

Your Ref: A839526

Our Ref: 20/171238 :D11512  
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Dear Mr Peter Katsambanis MLA

### **STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE APPEARANCE**

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee COVID-19 Pandemic Hearing on 16 September 2020.

I have reviewed the transcript provided by the Committee and attach a corrected transcript and a revised written submission for publication, as requested.

Further to the revised transcript I would like to take the opportunity to provide information illustrating the State Emergency Coordinator role does not exist only during a state of emergency, as reflected in the questioning by members.

The *Emergency Management Act 2005* gives the State Emergency Coordinator the below functions outside of a state of emergency:

- The State Emergency Coordinator:
  - provides advice to the Minister in relation to emergencies;
  - provides advice to the SDC during a state of emergency;
  - provides such advice and assistance to HMAs as the SEC considers appropriate; and
  - carry out EM activities as directed by the Minister. (s. 11(2) EM Act)
- Where authorised to do so under a State emergency management plan or State emergency management policy, or authorised to do so by the SEMC or the State Disaster Council, the State Emergency Coordinator may —
  - (a) liaise with the Australian Government and other persons, in or outside the State; and
  - (b) enter into agreements and arrangements with those persons, to assist the State to manage emergencies. (s. 11(3) EM Act)
- The State Emergency Coordinator may delegate to any person any power or duty of the State Emergency Coordinator under another provision of this Act (EM) (s. 12(1) EM Act).

- The State Emergency Coordinator is to appoint a district emergency coordinator for each emergency management district (s. 29 EM Act)
- The State Emergency Coordinator is to appoint a local emergency coordinator for each local government district (s. 37 EM Act)
- May approve the delegation by an HMA to an officer or employee of the agency any power or duty of the HMA under s. 50, s. 53 and s. 55, or any of those sections (s. 5 EM Act).

The State Emergency Management Policy and State Emergency Management Plan further articulate roles and responsibilities for the State Emergency Coordinator before and after emergencies.

I trust this information is of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ron F Edwards

**CHAIR**

**STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

29 September 2020

# HOW THE VARIOUS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCIES RELATE TO EACH OTHER

## **OVERVIEW OF *EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACT 2005 (WA)***

The *Emergency Management Act 2005* (EM Act) provides for prompt and coordinated organisation of emergency management (EM) in Western Australia. It covers matters relating to the overarching EM frameworks and infrastructure, policy and planning and coordination. The EM Act details the roles and responsibilities at a State, district and local-level in relation to the four aspects of EM: prevention; preparedness; response; and recovery (PPRR). The Act provides for additional powers in the event of a higher-level emergency such as an “emergency situation” or a “state of emergency” that support emergency management activities above and beyond the “operating” legislation of the responsible agencies.

The EM Act establishes the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC), which is a Committee with a strategic, advisory role in relation to EM. The SEMC is supported by a subcommittee structure and reference groups, which provide expert advice to the SEMC on various aspects of EM.

The SEMC is prescribed under the EM Act to arrange for the preparation of State EM Policies and State EM Plans, furthermore the SEMC is to arrange for these documents to be reviewed, amended or replaced, whenever the SEMC considers it appropriate.

### COVID19 Response

In relation to the COVID-19 emergency, the Minister declared a state of emergency on 15 March 2020, with subsequent declarations extending the state of emergency. Declarations have also been made in relation to the *Public Health Act 2016* to support the response to COVID19.

In April 2020 the Emergency Management Amendment (COVID-19 Response) Bill 2020 introduced new provisions into the Western Australian EM framework to strengthen the State’s capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Response Bill also clarified and amended existing provisions to remove barriers that were impeding the COVID-19 response and future emergencies.

To ensure the suite of State EM documents is aligned to legislation and fit for purpose, the SEMC amended several documents during the (ongoing) State response to COVID-19. These amendments included:

- Changes resulting from the COVID-19 Response Bill to State EM Policy, State EM Plan, State EM Procedure and State EM Forms.
- Approval of the Interim State Support Plan – Emergency Welfare
  - Considering the ongoing COVID-19 emergency, the Department of Communities deemed it appropriate to elevate some of the structures and services which are identified in the Plan.
- Inclusion of appendix AA COVID-19 Recovery
  - The inclusion of appendix AA in State EM Policy and Plan facilitates the State Recovery Controller leading the whole of government approach to Western Australia’s recovery from COVID-19.

