004,* making the Commissioner a public servant answerable to the Secretary of the Department of Justice. This is seen by some people as undermining the independence of the role.

Options for consideration

To ensure all agencies are undertaking their emergency management obligations effectively, measures could be introduced to improve accountability across the sector.

Option 25 Greater statutory independence could be given to the office of the ESC through the establishment of its own legislation. The ESC is required to monitor the performance of a limited number of ESOs against the standards he/she sets and the performance of the fire services against the performance standards developed by the Fire Services Commissioner. This role requires greater accountability and could be established under legislation similar to that governing the Fire Services Commissioner, who is appointed under section 5 of the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010*. Alternatively, the audit role could be given to another independent body/entity such as the Victorian Auditor-General's Office. (Medium term)

Option 26 The ESC could be given authority to review municipal level planning. There is a lack of clarity about the role of municipal councils in emergency management and how councils and the Victorian Government should work in partnership. Currently, VicSES audits municipal plans under section 21(a) of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and the CFA is responsible for auditing municipal fire prevention planning. Having an independent body reviewing these plans would provide a more rigorous approach focusing on quality assurance. Such a body could also act as a best practice clearing house so that councils can learn from each other. This would require the mandate of the ESC to be broadened across all emergency management agencies, rather than just ESOs. (Immediate term)

> **?**
>
> ### Question for the reader:
>
> How can we strengthen standards setting, review and accountability for the emergency management sector?

5.7 Post-event reviews and research

Lessons learned from emergency events are crucial to informing preparedness for future emergencies. A range of post-emergency review mechanisms are currently used, depending on the type and scale of emergency event. For routine events, agency de-briefs are likely to be the most appropriate form of review. For very large scale, destructive or complex events, independent or judicial inquiries may be the most appropriate mechanism to ensure all aspects are thoroughly investigated. However, a standard mechanism of review for events that does not fit either of these categories, may be beneficial.

Implementation and oversight of issues identified from reviews is also important, particularly when they relate to multiple organisations. For example, a Bushfires Royal Commission Independent Monitor has been appointed in Victoria to report on implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

In addition to Victorian post-event reviews, understanding lessons learned from events, research and best practices interstate and overseas will benefit Victoria's emergency management arrangements. A priority outcome of COAG's *Natural Disaster Resilience Strategy* is that lessons learned from local, national and international sources are "accessible and available for use by governments, organisations and communities undertaking risk management planning and mitigation works".[38]

Question for the reader:

What is the most appropriate way of reviewing and learning lessons from an emergency event? How do we ensure those lessons are implemented?

What is the best way to capture lessons learned from interstate and overseas events, research and best practice?

Option for consideration

Option 27 Establish a clear mechanism for reviewing emergency events that are not routine but that are not so significant to warrant independent or judicial inquiries. This responsibility could rest with the Emergency Services Commissioner, another existing body or a new body. This review mechanism could also report on the implementation of review recommendations. (Medium term)

38. Accessed from Council of Australian Governments, *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, 13 February 2011, www.coag.gov.au

Volunteers

The CFA Volunteer Charter, re-affirmed by the Government on 27 February 2011, is a statement of principles that applies to the relationship between the CFA, the State Government and CFA volunteers. The Volunteer Charter states that the individual and collective interests and needs of volunteers must be protected if they are to deliver their services safely and effectively.

In May 2011, the Government delivered on its election commitment to enshrine the Volunteer Charter into legislation by amending the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* to require the CFA, in performing its functions, to have regard to the commitment and principles set out in the Volunteer Charter.

In March 2011, the Government established an independent inquiry, conducted by His Honour David Jones AM, into the effect of arrangements made by the CFA on the recruitment, training, deployment, utilisation and support of its volunteers. The inquiry will help achieve the intention of the Volunteer Charter to strengthen and facilitate the Government's and the CFA's contribution to volunteers.

The Government's Valuing Volunteers Program aims to value, attract, develop and retain a workforce of confident, self-reliant emergency services volunteers for the ongoing protection and safety of communities through the State by providing funding to support the fire and emergency service agencies' existing volunteers programs and improving the overall volunteer base.

