Indigenous Translation of Western Australian Emergency Management Guidelines and the Emergency Management Arrangements

November 2008
Executive Summary

The Indigenous Translation of Western Australian Emergency Management Guidelines and the Emergency Management Arrangements Project was a partnership between the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) to promote the participation of Indigenous people in emergency management decision making by improving the accessibility and relevance of key emergency management literature.

Commencing in 2006 and funded by a Working together to Manage Emergencies (WTTME) grant, the project initially sought to translate two existing documents into language and content suitable for remote Indigenous communities. As the project unfolded, it became apparent that translation of the complex written emergency management doctrine per se was not going to achieve the desired outcomes. This was principally due to the:

- Cultural and linguistic diversity between Indigenous peoples;
- Australian Indigenous cultures are oral cultures. In the Kimberley Aboriginal people do not rely heavily on structured written compositions as the primary means of communicating information;
- Varying levels of English literacy in Indigenous communities;
- Relative density of emergency management literature;
- Complexity of the State emergency management policy and arrangements;
- Level of Indigenous community knowledge about the respective roles of key emergency management agencies;
- Fragmented engagement between emergency service organisations, local governments and Indigenous communities;
- Need for greater clarity around roles and responsibilities in regard to remote Indigenous communities; and
- Perceived relevance of emergency management to Indigenous communities.

The project then focussed on what steps FESA could take to enhance the capacity of both emergency managers and Indigenous people to build productive, equal partnerships to improve the safety and resilience of their own communities.
Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Recommendations from the project centred around five broad themes:

1. Context
   Reframing the issues in ways that emergency management has relevance and meaning for community people.

2. Format
   Employing a variety of interactive, participative mediums for communicating.

3. Content
   Ensuring literature is written in plain English and is reflective of the needs of the community.

4. Empowerment
   Engaging and enabling Indigenous people to participate in emergency management decision making.

5. Respect
   Acknowledging the cultural heritage, rights and responsibilities of Indigenous people

Post Project Events

It is acknowledged that some time has elapsed since the initial workshops and finalisation of this report. Some significant emergency events and further experience in working with Indigenous communities post this project are considered to warrant brief discussion.

Remote Indigenous Communities Emergency Management Arrangements Project

In 2008 FESA and the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) initiated a jointly funded 12 month project to work with progress emergency management arrangements in RICS. The pilot is focussed on Kimberley communities in the Dampier Peninsular and Bidyadanga. The project works directly with community members, emergency service providers and local government to institute and formalise emergency management arrangements which are inclusive of RICs.

Safer Country

FESA’s own experiences of delivering the Introduction to Emergency Risk Management – Safer Country training package has reinforced the findings of the project in respect to firstly its relevance to Indigenous communities and secondly the content and format. FESA is currently progressing a comprehensive evaluation of Safer Country due for completion in early 2009.
Tsunami Project Community Briefings

In 2007 as part of the Australian Government’s Australian Tsunami Warning System (ATWS) Project, FESA undertook briefings in the Dampier Peninsular communities considered to be at high risk of the effects of tsunami. The tsunami briefings underpinned by highly sophisticated scientific tools, provided visual modelling of tsunami events and coastal impact scenarios that were easily understood by Indigenous community members. This experience has reinforced the need to frame the issue in a context that was meaningful for community people.

Cyclones George & Jacob

In March 2007, the northwest was impacted by severe Tropical Cyclone George followed shortly by Tropical Cyclone Jacob which brought widespread flooding. The subsequent major incident review (MIR) made a number of recommendations relating to emergency manager’s knowledge of, engagement with and communication to Indigenous communities. The experiences and lessons learnt from Tropical Cyclones George and Jacob are congruent with the findings and recommendations of the Translation Project.

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Acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>Communication Facilitator</td>
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<td>DEMC</td>
<td>District Emergency Management Committee</td>
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<td>EM</td>
<td>Emergency Management</td>
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<td>EMA</td>
<td>Emergency Management Arrangements</td>
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<td>EMS</td>
<td>Emergency Management Services</td>
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<td>FESA</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Authority</td>
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<td>ISPB</td>
<td>Indigenous Strategy and Policy Branch</td>
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<td>KIS</td>
<td>Kimberley Interpreting Service</td>
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<td>KLRC</td>
<td>Kimberley Language Resource Centre</td>
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<td>LEMC</td>
<td>Local Emergency Management Committee</td>
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<td>LACAs</td>
<td>Language and Cultural Advisors</td>
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<td>PPRR</td>
<td>Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery</td>
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<td>RIC</td>
<td>Remote Indigenous Community</td>
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<td>SEMC</td>
<td>State Emergency Management Committee</td>
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Introduction

This is a joint report from the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) and is the final deliverable of the Indigenous Translation of Western Australian Emergency Management Guidelines and the Emergency Management Arrangements project funded under the Working Together to Manage Emergency (WTME) Local Grants Scheme.

With the implementation of the Emergency Management Act 2005, this project aims to address some of the issues surrounding Aboriginal inclusion and explore how the emergency management sector can better engage/empower Aboriginal communities to be involved in their emergency management arrangements.

