

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES ROYAL COMMISSION

The outcomes of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission are expected to have a substantial impact on national policy for the management of major bush fires where multi agency response is required. Issues that have been raised include a review of the effectiveness of the Stay and Defend, or Go Early policy versus forced community evacuation, the effectiveness of current community warning systems and the coordination of significant emergency events. Further detail on our response to the challenges identified is provided in the Agency Performance Section (pages 30-31).

THE CHANGING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

We recognised in our [FESA 2023 – Shaping Our Future](#) document the requirement to be able to anticipate and respond to the changing needs of the community and the environment. The development of a strategic foresight capability, proactive strategy development and a long-term planning approach will assist us in preparing for change. Areas of specific focus over the coming year include developing improved monitoring of future capital infrastructure requirements and the capacity of the Emergency Services

Levy to fund increased services. The development of standard design facility footprints for all emergency services premises will deliver increased efficiency.

We are participating in significant national projects to assess community preparedness and resilience to cope with significant disasters such as bush fires, floods and cyclones. We are continuing to adopt an all hazards approach to the delivery of emergency services across Western Australia through our Operations Doctrine and review of service delivery models.

The capacity to deliver Prevention Services was increased with the establishment of seven additional Community Fire Managers in 2008-09 to support local governments in high risk areas. The continued delivery of emergency management training through the All Western Australians Reducing Emergencies (AWARE) program will also support improved outcomes for the community.

Firefighting capacity increased by 44 personnel in 2008-09 to address an existing shortage and staff the new Ellenbrook fire station. An additional 23 firefighters will be added in 2009-10. The implementation of dispersed relieving arrangements in the metropolitan region will provide more effective coverage of absences and the development of strategies to reduce the number of false Direct Brigade Alarm activations will also improve the capacity to respond to genuine emergencies.

Increased budget allocations in 2009-10 to upgrade personal protective clothing, maintain urban search and rescue capability and increase operational funding for Volunteer Marine Rescue Services will enhance the delivery of Emergency Services.

STRENGTHENING OF LEGISLATION

Legislation to support effective emergency management is critical for reducing the impact of emergencies on the community. The proposed new Emergency Services Bill currently being drafted will significantly improve the clarity of roles and accountability in the management and coordination of emergencies requiring a multi agency response. In the short term, approved amendments to current legislation will address identified issues.

The impacts of emergency events have also resulted in changes to current building regulations to address community safety issues. During 2009-10, we will clarify and formalise our role in managing the application of the new Building Act and its impact on the building approval process.

“New legislation will significantly improve role clarity and coordination of multi agency emergencies.”

IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY

As the community becomes more vigilant in preparing for and reacting to emergencies, its expectation of timely and accurate information also increases. Our focus is on better communication and information flow to improve Prevention Services. The implementation of StateAlert will improve community capacity to manage risk by delivering targeted emergency alerts and warnings. An upgrade of our website will also increase community access to information, awareness of risk and preparedness.

Technology is also being used to improve and support the delivery of emergency services. Geographical Information Systems and the Shared Land Information Platform are improving planning during the preparedness and response phases of an emergency. Continued implementation of the Western Australian Emergency Radio Network is improving communication during incident response.

During 2008-09, upgrades to operational data systems have improved reporting capability and data collection to support future strategy development. The implementation of the Emergency Management Extranet has also enhanced emergency management committee business planning and reporting.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Improved human resource management is the cornerstone of our strategy to improve recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers. The development of a strategic human resource framework and associated workforce management plan will improve outcomes in this area. Work undertaken to date includes increased leadership training to improve succession planning and targeting improved age and cultural diversity in the workforce.

The outcomes of a research study examining effective strategies for recruiting volunteers have resulted in our new Recruitment Action Handbook for volunteers. In the coming year we will focus on identifying and monitoring areas where there is high volunteer turnover, building youth and cadet programs and continued recognition of volunteers and their employers.

