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A Safer Community Discussion Paper

Response from the SAFECOM Emergency Management Office

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Background

The Security and Emergency Management Office (SEMO) was established as a result of a 2002 review of the State Disaster Act 1980 and associated arrangements. The review concluded that in South Australia there was a real need for a 'champion' to lead and focus attention on emergency management at large. It recommended the establishment of a compact professional administrative entity to serve the strategic priorities of the State Emergency Management Committee and national agreed initiatives.

SEMO was initially located in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. In 2006, the Counter-Terrorism portfolio moved to SAPOL and the Emergency Management portfolio moved to SAFECOM. In 2009, the following was included in the Fire and Emergency Services Act to describe the role.

The Commission's function is to undertake a leadership role from a strategic perspective with respect to emergency management within the State and to maintain an appropriate level of liaison with other bodies responsible for the management of emergencies within the State.

The key policy driver is the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) endorsed by COAG in 2011. The SAFECOM Emergency Management Office is the sole entity within State Government that provides oversight of the Strategy's implementation in South Australia. The Strategy focuses on priority areas to build disaster resilient communities, and recognises that disaster resilience is a shared responsibility for individuals, households, businesses and communities as well as for governments. The Strategy has broadened the scope of involvement by government beyond the traditional emergency services sector. This is evidenced in the South Australia NSDR Implementation Plan developed and maintained by SAFECOM on behalf of the State Emergency Management Committee.

The SAFECOM Emergency Management Office (EMO) comprises 3.0 permanent FTEs. The majority of additional resources are contract staff working on projects funded by the Natural Disaster Resilience Program and NEMP¹ program to deliver outputs on behalf of the State Emergency Management Committee and the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee. The Office has employed up to 12.0 FTE contract staff and currently employs 7.0FTE contract staff.

Introduction

When the Minister presented the sector review to SAFECOM on 10 July 2014 we were advised that the Emergency Management portfolio had not yet been considered. The focus at the time was gathering opinion on how to improve the support arrangements for front line services.

SAFECOM's Emergency Management legislative function was not discussed in the regional consultation process and this is appropriate because the focus is an all-hazard, Whole of Government responsibility aimed at building disaster resilience.

¹ National Emergency Management Projects funded by CW Attorney Generals Department.

The CFS, MFS and SES are only three of a broad range of agencies that the SAFECOM EMO regularly engages with across the State's emergency management sector. The front-line ESO staff and volunteers are not the target audience of the SAFECOM EMO. ESO front-line staff and volunteers will speak on emergency management from an operational viewpoint in relation to a specific hazard but not from a high level strategic leadership perspective to implement the strategic priorities of the State Emergency Management Committee and national agreed initiatives.

This is the first opportunity that the Emergency Management Office has had to provide input to the review.

Summary of Key Recommendations

1. The Sector Reform Discussion Paper should distinguish between the emergency management responsibilities of the Emergency Service Organisations and SAFECOM's Whole of Government Emergency Management legislative mandate.
2. The Emergency Management Office should remain a discreet entity to deliver the strategic priorities of the State Emergency Management Committee and national agreed initiatives.
3. The Emergency Management Office should be located in the *Strategy and Governance* division of the proposed structure to ensure the delivery of an all-hazard and high-level Whole of Government service.
4. At the end of 2015 the Zone Emergency Risk Management project will transition into an ongoing program and will need to be adequately resourced within the new organisational structure.
5. The boundaries of the Bushfire Management Areas should be more closely aligned to the Emergency Management Zone boundaries.
6. The Logistics Functional Service must be incorporated into the new organisation structure and should be led or supported by personnel who have procurement and supply knowledge and experience.
7. A dedicated full-time position should be reinstated in the new organisation structure to coordinate the Logistics Functional Service.
8. The Emergency Management Office should be represented on relevant Sector Review working groups, or at least be directly consulted to ensure that the new structure continues to effectively serve the strategic priorities of the State Emergency Management Committee and national initiatives.

Discussion

Recommendation 1

The Sector Reform Discussion Paper should distinguish between the emergency management responsibilities of the Emergency Service Organisations and SAFECOM's Whole of Government Emergency Management legislative mandate.

The Sector Reform Discussion Paper does not distinguish between the emergency management responsibilities of the Emergency Services Organisations (ESOs) and their frontline brigades/units/stations, and the strategic Whole-of-Government all-hazards Emergency Management function of SAFECOM. This is an important distinction to make.

The SAFECOM Emergency Management Office (EMO) is considered a centre of excellence for Emergency Management policy in South Australia; influencing whole-of-government approaches at the Commonwealth, State and local levels. Partnerships with local government and the non-government sector are critical to this process. The EMO also represents South Australia and the emergency management sector on state-level and national committees, working groups and projects.

By contrast, the ESOs establish their emergency management arrangements pursuant to the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP). The SEMP identifies a number of State Government agencies including the CFS, MFS and SES that are responsible for the prevention of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from specified state level emergency hazards.

