

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON AUSTRALIA'S DISASTER RESILIENCE

SUBMISSION - INSPECTOR-GENERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (QUEENSLAND)

Executive Summary

1. The Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management (**Office**) welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission to support the Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience.
2. This submission addresses the role and functions of the Office.
3. In preparing this submission we have had the benefit of reviewing the submissions already made to the Committee by other entities. I note that the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (**QFES**) (submission No. 32) provides a summary of the current Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements (**QDMA**).

Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management

4. The role of the Inspector-General Emergency Management (**IGEM**) and the Office was first established in 2013 and formalised as a statutory position and Office in 2014 under the *Disaster Management Act* 2003 (Qld) (**Act**). Queensland and Victoria are the only two IGEMS in Australia. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (**RCNDA**) recommended the Australian Government, all states and territories should establish "accountability and assurance mechanisms to promote continuous improvement and best practice in natural disaster arrangements".¹
5. The primary responsibility of the Office is to enable confidence in Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements. Key functions and accountabilities of the Office are:
 - a) Reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of disaster management arrangements within Queensland (at State, District and Local levels);
 - b) Reviewing and assessing cooperation between entities responsible for disaster management in the State, including whether disaster management systems and procedures employed by those entities are compatible and consistent;
 - c) Establishing and regularly reviewing the standards for disaster management, reviewing and assessing performance entities responsible for disaster management in the State against these standards;

¹ Recommendations 24.1 & 24.2 [List of recommendations | Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements](#)

- d) Monitoring compliance by Queensland government departments with their disaster management responsibilities;
 - e) Identifying and improving disaster and emergency management capabilities, including volunteer capabilities and opportunities for cooperative partnerships;
 - f) Reporting to and advising the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services (**Minister**) about issues relating to these functions.
6. These activities are undertaken by the Office by reference to the [Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland](#) (**Standard**). They are also governed by legislation, policy, good practice guidelines and the performance indicators of key agencies or entities.

Standard for Disaster Management

7. The Standard establishes the outcomes to be achieved for all entities involved in disaster management in the state. The standard should be applied in conjunction with disaster management doctrine, good practice guidance and government policy, with reference to the Act and the [Queensland Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery Disaster Management Guideline](#) (the guideline). In summary:
- a. The Standard focuses on outcomes rather than setting a 'minimum' standard that must be met. It moves away from a traditional compliance tool and towards enhancing performance and achieving shared system-wide goals set by the sector.
 - b. To focus on outcomes, the standard provides the parameters within which disaster management should be conducted across Queensland, without being prescriptive about how it should be done. This allows for flexibility across a range of different entities according to their capability, capacity, and needs.
 - c. The standard is to be used by all entities in Queensland with a responsibility to contribute to disaster management. This includes those with legislated roles, as well as entities acting on behalf of or under an arrangement with those that do.
 - d. The Standard sets out seven shared responsibilities - managing risk, planning and plans, community engagement, capability integration, operations, collaboration and coordination, and common language.
8. From the perspective of the terms of reference of the Select Committee capability integration is possibly the most relevant.

Outcome 7: Resources are prioritised and shared with those who need them, when they need them

Indicators

<p>In terms of resources, entities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are aware of their own and others' resources and their availability - understand how resources can be accessed and integrated - know which of their own resources other entities may require - coordinate and manage resources - understand the capability limits of available resources - make relevant plans, procedures, and other documents and resources available to other entities 	<p>In terms of information, entities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - source, verify and share relevant intelligence products with other entities - understand their own information requirements - share current, relevant information - can securely store and share sensitive data
--	--

Outcome 8: Entities develop integrated capabilities and shared capacity to reduce the impact of disasters on the community

Indicators

<p>Entities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider the community's capability and capacity to manage their own risks - work together to build capability and capacity - have and maintain agreements for the provision and delivery of services and resources - have agreements with others for access to systems, documents and resources - develop and implement coordinated strategies 	<p>Training and exercising programs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - determined by needs, roles and responsibilities - informed by evidence and risk and doctrine - developed in collaboration with relevant entities - coordinated across and involve all relevant entities - developed and conducted by the appropriate entities - consistent with recognised methodology
--	--

Assurance

9. The Office is responsible for providing the Queensland Government an assurance of public safety. This is achieved through the establishment and implementation of an [Emergency Management Assurance Framework](#), to guide and focus the work of all agencies, across all tiers of Government towards achieving best practice outcomes for disaster management in Queensland.
10. The Office is committed to working with all relevant entities to effect change and to ensure continuous improvements to the QDMA. Through its functions the Office seeks improvement, evidence-based and innovative practice, so that others can be inspired in their own space to seek and lead their own improvements. The Office strongly embraces a partnered, co-design and co-implementation model in working with all entities in embracing constant improvement in all aspects of disaster management.