Objectives

The initial outputs of the partnership between the FESA and KLRC was to translate two emergency management foundation documents (Local Community Emergency Management Arrangements Guide for Western Australia and Western Australian Emergency Risk Management Guide) into formats that were suitable for engaging Aboriginal people in emergency management and with content which was accessible to remote Indigenous communities (RICs) across the Kimberley Region.

The KLRC was selected as an appropriate partner organisation because of its role in supporting improved communication and consultation practices between government and Aboriginal groups as a way forward for community development in the Kimberley. The KLRC accesses expertise on appropriate ways of communicating with the diverse groups of the region.

The project is intended to address the following:

i. Identify the most appropriate and effective way in which to deliver information from the WA Emergency Management Guide to RICs and Aboriginal people.

ii. Bring together information from workshops and meetings related to the project.

iii. Clarify project implementation issues that arose from these workshops/meetings, specifically from the Emergency Management Arrangements Translation Project.

iv. Determine how a ‘product’ outcome can be achieved to meet the needs of FESA for the Emergency Management Arrangements Translation Project but which also proves to be effective for Aboriginal communities.

v. Ascertain the input needed from FESA’s Indigenous Strategy & Policy Branch (ISPB) to progress the projects and to provide recommendations on a way to move forward.
Background

About the Fire & Emergency Services Authority

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) was established in 1999. Since this time FESA has emerged as a holistic emergency services organisation. FESA’s vision is for a “Safer Community” and it achieves this through delivery of timely, quality and effective emergency services. FESA has an overarching role in ensuring effective emergency management in Western Australia that embraces a comprehensive approach which includes arrangements and planning for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from emergencies.

FESA directly manages or supports fire and emergency management with in excess of 1,000 career staff and 30,000 volunteers across WA involved in emergency service delivery. FESA also plays a leading role in emergency management in WA by maintaining collaborative arrangements with other state and federal agencies which support emergency management. FESA advises and supports WA’s 142 Local Governments to meet their emergency management responsibilities.

Western Australia is faced with a broad range of emergencies ranging from flood and cyclones to transport and industrial accidents. Local and State Government can minimise the potential heartache, cost and devastation caused by these events through emergency management.

Effective emergency management arrangements enhance the capability of the community to manage emergencies. This can involve developing strategies that may prevent emergencies from occurring, preparing for and responding to those that do impact on the community, and assisting the community to recover after the event.

The emergency services volunteers and career personnel who are supported by FESA respond to a range of hazards – bush and structural fires, incidents involving hazardous materials (chemical, biological, radiological), floods, storms, cyclones and earthquakes. Emergency services personnel also undertake searches and rescues on land and at sea.

FESA is responsible for the administration and implementation of the Emergency Management Act 2005. The Indigenous Strategy and Policy Branch have been responsible for facilitating dialogue with FESA Regions, local governments and Indigenous communities to develop and maintain emergency management arrangements for RICs, providing advice and support on emergency management issues to key stakeholders at the local, state and national levels.

Legislative Parameters

Western Australia’s emergency management arrangements necessitate service delivery by a number of emergency services organisations, the majority established and empowered through agency level legislation. FESA derives its legislative authority from the following emergency services Acts:
Remote Indigenous Communities in Australia have diverse and complex emergency management needs. The complexities are often a result of isolation, vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards, inadequate services and infrastructure, transient populations, accessibility issues and entrenched levels of disadvantage. Different governance structures and statutory arrangements and distinctive languages and customs in communities add to the challenges of developing a national approach to emergency management\textsuperscript{2};\textsuperscript{3}.

In the context of the above, many Indigenous communities are especially vulnerable as they have a significantly diminished capacity to recover from the impact of natural disasters and other emergencies.

Indigenous people are part of the community and their issues need to be addressed along with the general community. Many Indigenous communities have been established in isolated areas which exposes them to the risk of a delayed response in the event of an emergency. In addition, these same communities are located in regions considered high-risk in terms of cyclone, flood, storm and fire.

FESA’s community centred approach involves a commitment to work with communities to encourage and enable them to take greater responsibility for their own safety by being better prepared for emergencies.

FESA appreciates and acknowledges the diversity of Remote Indigenous Communities, including the complexities that arise from isolation, transient populations, vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards, inadequate services and infrastructure and entrenched levels of disadvantage\textsuperscript{4};\textsuperscript{5}.


Background and need for emergency management legislation

Emergency Management Arrangements in Western Australian prior to the Emergency Management Act 2005 Western Australia (the Act) were conducted under State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) Policy Statement Number 7 – Western Australian Emergency Management Arrangements. Without the Act WA did not have the key legislative powers and protection required to prevent or mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from, large scale and catastrophic incidents.

The Emergency Management Act 2005 (the Act) was proclaimed on the 23 December 2005 and has provided the necessary legislative framework for the establishment of emergency management arrangements in remote Indigenous communities.

Part 3 – Local Arrangements of the Act provides those provisions that formalise the role of Local Government in emergency management. Nothing in this part is significantly different from the role Local Governments have been encouraged to and in many instances have been undertaking prior to and since 1985 with the inception of what became Policy Statement No. 7

Indigenous communities irrespective of land tenure are located within Local Government districts and are therefore, not excluded from the Act. Notwithstanding the legislative provisions, it is acknowledged that in some instances the Local Government has little or no relationship with the Indigenous communities located within the Local Government district.