Agency specific responsibilities are not the focus of the SAFECOM EMO including programs such as the FloodSafe and the Prepare, Act, Survive prevention programs. The EMO does not have the mandate or the resources to support individual agency responsibilities. These agencies strategically link to the broader Emergency Management sector via sub-committees of the State Emergency Management Committee; namely the State Response Advisory Group (chair SAPOL), the State Mitigation Advisory Group (chair SAFECOM), and the State Recovery Committee (chair DCSI). The SAFECOM EMO provides executive support to the State Mitigation Advisory Group.

Recommendation 2

The Emergency Management Office (EMO) should remain a discreet entity to deliver the strategic priorities of the State Emergency Management Committee and national agreed initiatives.

The original intention of the SAFECOM EMO to serve the strategic priorities of the State Emergency Management Committee and national agreed initiatives has worked well. These priorities include:

- Coordinating implementation of the NSDR on behalf of the State Emergency Management Committee.

- Administering the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience on behalf of the Minister, Emergency Services.
- Chair and Executive support to State Emergency Management Committee sub-committees.
- Undertaking State Strategic Projects on behalf of the State Emergency Management Committee
- Undertaking national projects on behalf of the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee.
- Providing relevant high-level briefings including to the Minister, Emergency Management Council, ANZEMC members and the State Emergency Management Committee.

The Discussion Paper alludes to the separation of EMO functions across the *Strategy and Governance* division and the *Community Safety and Resilience (Frontline Services)* division. If the intention is to maintain the EMO as a discreet entity within the new structure, then this needs to be explicitly stated. This approach is highly recommended.

The continuation of the EMO as a discreet entity will ensure that national and state policy continues to directly influence the all-hazard, high-level Whole of Government programs delivered by the EMO such as the Natural Disaster Resilience Program and the Zone Emergency Risk Management Program. These and other programs delivered by the EMO must continue to deliver the agreed outputs of the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience signed by the Premier and Prime Minister.

Over the past several years, the EMO has established strong partnerships across State and local government utilising the Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP) funding. This includes funding start-up projects by agencies that have not traditionally worked within the Emergency Management sector. For example, the NDRP has funded the development of South Australia's inaugural Land Use Planning and Building Codes Action Plan² that brings together for the first time the Planning sector with the Emergency Management sector.

The Zone Emergency Risk Management project works with eleven Zone Emergency Management Committees that have an all-hazards emergency risk management, planning and preparedness role. Committee membership is predominately local government and key State government agencies. This program, as with the NDRP program must remain linked to the strategic policy arm of the EMO to ensure national and state priority objectives are achieved across government.

Recommendation 3

The Emergency Management Office should be located in the *Strategy and Governance* division of the proposed structure to ensure the delivery of an all-hazard and high-level Whole of Government service.

The Discussion Paper does not make it clear whether the *Strategy and Governance* division is being established as an 'office' for the Chief Executive, or a more comprehensive corporate governance and strategic services unit. The 'Possible Sector Model' proposed at the Round Table 3 meeting on 13th October suggests the latter.

² Endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee July 2014.

The EMO function to *undertake a leadership role from a strategic perspective with respect to emergency management within the State* aligns to the *Strategy and Governance* division's role to provide 'national collaboration and coordination' and 'strategic planning'. Locating the EMO in this division will also provide a direct service to the Minister and senior executive representing South Australia on the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council, the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee, the Emergency Management Council, and the State Emergency Management Committee.

If the intention of the *Strategy and Governance* division is to provide a discreet office for the Chief Executive, then the second option is to establish a discreet EMO in the *Community Safety and Resilience (Frontline Services)* division. This is not the preferred option because it is moving a Whole of Government program to a "community facing" "front-line" division of the new structure. There is a risk that EMO Whole-of-Government programs will narrow their focus towards the priorities of the CFS, MFS and SES.

The Discussion Paper notes that there are challenges in sustaining the nexus between the national resilience and emergency reform agendas and the programs delivered by the three Emergency Service Organisations³. If the EMO is located in the *Strategy and Governance* division it will continue to 'champion' emergency management across government. It will also have a stronger voice within the new organisation to champion disaster resilience national and state initiatives. The current SAFECOM structure does not have this same influence.

Recommendation 4

At the end of 2015, the Zone Emergency Risk Management project will transition into an ongoing program and will need to be adequately resourced within the new organisational structure.

The Zone Emergency Risk Management program commenced in 2010 at the time the National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines (NERAG) was published. The national guidelines provide for the first time a common methodology for State and local government to conduct emergency risk assessments of priority hazards. Establishing this common national approach was a resolution of COAG back in 2002.