Reviews

11. Since its creation the Office has undertaken a number of reviews on behalf of Government. The Office also contributed and provided evidence at the RCCNDA.
12. The Office is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the QDMA as tasked by the Queensland Government. A copy of the [Terms of Reference](#) for the QDMA review are attached for the committee's information. The final review report is to be provided to the Minister by 29 April 2023 (Attachment 1).
13. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (**MER**) Program, enables the Office to monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of Queensland Government Action Plans published in response to IGEM review recommendations made since 2017.
14. The MER Program provides assurance to the Queensland Government that those activities are being implemented in response to review recommendations. This contributes to continuous improvement in prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery and community safety in Queensland.
15. The MER program uses an evidence-based approach to clarify the extent to which activities related to recommendations are being delivered. This ensures there is a sound rationale for IGEM's evaluation and accurate progress reporting.

Lessons Management

16. In accordance with the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan, the Office is also responsible for the Lessons Management Framework. The [Queensland Disaster Management Lessons Management Framework \(Framework\)](#) was publicly released by the Office in July 2020.
17. The Framework provides a common approach to lessons management and promotes sharing of lessons across the disaster management sector. Lessons management is a key part of Queensland's approach to continuous improvement in disaster management practice. It enables learnings from events, exercises and good practice to be identified, shared and embedded in the disaster management system.
18. The Office has established the Disaster Management Research Framework (**DMRF**) reinforced in the [State Disaster Management Plan](#) (SDMP), acknowledging the Offices role in enabling a sector-wide, collaborative approach to disaster management research.
19. This process involves working with DM sector, tertiary institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders to identify gaps and opportunities to improve Queensland's DM capabilities and support development of strategic research priorities. Through the DMRF the Office:
 - a. Acts as a knowledge broker – introducing and support partnerships between researchers, and researchers and practitioners.
 - b. Performs research mapping and gap analysis across the DM sector.

- c. Manages a researcher register to log active researchers and projects.
 - d. Chairs the Research Advisory Panel.
 - e. Provides a knowledge exchange of research activities on the IGEM website.
 - f. Leads and participates in DM research activities and events such as the Qld Research Forum and the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) in September 2022.
20. The Office represents the Queensland Government on a range of state and national working groups and committees. It provides assurance and evaluation, research and engagement input.

The role of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in responding to natural disasters

21. The Office has commented on the role of the ADF in recent disaster event reviews.
- a. IGEM's [Queensland Bushfires Review 2018-19](#) at pages 135-139 addresses the provision of ADF assistance in the context of the 2018-2019 bushfire season.
 - b. The [Monsoon Trough Rainfall and Flood Review \(Monsoon Trough Review\)](#)(Report 3: 2018-19, pages 119-123), IGEM provided commentary on the provision of ADF assistance during the monsoon trough rainfall and flooding event.
 - c. [South East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding February to March 2022 Review](#) (Report 1:page 88) ADF support enabled the Port of Brisbane operations to recommence as quickly as possible.
22. As part of the Monsoon Trough Review the Office made a finding that there is a risk of over reliance on, or expectations of, ADF availability in terms of both capability and capacity. It was noted then that there are many factors domestically and internationally that may influence this availability (finding 29). The review recommended that greater emphasis be placed on pre-planned and pre-determined arrangements between the ADF and state and local agencies (recommendation 9). Subsequently QFES engaged with the ADF in relation to this recommendation. There was a greater emphasis on pre-planned and pre-determined arrangements of Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) Policy and Manual, which were re-released in August 2020. The DACC arrangements has been further enhanced by the ongoing consultation arising from the recommendations in Chapter 7 of [RCNND A Report](#). The submission from QFES to the Select Committee (submission 32) outlines the current engagement with ADF.
23. It is acknowledged anecdotally that natural disasters are becoming more frequent and intense. This ultimately has resulted in greater pressure on whole DM system. For example COVID 19, compounded with number of severe weather events in 2022, which has seen local, State and Commonwealth deployments working together.