In mainstream communities, local government assumes responsibility for emergency management arrangements, including in many instances fulfilling the roles of hazard management agency (HMA) for bush fire and importantly, managing community recovery post incident.

With regard to remote Indigenous communities, historically provision of municipal services by Local Government to Remote Indigenous Communities has been limited. Essential municipal services usually provided by regional Local Governments (rubbish, roads, waste water, ranger services etc) are provided to remote Indigenous communities by resource agencies under contractual arrangements administered by agencies such as the Department of Housing and Works (DHW) and/or Family, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

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6 State Emergency Management Committee, 2005, Western Australian Emergency Management Arrangements

7 Barker, N. 2005, FESA Local Government Responsibilities Briefing Paper

In the absence of formalised arrangements, emergency management services to remote Indigenous communities are largely triggered by the occurrence of a natural disaster or emergency event and, have principally focussed on response and recovery to those communities actually subject to the impact of the event e.g. a flood or cyclone. Not surprisingly, prior to the proclamation of the Emergency Management Act 2005, those Indigenous communities located beyond the boundaries of an urban centre were largely overlooked from the local emergency management arrangements applicable to the town area.

**FESA’s service delivery to Remote Indigenous Communities**

FESA delivers services to RICs, with particular emphasis in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions where a large portion of the State’s Aboriginal communities are located.

Since 1993 FESA has attempted to collaborate on services to RICs to support them in addressing the prevention of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from (PPRR) natural hazards such as tropical cyclones, flooding and isolation due to road closures. Many RICs are extremely isolated from urban centres and are vulnerable to natural and other hazards, limiting their capacity to manage emergencies at a local level. Due to this people have been forced to seek assistance from outside their community.

FESA established two full-time positions in 1993 whose roles were to work closely with RICs to assist in improving their capacity to be better prepared for natural and other hazards. This was an important approach to engaging Aboriginal people and FESA staff learned important information about cultural protocols practised at a community level. It also became increasingly obvious that there was a need to enhance knowledge amongst the emergency services sector about Aboriginal diversity, culture and languages.

In turn, it was clear that RICs had minimal understanding and knowledge of the emergency services sector business. The absence of RIC representation on Local Emergency Management Committees meant that there was little opportunity for Indigenous people to become engaged in emergency management arrangements for their communities. This, combined with the historical arrangements for the delivery of municipal services has exacerbated an already fragmented relationship between the emergency services sector and many Aboriginal communities.

Notwithstanding the logistical and cultural challenges in delivery emergency management and response services to RICS, FESA has made considerable progress in developing relationships and building the capacity of Indigenous people to participate meaningfully in emergency management decision making.
FESA in partnership with the relevant Local Governments, industry, community councils and other non-government organisations is undertaking a considerable amount of work with Indigenous communities including:

- Development of community fire management plans and burning guidelines.
- Capture of aerial imagery of high risk Remote Indigenous Communities to support and facilitate emergency management and land use planning.
- Delivery of Introduction to emergency risk management training program (*Safer Country*) to Remote Indigenous Communities.
- Production of culturally appropriate community safety information campaign materials e.g. Mary G campaign.
- Community schools visits.
- Participation on the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) and Rangelands National Rangeland Management (NRM) Coordinating Group’s Kimberley based Ecofire Project.
- Cyclone and flooding preparedness planning in major Remote Indigenous Communities.
- Volunteer emergency first responder training and support.
- Fire suppression training for Indigenous community members and ranger programs.
- Operational response to Remote Indigenous Communities affected by major incidents i.e. cyclone, floods including evacuation and emergency resupply when required.

National Emergency Management Strategy for Remote Indigenous Communities – *Keeping our Mob Safe*

In the backdrop of the State legislative reforms, strategies for emergency management for remote Indigenous communities were being developed at the national level under the auspices of the Australian Emergency Management Committee (AEMC), culminating in the National Emergency Management Strategy for Remote Indigenous Communities – *Keeping Our Mob Safe*.  

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The objectives of the national strategy are to:

- Develop knowledge and skills in Indigenous people and organisations to enhance emergency management in remote communities.
- Improve the level and appropriateness of emergency management-related services in the area of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery provided by relevant agencies in Remote Indigenous Communities.
- Build the capacity of Remote Indigenous Communities to improve community safety through sustainable emergency management.
- Increase government commitment and accountability to address issues impacting on effective emergency management in Remote Indigenous Communities.
- Promote effective partnerships between emergency management agencies, Indigenous organisations, government and other agencies to improve community safety outcomes for Remote Indigenous Communities.

**About this project**

The Indigenous Strategy and Policy Branch works directly with FESA Regions, local governments and communities to facilitate implementation of the Act within RICs in Western Australia. It is important to acknowledge that given the immediate issues impacting on Aboriginal people such as pandemic poor health, access to adequate housing, low attendance in the education system, drug and alcohol issues, crime prevention, child protection, youth suicide and domestic violence, emergency management is not considered a high priority for RICs.