5.8 Recruitment and retention of volunteers

The Victorian Government acknowledges and values the essential contribution of the many volunteers who deliver Victoria's emergency and support services. The contribution by volunteers is one of the major strengths of our system that we should maintain and strengthen. In examining Victoria's emergency management arrangements, the Government seeks to enhance the volunteer experience and volunteers' capacity to contribute to community safety. Whatever changes may be implemented through the Green Paper – White Paper process, volunteers will remain a critical part of Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

It needs to be acknowledged that while we require our emergency management agencies to work across all hazards, volunteers may want to focus on only a single hazard or a specific range of tasks in relation to a hazard. Our ESOs are constantly adapting their ways of working to meet the needs of volunteers, many of whom expect a high level of professionalism in their engagement with these organisations. Incentives to attract and retain volunteers should also be considered.

? **Question for the reader:**

How can we attract and retain volunteers and build on the critical role they play in emergency management?

> Pervading the Commission's report is the idea that responsibility for community safety during bushfires is shared by the State, municipal councils, individuals, household members and the broader community. A fundamental aspect of the Commission's recommendations is the notion that each of these groups must accept increased responsibility for bushfire safety in the future and that many of these responsibilities must be shared.
>
> 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, Final Report, Vol 1, Part 2, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 352.

6. Government working with communities to build resilience

Our State faces significant challenges. The impacts of climate change, a growing and ageing population and significant changes in the patterns of urban development and regional settlement will increasingly be felt by every Victorian community.

In the past, Australian governments have adapted to new risks by adopting new legislation and designing more effective structures and activities to protect communities. Victoria's emergency management arrangements have evolved as a consequence of reviews following events that challenged the existing arrangements[39], and this Green Paper continues that evolution. However, it has become clear that governments now need to give greater focus to strengthening community resilience in order to manage the changing risk and hazard environment. Community resilience refers to "...the sustained ability of a community to withstand and recover from adversity (such as economic stress, influenza pandemic, man-made or natural disasters)".[40]

Now more than ever, our risk environment is placing greater responsibility on individuals and communities to take action to prepare for, and mitigate the impacts of emergencies. This is not only because emergency events are becoming more frequent and intense, but also because the increasing complexity of society means that individual choices have a much greater effect on communities than they did in the past. For example, increasing numbers of Victorians are choosing to live at the rural-urban interface, an area particularly at risk of bushfires.[41]

The private sector is also required to play a greater role in supporting a community's resilience to disasters. Businesses provide resources, expertise and many essential services on which the community depends. It is critical that the private sector, including critical infrastructure providers, make a contribution by understanding the risks that they face and ensuring that they are able to continue providing services during or soon after a disaster.

The importance that government attaches to continuity of supply for essential services is evidenced by the range of industry-specific legislation that provides for special arrangements to secure the supply of services during emergencies or in the face of threats. For example, under the *Electricity Industry Act 2000*, the Victorian Government has access to extensive emergency powers if there is a major threat to the security of Victoria's electricity supply and actions need to be taken to resolve the situation that cannot be taken by industry participants themselves.

39.   Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, *Witness Statement of Penny Armytage*, The State of Victoria, Melbourne, 8 April 2010, p. 12.

40.   Anita Chandra et al., *Building Community Resilience to Disasters: A Way Forward to Enhance National Health Security*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2011, p. iii.

41.   2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report*, Vol Two, Part One, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. xvi.

A key finding of the *Interim Report* of the Victorian Floods Review is that communities expect to play an active role in deciding how to deal with emergencies and in working with emergency management agencies to achieve this. The report concludes that much work is still required to build resilience across Victoria. The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission made the related observation in its *Final Report* that "responsibility for community safety during bushfires is shared by the State, municipal councils, individuals, household members and the broader community".[42]

Government must assist communities to play a more active role in taking responsibility for their own safety. This role for government is proposed by the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2011. As the Victorian Floods Review *Interim Report* outlines, the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* highlights the role of government at all levels in strengthening resilience by:

> developing and implementing effective, risk-based land management and planning arrangements and other mitigation activities;

> having effective arrangements in place to inform people about how to assess risks and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to hazards;

> having clear and effective education systems to help people understand what options are available and what the best course of action is in responding to a hazard as it approaches;

> supporting individuals and communities to prepare for extreme events;

> ensuring the most effective, well-coordinated response from our emergency services and volunteers when disaster hits; and

> working in a swift, compassionate and pragmatic way to help communities recover from devastation and to learn, innovate and adapt in the aftermath of disastrous events.[43]

42.   2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report,* Vol Two, Part Two, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 352.

43.   Neil Comrie AO APM, *Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response: Interim Report*, 30 June 2011, p. 22.

6.1 Challenges to fostering disaster resilience

Victorian governments face six key challenges in trying to foster a community resilience approach.

