Office of Emergency Management

The WA State Government established the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) on 1 December 2016. OEM replaces the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) Secretariat. This action was taken in response to the Ferguson Report (i.e. Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire) which recommended greater independence for the peak emergency management body and a more thorough assurance and reporting role.

The new OEM has a direct reporting line to the Minister for Emergency Services, thereby giving it greater independence than the former SEMC Secretariat. An increased focus on assurance, and reporting and recovery will be delivered through a refocussing of the resources of the previous SEMC Secretariat around an assurance role and the creation of the new position of Director Assurance, OEM.

The assurance function will be boosted initially by the secondment of additional staff from the Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM). The recovery function will be enhanced with the transfer of personnel from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Further details are available on the OEM website. www.oem.wa.gov.au

OBRM will co-locate with the new OEM at Dumas House in West Perth. The move by OBRM is expected to occur in March this year.

New State Bushfire Coordinating Committee

In response to Recommendation 16 of the Ferguson Report, the State Bushfire Coordinating Committee (SBCC) was established as a subcommittee of the SEMC on 1 January 2017. The SBCC will be chaired by the Director OBRM. With the establishment of the SBCC, the Minister for Emergency Services has dissolved the Interagency Bushfire Management Committee (IBMC).

A key responsibility of the SBCC will be to develop a State Bushfire Management Policy and a set of long term bushfire risk management objectives. The first meeting of the Committee is scheduled for late February 2017.

Third Edition of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas

The next edition of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas (the Map) is due for release in May 2017. The local government review period to support the development of this edition is now open and will run until 1 March 2017. OBRM works closely with all local governments to identify required updates to the vegetation mapping during this time. Local knowledge is essential to help our team identify areas that have been recently cleared or re-vegetated, or where vegetation management practices (such as regular mowing regimes) are in place or have changed. We’d like to thank local governments for their participation in this review. We’d also like to recognise
the strong support from local government over the past two years, with greater than 95 per cent participation over the 2015 and 2016 reviews combined.

**Local Government Permit to Burn Review Project**

OBRM is in the process of reviewing the local government ‘Permit to Burn’ with the aim of assisting stakeholders to develop a document that can be better tailored to their local needs. The Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) is at the stage of drafting the permit to burn. In early 2017, OBRM contacted all permit to burn issuing local governments requesting their participation in an online survey seeking feedback on the following:

- their use of ‘Permit to Burn’ books;
- whether or not they have a ‘Permit to Burn’ book register; and
- their level of interest in the idea of an online ‘Permit to Burn’ design system (i.e. design your own permit and print).

OBRM is currently collating the survey results which will be presented at the next SRG meeting at the end of February 2017. OBRM would like to thank the 58 LGs that participated in the survey. You can view the minutes from each SRG meeting on the OBRM publications page. [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/obrm](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/obrm)

**New OBRM Team Members**

In February 2017, Dr Jo Ann Beckwith joined OBRM as a Senior Policy Officer. Jo Ann comes from the private sector and has many years of experience in the fields of natural resource management and risk perception from Western Australia and internationally. Jo Ann will be a further complement to the OBRM team.

OBRM also engaged two vacation students this summer to assist with the review of the Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas. These students are undertaking their Masters of Environmental Science specialising in Geographical Information Science at the University of Western Australia and have assisted to enhance the accuracy of the Map.

**MURRAY CARTER**

**DIRECTOR OBRM**

14 February 2017