Notwithstanding the immediacy of other issues, the pre-existing levels of social and economic disadvantage mean that Indigenous communities are more vulnerable to, and less able to recover from natural disasters and other emergencies.

It is widely accepted that community participation, empowerment and engagement are critical success factors to effective emergency management, particularly during the recovery phase. As such, it is essential that the people in the affected community are equipped with the necessary knowledge and understanding of the Emergency Management Arrangements and Western Australian Emergency Management Guidelines to enable their active participation in community decision making.

In their present format, the guidelines are not considered to be an effective medium for communicating and informing RICs about their role and responsibilities in local emergency management arrangements. It is important to note that in many RICs English is spoken as a second or third language.
Initial objectives of project

The intent of this project is to bridge the gap for RICs in accessing relevant information about emergency management. By providing RICs with access to this information it will increase knowledge and awareness in communities of their local emergency management arrangements.

FESA, in partnership with the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, organised a scoping workshop with the initial goal of getting advice on how to translate and develop appropriate materials from the emergency management documents into content that would be suitable for remote Indigenous communities.

Revised objectives of project

At the initial workshop the Language and Culture Advisors convened by the KLRC raised the issue of written materials versus more appropriate media for the dissemination of information. As a consequence approval was sought through the WTTME grants Project Manager to undertake a variation for the final outcome with the intention that the KLRC provide FESA with advice on how to deliver messages clearly and concisely to Aboriginal people throughout the State about the Guidelines and Arrangements.

The overall objective for this project was amended to identify more clearly the appropriate method of disseminating information about the Western Australian Emergency Management Guidelines and the Emergency Management Arrangements to Remote Aboriginal Communities.

To achieve this objective, the project delivered the following outputs:

1. Identify the most appropriate and effective way in which to deliver information on WA Emergency Management Guidelines to Aboriginal communities and people.

2. Identify the most appropriate and effective way in which to apply the Local Emergency Management Arrangements documents.

About the partnership

FESA has been addressing emergency management with remote Aboriginal Communities since 1993 in the area of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery services delivered during this time have mainly focused on wet weather hazards (flood, cyclone, storm, storm surge).

Experience in the field of delivering the current version of Safer Country found that the language and culture of emergency management is complex and generally far too culturally alien to deliver in RICs in its present format.

In June 2006 KLRC was approached by FESA to partner with them in the Emergency Management Arrangements Translation Project. The KLRC was asked to provide expert advice, and identify Aboriginal consultants who could assist with communication, translation and facilitation of the Emergency Management Arrangements and WA Emergency Management Guidelines.

About the Kimberley Language Resource Centre

The KLRC is an Aboriginal, not-for-profit community organisation. It was established in 1984 (incorporated 1985) by Kimberley Aboriginal people concerned about the continuing decline in use of their traditional languages.

Mission Statement:

The KLRC is an Aboriginal owned and governed organisation, working in partnership with the community to keep Kimberley languages strong. It recognises that language is central to culture, land and identity and that it has value in today’s world. It is crucial to the survival of Kimberley languages for them to be passed on to children. The KLRC works to promote respect for language, survival of those languages that are threatened and revival of those languages that are in danger of being lost. The KLRC is an advocate for Kimberley languages on all levels.

The organisation is governed by an Aboriginal Board representative of languages across the Kimberley Region. At present the KLRC Board represent 18 language groups (Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Nyikina, Mangala, Ngarinyin, Karrajari, Nyangumarta, Walmajarri, Eastern Walmajarri, Jaru, Kija, Miriwoong, Worla, Bardi-Jawi, Wangkajunga, Kukatja, Ngardi, Wanyjirra - see Appendix A for map).

The policy of the organisation is to approach the appropriate people in language groups not represented on the Board in regard to specific issues for their languages (e.g. Worrorra, Warrwa, Wunambal, Kwini). The role of the Board is to advise on Kimberley-wide language issues that arise and to input into areas of cross-cultural communication and education. They provide advice to KLRC staff, contract consultants and researchers on protocols for working with communities and the different language groups.

The Board are also informed by the practical work of staff and consultants with language groups at the community level. The basis of all the work carried out by the KLRC is building the capacity of Aboriginal people in communities to support their own languages in a sustainable way and to promote their ability to deal with cross-cultural communication issues. This practical work therefore requires the organisation to assist in improved communication between Aboriginal people and communities and non-Aboriginal researchers or government agencies.
The organisation does not simply provide ‘interpreters’ (see discussion below), but instead advises on strategies for both sides to come together and develop their own working relationships through mutual understanding. This is delivered by ensuring a proper consultation process based on informed consent for Aboriginal people and communities and increasing the understanding of non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal languages, different teaching and learning styles and appropriate consultation strategies.

There are a range of other Kimberley based Aboriginal organisations that could conceivably work with FESA in developing emergency management capabilities of remote Indigenous communities. These include other language specialists, land and culture organisations, resource agencies and the Indigenous arts fraternity. Details of potential partners are included in Appendix B.

It should be noted that the KLRC cannot and does not speak for language groups or Aboriginal organisations in other Western Australia regions such as the Pilbara, or indeed nationally. The recommendations in this document relate to the experiences in the Kimberley Region.