## EM PRINCIPLES

The SEMC Emergency Management Framework is underpinned by the SEMC Emergency Management Principles:

- **All Hazards Coordinated and Integrated Approach**
  - The 'all agencies coordinated and integrated' approach recognises that no one agency can address all of the impacts of a particular hazard. It is necessary for a lead agency to coordinate the activities of the large number of organisations and agencies that are involved. These can be drawn from across all levels of government, non-government, volunteer organisations and the private sector. Emergency management requires collaboration, coordination and integration to facilitate complementary and coherent action by all partners to ensure the most effective use of resources and activities.  
This principle also encapsulates the shared capabilities and skills required to manage hazards, regardless of the particular hazard.
- **Continuous Improvement**

Continuous improvement, including incremental and transformational change, is undertaken systematically as an integral part of emergency management practice to improve outcomes. Improvement in arrangements is achieved through the regular monitoring and review of plans, arrangements, policy and procedures at all levels, as well as the capture and implementation of lessons identified by research, exercises and incident reviews.
- Risk Management Approach
- Shared Responsibility for Resilience
- All Hazards Approach
- Graduated Approach
- Community Engagement
- Integrated Information Management

## STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The SEMC is responsible for assisting the Minister for Emergency Services in relation to the EM Act and the *Emergency Management Regulations 2006*, (EM Regulations) supported by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. The SEMC's vision is to have "a better prepared, safer and more resilient Western Australia".

The EM Act establishes and provides for the composition, roles and responsibilities of the SEMC. The SEMC comprises representatives appointed by the Minister for Emergency Services from those organisations, including the WA Local Government Association (WALGA), that are essential to the State's EM arrangements, including persons from both within and external to the public service. Its key functions include:

- to advise the Minister on EM and the preparedness of the State to combat emergencies;
- to provide direction, advice and support to public authorities, industry, commerce and the community, in order to plan and prepare for an efficient EM capability for WA;
- to provide a forum for whole-of-community coordination to ensure the effects of emergencies are minimised;
- to provide a forum for the development of community-wide information systems to improve communications during emergencies;
- to develop and coordinate risk management strategies to assess community vulnerability to emergencies; and
- to arrange for the preparation of and approve State EM policies and plans.

The SEMC performs a strategic, advisory role in relation to EM and does not perform operational tasks.

Importantly, the SEMC publicly reports, through the Minister, to Parliament on its activities, inclusive of all subcommittees, reference groups, district EM committees and local EM committees, and reports on the State's EM preparedness. Both reports are published annually.

#### COVID19 Response

- SEMC Chair and Executive Officer are members of the State Emergency Coordination Group.
- SEMC Chair and Executive Officer attended Public Sector Leadership Forums in support of COVID-19.
- SEMC hosted and facilitated Business Continuity Workshop with all government agencies to understand preparedness levels.
- SEMC commenced collecting data on PPE, this was transferred to Dept of Finance who are better equipped to capture and report on purchasing data.
- SEMC facilitated changes to legislation and policy to support the COVID response.

### **HAZARD MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The SEMC carries out its functions in accordance with the legislative framework, which prescribes 28 hazards to agencies, known as the hazard management agencies (HMAs), and approves policies and plans for dealing with these hazards through input at a State, district and local-level. These plans must cover prevention; preparedness; response; and recovery. SEMC also maintain a State-level Policy, Plan and Procedure that set the EM framework in WA in an all hazards context.

The State EM Policy specifies the requirement for all Emergency Management Agency's (EMAs) and public authorities with agreed roles and responsibilities within the State EM Plan, State Hazard Plan or State Support Plan to assist in developing, reviewing, amending and/or replacing those plans, as required. All other agencies with agreed roles and responsibilities within a plan must be invited to participate in developing, reviewing, amending and/or replacing, as required. This approach is often referred to as "shared responsibility."

The State EM Plan outlines the various officers, agencies and entities who undertake EM activities in Western Australia and documents the agreed EM arrangements to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover (PPRR) from all-hazards as listed in the EM Act and prescribed in the EM Regulations. The State Hazard Plans (Westplans) detail the hazard-specific EM arrangements and roles and responsibilities across the PPRR spectrum. They align with, and for the most part do not duplicate, the arrangements within the State EM Plan. The State Support Plans outline support functions and services that support EM arrangements across all-hazards.

#### COVID-19 Response

- The State Hazard Plan (SHP) – Human Biosecurity emphasises the importance of an integrated EM approach. The assistance and cooperation of other EMAs and organisations operating within their functional areas is essential for ensuring an effective and timely response. The SHP– Human Biosecurity provides a summary of organisation responsibilities to support the Department of Health in responding to Human Biosecurity Emergencies (COVID-19).
- For the hazard of human epidemic the HMA is the Chief Executive Officer of Health Department. The HMA has delegated all powers and functions to the Chief Health Officer.