The role of the Zone Emergency Management Committee (ZEMC) is to provide assurance that arrangements are in place to prevent and/or mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters that could impact the Zone. The Zone Emergency Risk Management project has addressed multiple hazards utilising a rigorous risk assessment methodology and the outputs will be a major driver of the ongoing ZEMC work program to reduce risk and build local resilience. The ZEMC membership is predominately local government with key State Government agencies and community members. The program has proven highly effective in bringing together

³ Discussion Paper page 16.

both levels of government to work together.

The SAFECOM EMO has led the program by developing common ZEMC templates, providing training on the NERAG⁴ methodology, developing NERAG support tools, facilitating zone emergency risk assessment workshops and collating the findings into summary reports that identify mitigation strategies. The ZEMCs are now at the stage of identifying and evaluating treatment options and developing a Zone Emergency Management Plan to address residual risk.

It is critical that SAFECOM continue to support the ZEMCs through this process and provide resources to progress the ongoing work program; to develop and implement processes that enable ongoing assurance that emergency risk is effectively identified and treated across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

A major issue is that SAFECOM's support to Zone Emergency Management Committees is being funded as a time-limited project through the Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP) until December 2015. There are no provisions for ongoing support to ZEMCs past this date. The ZEMC Chairs have written to the State Emergency Management Committee stating that ongoing support from SAFECOM is critical to the ongoing effectiveness of the Zone Emergency Management Committees.

It is recommended that the Zone Emergency Risk Management project become a core program in the new Sector Model that will require resourcing of 7.0 permanent FTEs. The value of this program to enhance community resilience will be significant over the longer term. The program is also reducing risk to government through the implementation of a rigorous process of risk assessment and risk mitigation utilising national best practice approaches.

Recommendation 5

The boundaries of the Bushfire Management Areas should more closely align to the Emergency Management Zone boundaries.

The boundaries of the Bushfire Mitigation Areas should be more closely aligned to the State Government Regions that are also the Emergency Management Zone boundaries.

Further analysis would be required to determine if the current role of the Bushfire Management Committees could be effectively undertaken by Zone Emergency Management Committees. Currently the committees have a different focus. The BMCs have a more operational focus specific to bushfire whereas the ZEMCs are responsible for high level assurance across all-hazards.

⁴ National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines that must be adopted by all States and Territories as agreed in the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience.

Recommendation 6

The Logistics Functional Service must be incorporated into the new organisation structure and should be led or supported by personnel with procurement and supply knowledge and experience.

SAFECOM is responsible for the Logistics Functional Service as prescribed in the State Emergency Management Plan. The function is administered by the SAFECOM EMO however has not been considered in the Discussion Paper.

The purpose of the Logistics Functional Service is to facilitate the effective provision of supply and catering services to support emergency services and the South Australia community during response and recovery operations relating to an identified major incident, major emergency or disaster.

The function was previously administered by the Department of Administrative and Information Services that had significant procurement expertise until the agency was disbanded. There is no strategic reason why the function sits with SAFECOM other than no other State Government agency offered to take on the role. The State Emergency Management Committee requested that the function move to SAFECOM.

There is also no strategic reason why the function resides in the SAFECOM EMO. It previously sat with the procurement function of SAFECOM until that section was significantly reduced as a result of budget cuts. It was then transferred to the EMO that is not experienced in procurement and supply. There will potentially be a significant demand on the Logistics Functional Service during a major emergency and lack of procurement experience within the EMO is a risk in delivering this support to the emergency services and the community.

Recommendation 7

A dedicated full-time position should be reinstated in the new organisation structure to coordinate the Logistics Functional Service.

The Logistics Functional Service was originally resourced with a dedicated 1.0FTE ASO5 position. The position was lost approximately 3 years ago due to SAFECOM funding cuts. The function has since operated with temporary staffing arrangements and this has resulted in a significant decline of the capability. This position needs to be reinstated in the new structure to reduce the risk to government and the community.

The risk of not filling this role on a permanent basis has been documented on several occasions by the EMO. This risk will not become evident until there is a major emergency or disaster.

Furthermore, the Logistics Functional Service has relied on the goodwill of SAFECOM staff to support the on-call roster. The EMO supports the concept of non-operational staff supporting operations during major and/or protracted emergencies rather than relying on goodwill. This is discussed on

page 13 of the Discussion Paper. It is considered appropriate that all non-operational Position Descriptions include the requirement for staff to assist operational activities during major emergencies that may require some out-of-hours work.

Recommendation 8

The Emergency Management Office should be represented on relevant Sector Review working groups, or at least be directly consulted to ensure that the new structure continues to effectively serve the strategic priorities of the State Emergency Management Committee and national initiatives.

The EMO provides a different focus to the rest of SAFECOM. The business is predominately external to the agency and can be forgotten to a degree when the sector is undergoing a review.

It is important that the EMO is directly involved with planning around the new structure and its implementation to ensure any future arrangements complement and ideally enhance the existing functions of the EMO.