

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO RECENT TRENDS IN AND PREPAREDNESS FOR EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

The Attorney-General's Department makes the following additional comments in relation to the following term of reference:

(e) the current roles and effectiveness of the division of responsibilities between different levels of government (federal, state and local) to manage extreme weather events

Under Australia's constitutional arrangements, the government of each Australian State and Territory has responsibility for the protection of life and property, and for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in the emergency management context. The Commonwealth government's role in emergency management is to support State and Territory governments in technical and financial matters, policy and crisis coordination. At the Commonwealth level, the Attorney-General's Department has lead responsibility for emergency management.

Because of the collaborative nature of emergency management policy, decision-making occurs on a collaborative basis through national fora, primarily:

- the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), comprising heads of governments
- the Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management (SCPEM), comprising ministers
- the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC), comprising senior officials, and
- at a working level through ANZEMC sub-committees, including the following four permanent sub-committees:
 - the Capability Development Sub-committee
 - the Community Engagement Sub-committee
 - the Recovery Sub-committee, and
 - the Risk Assessment, Measurement and Mitigation Sub-committee.

The 'shared responsibility' approach is also reflected in the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, which was adopted by all Australian governments in February 2011. The Strategy guides national reform work with a focus on disaster resilience, and complements many other initiatives undertaken by States and Territories in their respective jurisdictions. The Strategy promotes a collaborative approach amongst all levels of Australian government, and focusses on collective responsibility for disaster resilience which includes governments, business, individuals, non-government organisations and volunteers. The Strategy does not seek to impede ongoing State and Territory emergency management policies or ongoing work to improve disaster resilience within their borders.

At its July 2013 meeting, SCPEM endorsed disaster mitigation as a future priority of the Strategy. ANZEMC was subsequently tasked with further examining disaster mitigation, and developing an evidence base for future investment in mitigation, to be considered at SCPEM's November 2013 meeting.

July 2013