Community expectations – at a time when our population is growing rapidly, the community's expectations of government are also growing. Many Victorians continue to expect immediate and universal assistance from the emergency services in the event of a major disaster. Realistically, however, it is often not possible to provide assistance to everybody at once and ESOs rightly give priority to those who are most in danger and the most vulnerable. This places a responsibility on all members of the community to ensure they are prepared for and resilient in an emergency.[44]

Demographic change – while the population density is likely to increase in many natural hazard prone areas, due to factors such as the 'tree change' phenomenon, there may not be an equivalent increase in the capacity of these communities to cope with hazards. This is because these communities are likely to be older or to have little experience of living with natural hazards, having relocated from the metropolitan area.[45]

New technologies – online and mobile media are now well established as significant tools for public communication among communities and emergency response agencies. Agencies need to harness technology, including social media effectively, to provide official warnings. They also need to manage the challenge of information being disseminated ahead of or in conflict with authorised information. In other words, governments need to keep people informed while avoiding the spread of misinformation.

Diverse communities – the diversity of Victoria's community is a source of strength for the State but also presents challenges for emergency services. 23.8% of Victoria's population was born overseas. Victorians come from more than 200 countries; speak more than 230 languages and dialects; and follow more than 120 religions.

Communication is key to this effort, noting that at the time of the 2006 Census, 18.5% of Victorians who spoke a language other than English at home had low English proficiency.

Infrequency of events – while the frequency and severity of disasters is increasing, an individual's experience of them is still infrequent. In the period immediately following a major event, the community (along with governments, business and other institutions) experiences a period of heightened awareness and there is greater compliance with good practice. However, as Victoria's experience with bushfires shows, "the passage of time sees growing complacency and reduced levels of preparedness overtake the heightened level of awareness and preparedness, ahead of the next major fire event".[46] The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission reinforced the danger of complacency and observed that "the State needs to help break ... [the] cycle [of complacency] with sustained efforts to deliver frank education and public awareness campaigns".[47]

Figure 3: The Bushfire Cycle[48]
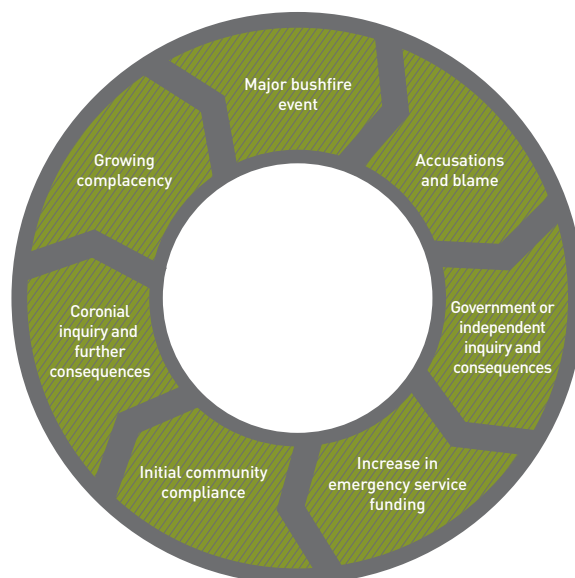
44. Charlie Edwards, *Resilient Nation*, Demos, London, 2009, pp. 15-16.

45. Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, *Witness Statement of Penny Armytage*, The State of Victoria, Melbourne, 8 April 2010, pp. 7-8.

46. P.J. Kanowski, "Inquiries Following the 2002-2003 Australian bushfires: common themes and future directions for Australian bushfire mitigation and management", Australian Forestry, Vol. 68 No. 2, 2005, pp. 77-78.

47. 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report*, Vol Two, Part Two, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 354.

48. *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, Final Report, Vol 1, Part 2, Parliament of Victoria, July 2010, p. 355.*

Adequate resources – the current focus of financial investment by governments in emergency management tends to be on response and short-term recovery, and to follow a cycle of increased investment in the aftermath of an emergency. A commitment to building disaster resilience, and a risk based approach to funding, requires a more sustainable investment model.

Option 28 Align ESOs' priorities and funding with an assessment of risk. (Longer term)

Pioneering public engagement through social media in times of crisis

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) trialled the use of Facebook, Twitter and You Tube in May 2010, with the aim of using social media to establish an online presence, engage in a two way conversation with the public and develop an online audience that would turn to QPS for reliable information in times of emergency.

The January 2011 flash flood in the Lockyer Valley, followed by significant flooding in Ipswich and Brisbane, led to two-thirds of the state being disaster-declared. Within weeks of the floods, Tropical Cyclone Anthony struck north Queensland, followed days later by category 5 Tropical Cyclone Yasi.