## PLANNING AND PREVENTION

State Emergency Management Committee											
Lessons Management Reference Group			Lessons Management Reference Group			Response Capability Subcommittee		Risk Subcommittee			STATE LEVEL
State Exercise Coordination Team			Public Information Reference Group			Recovery and Community Engagement Subcommittee		Public Safety Communications Subcommittee			
Kimberley District Emergency Management Committee	Pilbara District Emergency Management Committee	Midwest Gascoyne District Emergency Management Committee	Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee	Goldfields Esperance District Emergency Management Committee	Great Southern District Emergency Management Committee	South West District Emergency Management Committee	North Metro District Emergency Management Committee	Central Metro District Emergency Management Committee	East Metro District Emergency Management Committee	South Metro District Emergency Management Committee	DISTRICT LEVEL
4 Local Emergency Management Committee	9 Local Emergency Management Committee	17 Local Emergency Management Committee	25 Local Emergency Management Committee	9 Local Emergency Management Committee	23 Local Emergency Management Committee	12 Local Emergency Management Committee	2 Local Emergency Management Committee	7 Local Emergency Management Committee	5 Local Emergency Management Committee	7 Local Emergency Management Committee	LOCAL LEVEL

Figure one: Western Australian emergency management structure

### DISTRICT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The EM Act 2005 establishes EM districts in Western Australia. There are seven EM districts in the regions and four in the Perth metropolitan area.

The District Emergency Management Committees (DEMC) are an integral part of the State's EM structure. Their members come from State and local government agencies, service providers and community agencies that have a key role in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities in their districts.

DEMCs are led by the Police Superintendent (Chair) and DFES Superintendent (Deputy Chair) in each district. They form an important conduit between State and local EM. They are key forums for relationship building, bringing together decision-makers from emergency management agencies, industry and local government to discuss issues affecting their district.

#### COVID19 Response

- Many DEMCs postponed meetings due to COVID-19, many of their members were intricately involved in the response and the regional Operational Area Support Groups established.
- DEMCs have run COVID-19 outbreak exercises in their district to provide capability building and opportunities to identify gaps specific to the district.

### LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Section 38 of the EM Act 2005 requires local governments to establish one or more Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMC). The LEMCs advise and assist local governments to ensure that local emergency management arrangements (LEMA) are established, reviewed and tested in accordance with section 41 of the EM Act.

Within each LEMC, a Local Emergency Coordinator is responsible for providing advice and support in the development and maintenance of emergency management arrangements for the district.

The LEMCs have representation from organisations and agencies that play a role in EM within each area. Local governments are particularly important, providing expert knowledge about their communities and environments. It is the role of local governments not only to ensure that LEMAs are prepared and maintained, but also to manage recovery after an emergency.

#### COVID19 Response

- Many LEMCs postponed meetings due to COVID-19 or alternatively held COVID-19 specific LEMC to coordinate at a local level.



