

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Group: Written**

**Program: 1.6**

**Question: BE14/096**

**Senator Singh asked the following question at the hearing on 26-29 May 2014:**

1. Has the government consulted with stakeholders such as St John's Ambulance, Red Cross, the volunteer fire services, about the impact of closing the Mt Macedon facility on emergency services?
2. Has the Institute or the Department received any correspondence or comment from stakeholders about the government's decision to close down the Mt Macedon facility? If so, from whom was the correspondence? What was their reaction?
3. How many staff work at the Australian Emergency Management Institute?
4. How many of those staff will be transferred to Canberra when the Institute closes?
5. What assistance will they receive to relocate?
6. What redundancy will staff who can't relocate receive?
7. Has the Government considered how the loss of these jobs will impact on the local economy?
8. How will the Institute function as a virtual centre? What concrete planning has been done to support this new mode of operation?
9. How will the students who participate in these courses after the physical Institute closes receive the same level of training?
10. How will closure impact on the bushfire preparedness in Victoria?
11. In a Media Release dated 23 Oct 2013 and titled, Bushfire Risk and Climate Change, Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Chubb, stated that "there is a link between climate change and meteorological conditions conducive to fires starting and spreading rapidly. What through our history have been irregular but frequent events now have a new and additional variable: climate change...the intensity, duration, and frequency of heat extremes are contributors to increased risk."
12. When there is ample evidence of increased frequency and intensity of bushfires and other natural disasters in Australia, and with the catastrophic loss of life we have seen from these disasters, why is the Government cutting, rather than increasing support for our nation's emergency management response capabilities?
13. Did the Attorney-General consult with emergency management agencies and communities about the impacts of these cuts? If so, with whom and when?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

1. Following the Budget announcement, the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) has undertaken comprehensive consultation with stakeholders in relation to the relocation of the Australian Emergency Management Institute from Mt Macedon to Canberra.
2. Yes, a limited number of letters from stakeholders have been received, including requests for future information on the transition.
3. 44 (36.95 FTE, 9.95 of which are non-ongoing positions).
4. Current ongoing staff have the opportunity to relocate to Canberra as part of the transition arrangements. The department will take all reasonable steps to transfer ongoing employees to a suitable vacancy at the same level within the department in accordance with the AGD Enterprise Agreement.
5. The Department may make financial or other assistance available for relocation in accordance with the provisions of the Attorney-General's Department Enterprise Agreement.
6. Ongoing staff unable to relocate will be declared excess and will be subject to the provisions of the Attorney-General's Department Enterprise Agreement, including options for redeployment and voluntary redundancy.
7. The department has discussed the closure of the Mt Macedon facility with the local council's representatives.
8. The new model is currently being developed with input from stakeholders in the emergency management sector. A range of education, knowledge management and community awareness and engagement products and services will be delivered using both face to face delivery and other flexible methods, such as online.
9. The commitment to support students and offer excellence in emergency management education during the transition and beyond remains strong. In developing the new model, the Institute will work through the best way to meet the needs of students within the new model ensuring compliance with its status as a Registered Training Authority (RTO).
10. The Institute does not provide any specific operational capability in relation to bushfire preparedness to the local community. Rather, its work builds national capability, including for Victoria through its education services and products. This important work of the Institute will continue, albeit from a different base and with a different model, continuing to meet the needs of the sector and contribute to capability development for the whole Australian community.
11. No response required.
12. The Government is modernizing the Institute so that it remains relevant into the future, and will better meet the needs of its clients.
13. Since the budget announcement the Department has consulted widely with the emergency management sector to ensure AEMI's services are effectively targeted to meet the needs of the sector.