While there are many areas where different groups will coincide, protocols dictate that the suggestions cannot be implemented in other areas without consultation with the relevant Aboriginal organisations, language groups or communities.

**Methodology**

The KLRC’s commitment to the project was to source Language and Culture Advisors (LACAs) and Communication Facilitators (CFs) to provide guidance on how best to communicate with RICs across the Kimberley, and to develop materials from the emergency management documents. The KLRC’s intention was that some of the LACAs would continue working directly with the ISPB or other sections of FESA.

Although this project was labelled with the title *Translation*, the intention of the KLRC was to assess whether written translations of the full documents were feasible and to provide advice on use of additional media to deliver information from the documents to RICs.

**Scoping Workshop – Broome, May 2006**

The Broome Scoping Workshop was held over three days. It brought together four Language and Culture Advisors (LACAs) from two different language groups (Bardi and Walmajarri) representing areas of the Kimberley on the Dampier Peninsula and in the Fitzroy Valley.

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11 Two of the CFs who are also trained interpreters have been used by FESA in other capacities
The initial intention of the workshop was to provide the LACAs with a shortened training session in the ERM package as a precursor to review of the emergency management documentation. During this process, however, many fundamental issues in terms of the LACA’s knowledge of emergency management arrangements and the sector were raised as well as confusion about FESA’s roles and responsibilities.

The LACAs were not aware that FESA has an operational response responsibility as well as being the agency responsible for coordinating broader emergency management arrangements within Western Australia. The LACAs suggested that this lack of knowledge about the scope of services delivered by FESA’s is a widespread factor in regard to Aboriginal people engaging with emergency management activities.

Many of the LACAs considered that the confusion of the roles and responsibilities of FESA had contributed to feelings of distrust and dissention in regard to FESA’s operational activities. This sentiment initially informed how the LACAs engaged with the ISPB facilitators in the workshop. It became apparent that before the workshop could deal with matters of the translation project, it was necessary to provide participants with a forum where they could tell FESA representatives some of the stories of Indigenous people’s prior interactions with FESA that were likely to influence perceptions of, and relationships with FESA personnel.

**Community Stories About FESA**

It was considered important that participants were given the opportunity to raise a number of concerns about past experience with FESA’s operational response during flooding and Aerial Controlled Burning in the Fitzroy Crossing area and community evacuations (see points a), b) and c) below).

a) 2002 Fitzroy Crossing Flood – Missing Persons

One of the attendees spoke about four Aboriginal men who decided to walk back to their community during widespread flooding. The men became isolated in the flooded river. When local police and SES arrived in the community they were advised that locals had knowledge of the river and the possible location of the men. Assistance was offered to the team. The community members felt that the rejection of their offer of assistance was based on lack of trust or respect for them or their local knowledge. That the men were not saved compounded negative feelings.

In this instance improved knowledge of operational response in the community (e.g. public liability may have prevented SES taking people with them) and demonstrated respect for local knowledge of the area from the response team may have prevented the community’s ongoing perception that the men lost their lives because their help was not accepted.
b) Aerial Controlled Burning

The LACAs raised the lack of information about the Aerial Controlled Burning program in the region, which has caused upset, particularly in the northern parts. It was suggested that FESA operational staff had been known to comment that these areas are aerial burned because they are hard to access and “uninhabited”. This is not true for local inhabitants of RICs.

This type of comment is seen as demonstrating disrespect for Aboriginal country and lack of knowledge of continuing cultural land use practices. Improved two-way learning – through cross-cultural workshops for example - would avoid the continuing sense of alienation members of RICs feel in regard to aerial burning.

c) Community Evacuations

Evacuation practices during cyclones on the Dampier Peninsula were also discussed. It was felt the emergency services personnel lacked local and cultural knowledge and not enough information was provided to the community about the role of the emergency services once evacuation becomes necessary.

For example, ignoring cultural protocols can cause upset e.g. people in avoidance relationships being seated together in a plane or other form of transport or unsympathetic treatment of elders who do not often move from their community, and who are traumatised by being evacuated to other places, especially when their return is delayed. Ensuring operational response information is provided to RICs using appropriate media would assist greatly in these situations, as would more localised cross-cultural sessions for emergency services personnel.

Western Australia’s emergency management arrangements designate organisations because of their legislative responsibility or specialised knowledge expertise and resources as the Hazard Management Agency (HMA) for particular hazards\(^\text{12}\). FESA was not the HMA in the instance of the missing persons during the Fitzroy Floods nor is responsible for the operation of welfare centres to accommodate evacuees.

Notwithstanding the prescribed roles of respective agencies in emergency management, in view of the relative complexities of emergency management arrangements combined with a general lack of understanding of those arrangements, it is not surprising that communities will attribute responsibility for what happened to which ever agency or persons who were on the ground at the time, highly visible and perceived to be in charge at the time.

These are the community’s stories drawn from perceptions of what happened. It was beyond the scope of this project to examine and agree or refute the factual accuracy of these stories, nor is it considered helpful to do so at this point. The stories have been included in this report as examples of the unintentional consequences arising from the absence of robust relationships and dialogue between the community and FESA.