During this period and in the aftermath of these disasters, QPS disseminated information through Facebook and Twitter as soon as it became available. Live video streaming of media conferences was provided on Facebook and subsequently posted to the QPS You Tube channel. Social media was also used to quickly 'mythbust' misinformation and rumour.

This immediate communication enabled the QPS to quickly disseminate large amounts of information to a wide audience, dramatically reducing any 'vacuum' in official information. This approach was embraced by the mainstream media who found the various channels used by QPS to be immediate, reliable and valuable sources of information.

Facebook and Twitter also gave QPS access to immediate feedback and information from the public at disaster-affected locations.

The QPS has shared the learnings from this initiative by documenting its experiences in a case study, which is publicly available online.
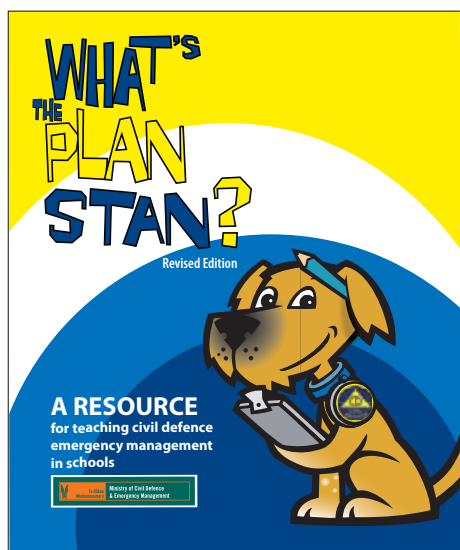
Queensland Police Service, 'Disaster management and social media – a case study Version 1.0', accessed from www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/services/reportsPublications/documents/ QPSSocialMediaCaseStudy.pdf

Queensland Police Service

Disaster Management and Social Media - a case study

Version 1.0

6.2 International approaches

Internationally, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are at the forefront of the shift in crisis and emergency management effort towards a focus on building resilient communities. In NZ, the Government provides leadership through clear messages that tell community members what is expected of them and provides advice and toolkits showing people how to take action to ensure they are ready for any emergency. These messages include realistic advice about the limits of assistance available and tells people to 'plan to look after yourself and your loved ones for at least three days or more'.[49]

The UK, like NZ, produces a number of tools to assist communities to enhance their resilience.[50] In addition, the UK Government regularly assesses the natural hazards and manmade threats that could affect the UK. These are published in the National Risk Register, which explains the likelihood of a risk occurring and possible effects of an emergency if it happens. At a local level, each Local Resilience Forum (made up of local emergency responders such as the police) publishes a Community Risk Register. This approach is backed by strong research evidence that people must be able to assess their proximity or vulnerability to understood risks in order to be motivated to take action and be prepared. [51]

'Get ready get thru'

The New Zealand Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management's vision is for a 'Resilient New Zealand, strong communities, understanding and managing their hazards'.

To achieve this vision the New Zealand Government has developed a campaign to raise awareness of disaster preparedness. Employing the slogan 'get ready get thru', households are advised to plan for an emergency and be able to look after themselves for at least three days, noting that:

'Many disasters will affect essential services and possibly disrupt your ability to travel or communicate with each other. You may be confined to your home, or forced to evacuate your neighbourhood. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, emergency services will not be able to get help to everyone as quickly as needed'.

The website www.getthru.govt.nz provides households with information to assist with planning and preparing for disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and landslides.

In addition to the website, the community messaging is supported by a range of radio and television advertisements including the 'What's the plan Stan?' campaign targeted at children. Resources are provided in seven languages other than English, and for the blind and hearing impaired.

Further details of the campaign can be found at www.getthru.govt.nz

49. New Zealand Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, www.getthru.govt.nz/web/GetThru.nsf/web/BOWN-7H37SG?OpenDocument

50. UK Cabinet Office, *Community Resilience*, August 2011, accessed from www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/community-resilience

51. Cabinet Office, *Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience*, Cabinet Office, London, March 2010, p. 11.

6.3 Improving community resilience in Victoria

Internationally, the terms 'disaster management' and 'disaster resilience' are replacing the more traditional terminology of 'crisis and emergency management' that is used in Victoria. To achieve the sustained behavioural change and enduring partnerships required to support community resilience in Victoria, it may be desirable to embrace this trend across our legislation and leadership and governance arrangements.