Extensive discussion did occur about improving communication and what types of resources are most useful for delivering information to RICs. Whilst these discussions were not related directly to the two documents under consideration, it is indicative of the complexities and sensitivities of the relationships between communities and emergency service organisations and provided some valuable advice on where to progress from this point.

### Broome Outcomes

- Recommendation that a straightforward written translation of the two documents was not practicable.
- Training LACAs in the emergency risk management package is too time consuming and will not achieve the desired outcome of advising on communication strategies or resource development.
- There is too much unnecessary information in the two documents in relation to RICs.
- The negative image of the emergency services sector in RICs is preventing effective communication and the materials developed need consider this issue.
- More information needs to be given out about FESA’s service delivery arrangement and where RICs fit into emergency management.
- The Safer Country video featuring RIC people telling their stories was seen as effective in explaining risks and risk prevention. Audiovisual projects were agreed to be very effective when they present local people and local issues.

### Advisory Meeting – Perth October 2006

This workshop was convened by the ISPB to address some of the issues arising out of the Broome workshop – in particular to explore the question of what information was essential for RICs. The people invited to take part in this group work for government departments, several of them being Kimberley Aboriginal people who are considered to be in a good position to see both the government and community perspectives.

### Outcomes

- The two documents offered for ‘translation’ do not refer to RICs at all, and much of the information in them is not relevant to Kimberley communities.
- It is not clear from the documents what input FESA, Local Government or the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) actually want from Aboriginal communities.
The documents outline the emergency risk management process but do not explain why it is important to RICs in the Kimberley – therefore it is not clear why communities should get involved.

The documents do not explain why Local Government is required to develop these plans.

There is a lot of information that Aboriginal communities might need to know not reflected in these documents – such as what are the roles of police, fire services, Department for Child Protection and others in an emergency.

**Translation of the documents**

This section of the report reflects information inputted by the KLRC in regard to language and communication factors which support the outcomes of the Scoping Workshop (Broome) and the Advisory Meeting (Perth).

**Linguistic and cultural diversity & relationship to country**

Aboriginal people in the Kimberley are not a homogeneous group. The diversity of languages, as mentioned above, is also reflective of diversity in cultures, which in turn is related to the diversity in landscape, and consequently to the biodiversity found in the region.

Each Kimberley language/cultural group had different experiences post-colonisation which affected their languages and cultural practices, as well as their use of English for communication. The same can be said about their removal from, or access to, traditional country. Therefore, a related factor when discussing approaches to RICs in the Kimberley is the differences in community location, administration and population (some are mixed groups, other are homologous). It is important to respect the cultural mix of communities and the history that brought people to that place before implementing programs that may become ineffective because of this lack of knowledge.

A communication strategy for delivering information on the *Emergency Management Arrangements and WA Emergency Management Guidelines* needs to have a foundation in the correct protocols for approaching communities. The starting point should not be specifying exactly what words to use in communicating information. The first phase should be establishing who the target audience is and identifying effective ways of communicating with them. This will require exploring different worldviews, as discussed below. This approach is also appropriate for RICs in the rest of the State.

**Aboriginal languages and literacy**

Prior to colonisation the Kimberley Region had over 40 languages. Since colonisation a handful of those languages have disappeared completely. However there are about 30 still spoken to varying degrees in the Kimberley. There is no traditional language that could account for the whole Kimberley region, never mind the whole State. Respecting and maintaining this diversity is a goal of Kimberley Aboriginal people.
All these languages are oral languages that do not have a history of literacy. The documenting of the languages since early last century has not generated a body of literature written by Aboriginal language groups, but is a record of stories, grammars and wordlists mainly created by non-Aboriginal researchers for the purpose of ‘preserving’ the languages.

There is a body of resources created by Aboriginal people for use in school language programs, but this has not produced a literate culture, because the basis of Aboriginal language and knowledge is an oral heritage tradition and much of the learning still takes place in a spoken context. Therefore, written translation of the Emergency Management documents into a selection of Kimberley Aboriginal languages will not achieve the aim of getting the information to the broad community in their own languages.

Kriol Language

There is a more recent Aboriginal language, Kriol, spoken across the Kimberley region. This language has many different dialects, and is spoken differently by younger and older generations. Although it is a lingua franca across the region, it is not possible to provide a single Kriol translation that will be certain to reflect the whole region. For example, traditional languages words specific to language groups and certain communities are used in local dialects.

A discussion around literacy is also relevant to Kriol, since the body of Kriol ‘literature’ is only newly developing. At present Kriol is written regularly in some of the schools in the region, but not used as a general medium of communication. The KLRC will facilitate Kriol translations, but not for lengthy documents as suggested in this instance. Kriol could potentially be used for significantly shortened documents e.g. pamphlets. Often the use of Kriol in pamphlets and on posters acts as factor in drawing attention to the resource. In regard to audio or audiovisual media, Kriol would be a language that would be more accessible, and localised interpreters would be able to advise on pan-Kimberley media using Kriol and Aboriginal English dialects.

A factor to consider about the nature of oral languages/cultures is that they have a stronger emphasis on visual methods of communication as well as memory techniques and wordplay. The use of culturally appropriate (and locally created) images is much discussed as a good method of communicating information across language barriers in Aboriginal communities. This should not be regarded in a tokenistic way. The use of visual imagery as a way of communicating is also used by other cultures. Advertising globally is driven by the visual image with the goal of linking a ‘logo’ or other image to a product using a key message tagline.
Contexts and Worldviews

The most important factor to consider in regard to translating these documents in a written form is related to cultural contexts and differing worldviews. Since what is captured in these documents is the emergency services sector perspective on a particular way of managing risk in communities, what actually needs to be translated is that worldview. The worldview in regard to ‘risk’ management for Aboriginal people will more than likely be expressed in a different way – although that is not to say that there is a ‘lack of understanding’ of what a ‘risk’ actually is. By working in partnership with RICs the Aboriginal perspective on ‘risk management’ would emerge.

Emergency Management Australia has already considered the importance of approaching Culturally and Linguistic Diverse (CALD) communities with a goal of two-way communication as set out in Guidelines for Emergency Management in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities\(^\text{13}\). It does not, however, mention Aboriginal communities at all.

It needs to be stated clearly, therefore, that in the regard to correct approaches to communities for the Emergency Management Arrangements Translation Project, the Kimberley is not a CALD community that can be treated as one group. It is made up of several groups of CALD communities.

However, some of the strategies from the Guidelines for Emergency Management in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities document are directly relevant and are recommended:

- Education and training is the responsibility of both the emergency management organisation AND the CALD communities themselves.
- Training needs to equip emergency service personnel with the necessary understanding, knowledge and sensitivity to effectively provide service to CALD communities. In addition, CALD communities need to know the issues they can address and their responsibilities.
- Establish a clear insight into any language or cultural barriers that may exist
- Utilise networks and consult with community organisations who can help to link people with services effectively.
- Seek feedback directly from CALD communities.
- Work collaboratively with CALD communities in developing consultation strategies as this will help prevent consultations developing unrealistic expectations.

\(^{13}\) Emergency Management Australia, 2007, Guidelines for Emergency Management in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, Manual Number 44
Specific issues preventing effective communication

Communicating with Aboriginal people and communities is not simply about language barriers. In any cross-cultural situation worldviews and the relevance of concepts are the biggest obstacles to overcome. When advising on the development of written materials from materials such as the two emergency management documents, the KLRC promotes Plain English as the most effective language for written translations of the type targeted in this project. There are more people with literacy in English (including children) than in Kriol or the traditional languages.

Using Plain English for the key information from the emergency management documents will avoid technical jargon that obscures the important messages to be communicated - but also encourage access to other more technical emergency management materials in English. Combine this with the strategy of using Kriol for key messages (as discussed above) and the effectiveness of written materials will be much improved. If the community wants further translations into Kriol or traditional language, Plain English provides a basis for this.

Relevance of emergency management to communities

In the case of this project there is a huge gap between the concept of emergency risk management implemented by the emergency management sector and how Aboriginal people see the safety of their community. Emergency risk management requires that thought is put into what to do for a future incident that may not even occur. Aboriginal people have immediate concerns, often to do with their social situation. It needs to be made clear that ‘lack of understanding’ is not about the ability to understand the concept, but about understanding the relevance of emergency risk management to Aboriginal peoples’ lives.

Historically, the operations of emergency services on the ground during an emergency have not required input from RICs. When a cyclone or other major incident occurs, RICs simply accept that emergency services will be involved in any evacuation or recovery. This makes it hard to initiate a dialogue with communities about involvement in the planning of emergency management at a local level since it has always been one-sided.

There is historically no Aboriginal representation on the LEMCs in the Kimberley local government areas and it was assumed that the state Department of Indigenous Affairs could represent Aboriginal Communities. This has proven detrimental for the community to voice their opinions and concerns in addressing emergency management.

Working through these barriers to communication and developing Plain English documentation to help start the dialogue is recommended.
The Roles of Language and Cultural Advisors and Communication Facilitators

A Communication Facilitator negotiates understandings on both sides. For this project, the CFs brought the community perspective and to a certain extent provided answers. For future collaborations, FESA, Emergency Management sector or Local Government need to bring their own perspective and negotiate understandings directly with the CFs – with a view to then taking the information to the community level for further discussion or confirmation. The CF therefore, acts as a mediator between differing worldviews to improve communication with target groups or a community.

A Language and Cultural Advisor is someone the KLRC would contract specifically to deal with the language and cultural aspects of a project. In the case of developing different media forms they may also be skilled interpreters or translators or language teachers.

The role of LACAs and CFs is different to that of an Interpreter. An interpreter translates in spoken form exactly what one party says into the language of the other party and back again. Interpreters are unbiased and do not add, take out or negotiate any content or meaning.

The intention behind sourcing LACAs and CFs for this project was to advise on, and where relevant assist with, communicating with Aboriginal communities and to advise on the best method of delivering information to the communities. Sometimes there may be language or cultural barriers to overcome. Any development of written materials would need to be undertaken in a collaborative manner between ISPB, FESA Regions and Local Government officers.