The principles of resilience and international good practice discussed above point to a need in Victoria for a greater focus on 'all hazards' messages and preparedness, including giving communities meaningful information about risks and clear advice about practical actions to manage those risks. Government may need to partner with the private sector to do this. For example, promoting the take-up of insurance will require governments and the insurance industry to work together to ensure people understand the benefits of insurance and also that there are appropriate insurance products available.

Ultimately, the aim is to build a community in which individuals and communities take greater responsibility for their own resilience and recovery, challenging decision makers in their local area to ensure that adequate provisions and preparations are made for an emergency and having input into how recovery occurs and what improvements should be made.

Options for consideration

Option 29 Replace the terminology of 'crisis and emergency management' with 'disaster resilience' in relevant Victorian legislation and in emergency management leadership and governance arrangements. (Longer term)

Option 30 Adopt the New Zealand model of community information where the government delivers realistic messages about the limits of assistance available and the likely period of time that most individuals will need to be self-reliant during an emergency. These messages could be coupled with the provision of guides and toolkits to help people prepare for hazards of all kinds. (Medium term)

Option 31 Publish a Victorian risk register to encourage people to think about their vulnerabilities and consider the infrastructure they rely on. Using this information, the next steps are for people to consider what risks they face and whether they need to take steps to prepare themselves to deal with the potential consequences of an emergency. (Longer term)

Option 32 Currently many local governments work with their communities on emergency management planning. However, this could be more widespread and strengthened. State and local governments could consider new ways of building community resilience that would see communities drive their own priorities, not just related to emergency management, and have a means for making appropriate connections with governments, businesses and the not-for-profit sector. For example, governments could provide communities with facilitators to support community planning and link communities with resources and expertise held by government departments, universities and other organisations. (Longer term)

> **?**
>
> ### Question for the reader:
>
> How can the Victorian Government and municipal councils support and encourage individuals and communities to be better prepared and more self-reliant during emergencies?

Community led recovery of the Marysville and Triangle area

In the aftermath of the 2009 Victorian bushfires, a process and plan were needed for rebuilding the Marysville and Triangle area, where 530 properties and 95 per cent of retail businesses were destroyed. While planning zones were in place to guide rebuilding, the community expressed a strong desire to come together and shape the area's future.

The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority arranged community planning days and commissioned a study to develop a shared vision of what needed to be done to make Marysville well designed, economically viable and sustainable. Community feedback led the development of the Marysville and Triangle Urban Design Framework a strategic planning tool to guide the physical growth, character and accessibility of Marysville and neighbouring towns.

This community-driven process saw a framework that reflected the aspirations of the community adopted by the Victorian Government within six months – a process that can normally take up to two years. This played an important role in assisting both personal and community recovery in the area. It is an example of government supporting a community to lead its own recovery, which should be the norm, not the exception.

Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (2011) Legacy Report, State of Victoria, Melbourne, June 2011

7.   Options for reform

Issues and challenges	Option	Timeframe
Governance arrangements	1. Assign responsibility for prevention/mitigation planning to a designated role	Longer term
	2. Rationalise emergency management committees so that only three planning committees report to VEMC (or its successor) and give sub-committees clearer accountability and reporting lines	Immediate term
	3. Establish a single emergency services board to oversee all ESOs that reports to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services	Longer term
	4. Establish an umbrella body for all ESOs	Longer term
	5. Assign responsibility for relief and recovery to a specific Ministerial portfolio, separate to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services portfolio	Immediate term
Statewide capacity to deal with large-scale events	6. Eliminate specific coordination roles from Victoria's emergency management arrangements, making coordination the responsibility of the relevant control agency	Medium term
	7. Extend the remit of the Fire Services Commissioner to encompass response to all major natural hazards	Medium term
	8. Include an operations function in an umbrella body led by a Chief Operations Officer, who would assume the role of State Controller for all major emergencies	Longer term
	9. Introduce a graded scale of emergency declaration	Medium term
	10. Introduce common training and exercise programs for large-scale and complex emergency events across all emergency services and emergency management agencies, including local government	Medium term
	11. Develop a standard model for large-scale relief, recovery and reconstruction	Medium term