Key findings from project

- The two documents cannot be productively translated into only one or two Aboriginal languages and achieve the goal of reaching all of the diverse Aboriginal groups in Western Australia.
- In order to decide on what materials to develop, FESA needs to be clearer on what information they believe is vital to RICs.
- There needs to be more networking between FESA and Aboriginal organisations in Western Australia to facilitate improved communication at the ‘ground level’.
- Service delivery would be greatly enhanced by emergency services staff acquiring a greater understanding of and sensitivity to the issues for RICs.
- The commitment and role of Local Government needs to be addressed since a successful outcome to this project will impact on them.
- Operational staff from FESA or Local Government working in the emergency services area should be supported to develop working relationships with Aboriginal people in RICs.
- Approaching the delivery of information from the documents as trying to ‘sell’ it to Aboriginal communities may provide a guideline to the how.
Clear roles and responsibilities for the KLRC, LACAs and CFs and the ISPB in future projects need to be established.

**Recommendations for the future**

1. Develop the key messages – i.e. *what* information from the two documents is essential for RICs, and *why* is it relevant?

2. The ISPB and KLRC collaboratively develop a realistic goal for delivery of information based on those key messages.

3. The method of delivering information should not be focussed solely on written materials.

4. Any written information developed uses Plain English first with the aim of localising the language content in the future.

5. KLRC work with the ISPB to help create understanding around the role of LACAs, CFs and Interpreters.

6. KLRC and the ISPB assist FESA and Local Government staff to develop their own relationships with community members, including liaising with other relevant Aboriginal organisations.

7. Before widely disseminating any information materials the ISPB consult with LEMCs to ensure they are able to deal with enquiries from RICs - in particular about Aboriginal representation on the LEMCs.

8. The FESA Indigenous Strategy and Policy Branch further their networks with Aboriginal Resource Agencies across the region, and with the Kimberley Land Council and the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, in order to appropriately access RIC members as well as advisors on Cultural Land Management, Environmental Health and community infrastructure for effectively developing EMA.

9. Develop imagery with Aboriginal artists for visual representation of key messages.

10. Develop radio advertisements in Plain English as well as Kriol and Aboriginal English dialects as appropriate.

11. Develop television advertisements that are able to capture localised areas of the State.

12. Use visual and oral education programs about emergency management as a basis for developing appropriate materials for both adults and children in localised areas.

13. Continue to consult effectively on the relevance of traditional language materials.
This map of the approximate locations of Kimberley Aboriginal languages is a work in progress provided to FESA only for the purposes of the Indigenous Translation Project. It is not to be further copied or distributed without permission from the Kimberley Language Resource Centre. ©KLRC 2008
Appendix B

Other Kimberley Aboriginal Entities

The KLRC is the peak, regional body in the Kimberley for supporting Aboriginal languages. There are also other organisations supporting languages, such as Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring in Kununurra (Miriwoong, Gajirrawoong and Doolboong), Madjulla Inc. in Derby (Nyikina) and the Language Committee of the Mowanjum Art and Culture Centre in Derby (Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal). For issues to do with these specific languages, the KLRC also liaises with these organisations.

The peak bodies for land and for culture are respectively the Kimberley Land Council (Head Office in Broome) and the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (Head Office in Fitzroy Crossing). In regard to the operations of FESA in Aboriginal communities, both these organisations are key stakeholders in issues to do with cultural land management e.g. fire management. All three organisations have representatives on the Kimberley Aboriginal Reference Group which advises the Western Australian Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group.

The other central Aboriginal organisations that provide a key for successful Emergency Management in Kimberley Aboriginal communities are the Resource Agencies: Mamabulanjin (Broome), Joorook Ngarni (Wyndham), Marra Worra Worra (Fitzroy Crossing), Warringari (Kununurra), Winun Ngari (Derby) and the Halls Creek Aboriginal Corporation (Halls Creek). These resource agencies provide direct access to people in communities. FESA can and does directly approach these organisations, and encourages Local Government involved in emergency management planning to do so too.

Two other organisations that could provide partnership support in communicating emergency management are Goolarri Media Enterprises (GME) in Broome and the Kimberley Interpreting Services (KIS) Kununurra. GME have the expertise to develop radio and television advertisements – as well as other audiovisual media. KIS can provide interpreters for community consultations.

Another group of organisations that could contribute is the art centres. These include Warliyirti Art and Culture Centre (Balgo Community), the Warmun Art Centre (Turkey Creek), Laari Art Gallery (Yiyili Community), Mowanjum Art and Culture Centre (Derby) and Mangkaja Arts (Fitzroy Crossing).
PRINCIPAL ADDRESS:
FESA House
480 Hay Street
Perth WA  6000

POSTAL ADDRESS:
GPO Box P1174
Perth WA   6844

TELEPHONE:
[08] 9323 9300

FACSIMILE:
[08] 9323 9384

EMAIL:
fesa@fesa.wa.gov.au

WEB:

Kimberley Language Resource Centre
ABN: 43 634 659 269
Administration – Halls Creek
PMB 11 HALLS CREEK WA 6770
phone: (08) 9168 6005  fax: (08) 9168 6023
lfo@klrc.org.au