Issues and challenges	Option	Timeframe
Service delivery performance	12. Review legislation and policy frameworks to ensure that the prescribed roles and responsibilities of Victorian Government agencies with emergency management roles reflect reality, capacity and expectations	Medium term
	13. Undertake a review of the current legislation to determine if consolidating all emergency management related legislation and ESOs under the one Act would reduce 'silos' and streamline arrangements	Immediate term
	14. Introduce a central procurement program to coordinate equipment and services purchases by ESOs across Victoria	Medium term
	15. Where appropriate, co-locate ESOs in the same building	Longer term
	16. Introduce mechanisms and templates to ensure a common operating picture across government	Immediate term
	17. Allocate responsibility for the collation and dissemination within Government and emergency services organisations of a common operating picture to a single source	Immediate term
	18. Establish common regional boundaries across Victoria for all emergency management agencies	Immediate term
	19. Replace the current Recovery Coordinator position in DHS with a Recovery Controller position to lead relief and recovery across all levels of government	Medium term
	20. Make relief and recovery the responsibility of a new umbrella body (see option 4)	Longer term
	21. Establish a permanently-staffed dedicated relief and recovery unit within government	Medium term
	22. Review and update legislation and staffing models to make emergency management arrangements more in line with municipal councils' capacities	Immediate term
	23. Enact legislation for the Victorian Government to step in and support municipal councils where they do not have capacity to meet their emergency management responsibilities	Medium term
	24. Undertake planning at the sub-regional level where municipal councils do not have the capacity to maintain appropriate emergency planning	Medium term
	25. Give greater statutory independence to the office of ESC through the establishment of its own legislation	Medium term
	26. Give the ESC authority to review municipal level planning	Immediate term
	27. Establish a mechanism for reviewing emergency events that are not routine, but do not warrant independent or judicial inquiries	Medium term

Issues and challenges	Option	Timeframe
Government working with communities to build resilience	28. Align ESOs' priorities and funding with an assessment of risk, including consideration of potential consequences	Longer term
	29. Update terminology in legislation and governance arrangements with a greater focus on disaster resilience	Longer term
	30. Adopt the NZ model of community information where the government delivers realistic messages about the limits of assistance available and the likely period of time that most individuals will need to be self-reliant during an emergency	Medium term
	31. Publish a Victorian risk register to encourage people to think about their vulnerabilities, consider the risks they face and whether they need to take steps to prepare themselves to deal with the potential consequences of an emergency	Longer term
	32. Consider new ways of building community resilience that would see communities drive their own priorities and make connections with governments, businesses and the not-for-profit sector	Longer term

PART C: THE WAY FORWARD

The Government's reform goals for crisis and emergency management focus on:

> service delivery to Victorians across government and communities;

> building community resilience;

> achieving a genuine 'all hazards, all agencies' approach; and

> enduring and sustainable change.

These goals will be achieved by:

> enhancing capacity for whole-of-Victorian Government planning and preparedness for prevention, mitigation, response and recovery;

> renewing legislation and governance arrangements;

> removing legislative, policy and cultural impediments; and

> embedding a culture across government and ESOs focused on community engagement and building disaster resilience.

The review process

The review of Victoria's emergency management arrangements is being jointly coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Justice.

Consultation and feedback

The Victorian Government is seeking feedback from interested parties on the options set out in this *Green Paper*. For information on how to make a submission see: **www.dpc.vic.gov.au**

The Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of Justice will arrange sessions with key emergency management agencies to seek their input and advice on the suggested options.

Timeline for reform

The Victorian Government will be seeking feedback on this *Green Paper* until 14 November 2011. Following this, feedback will be reviewed and further information sought where necessary. Mr Neil Comrie is expected to present his Final Report to Government on the Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response by 1 December 2011.

These two processes will inform the development of a policy proposal on how to reform Victoria's emergency management arrangements. This policy proposal will be released in the form of a White Paper in 2012 which will lead to major amendments to Victoria's legislative and policy framework.

While this review is underway, the Victorian Government will continue implementing recommendations from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and identifying short-term measures to improve emergency management arrangements in preparation for the next fire season.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CFA	Country Fire Authority
CGRC	Central Government Response Committee
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DH	Department of Health
DHS	Department of Human Services
DISPLAN	State Emergency Response Plan
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment
EMMV	Emergency Management Manual Victoria
ESC	Emergency Services Commissioner
ESOs	Emergency service organisations
ESTA	Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
FSC	Fire Services Commissioner
MFB	Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
PPRR	Prevention, preparedness, response and recovery
SEC	Security and Emergencies Committee
The Act	*Emergency Management Act 1986* (Vic)
VEMC	Victorian Emergency Management Council
VicSES	Victoria State Emergency Service

For an explanation of terms used in this *Green Paper*, refer to the glossary contained in Part 9 of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria, available at www.oesc.vic.gov.au

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