# RESPONSE

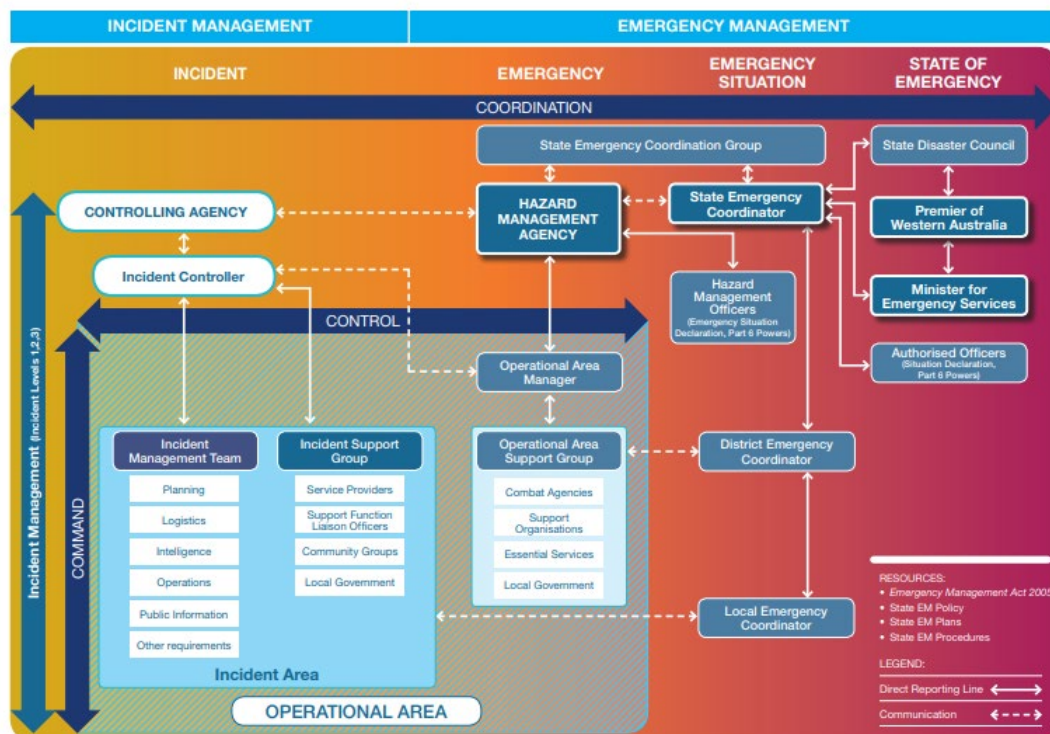


Figure two: Structure under a State of Emergency<sup>1</sup>

## STATE DISASTER COUNCIL

By declaring a state of emergency, the State Disaster Council (SDC) is established under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*. The SDC is the forum through which Government (represented by the Premier and relevant Ministers) is kept informed of developments in respect of a 'state of emergency', and has the opportunity to provide input with the following functions provided for under Section 64 of the EM Act:

- to provide prompt and accurate advice to the Government and the State Emergency Coordination Group in relation to the state of emergency; and
- to perform any other functions as directed by the Premier.

## COVID-19 Response

- The State Disaster Council is chaired by the Premier and includes the Ministers for Emergency Services, Health, Police and others as required. It also includes the State Emergency Coordinator and HMA. It provides a clear and integrated avenue for the government to remain proactive and acutely aware of the activities required to prepare Western Australia for possible outbreaks throughout the response to COVID-19. This forum in practice has provided the integral direct link between the National Cabinet and State Government.
- State Disaster Council has met regularly.
- This is the first emergency that has triggered the State Disaster Council in WA since the EM legislation was introduced in 2005.

<sup>1</sup> State EM Plan, May 2016 v 02.05, figure 9.

## **STATE EMERGENCY COORDINATOR**

The Commissioner of the WA Police Force (CoP) holds the office of the State Emergency Coordinator (SEC) and is responsible for coordinating the emergency response during a state of emergency. In addition to undertaking the CoP's other functions, the role of the SEC is to:

- provide advice to the Minister in relation to emergencies;
- provide advice to the State Disaster Council during a state of emergency;
- provide such advice and assistance to HMAs as the SEC considers appropriate; and
- carry out other EM activities as directed by the Minister.

When authorised to do so, the SEC may liaise with the Australian Government and other persons, in or outside the State, and enter into agreements and arrangements with those persons to assist the State to manage emergencies.

The SEC is responsible for coordinating public authorities as the SEC considers necessary or desirable for responding to the emergency. The SEC is empowered to direct public authorities during the state of emergency, as well as a power to appoint an officer of a public authority to have overall control of particular activities.

The EM Act also extends extensive powers to authorised officers, appointed by the SEC, during a state of emergency, including, for example, powers to enter a place or vehicle, search any place or vehicle, take and use necessary materials, persons, and resources into an emergency area, and various other activities that would assist to respond to an emergency.

### COVID19 Response

- This is the first emergency that has triggered the SEC operate under a State of Emergency since EM legislation was introduced in 2005.

## **STATE EMERGENCY COORDINATION GROUP**

The State Emergency Coordination Group is Chaired by the State Emergency Coordinator and consists of key public sector leaders, critical stakeholders and subject matter experts.

In the event of an emergency, the SEC may, on the request of the relevant HMA, or on his / her own initiative in consultation with the relevant HMA, establish a SECG. Membership consists of:

- SEC as the chairperson;
- the chairperson of the SEMC;
- the executive officer of the SEMC;
- a representative of the relevant HMA;
- a person nominated by the SEC who is representative of local governments in the emergency area, or in the area where the emergency is occurring or is imminent (as the case requires), and
- such other members as are, in the opinion of the SEC, necessary.

Section 27 of the EM Act provides that the SECG has the following functions:

- to ensure the provision of coordinated EM by public authorities and other persons;
- to provide advice and direction to public authorities and other persons to facilitate effective EM;
- to liaise between EM agencies and the Minister.



## **INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The Incident Controller (IC) may determine that they need assistance to manage an incident. This assistance is provided by way of an Incident Management Team (IMT). The team is led by the IC. An IMT is a group of incident management personnel comprising the IC and personnel appointed by the IC to be responsible for functions including operations, planning and logistics.

## **OPERATIONAL AREA SUPPORT GROUP**

The HMA may activate an Operational Area Support Group (OASG) to provide strategic support to the emergency response, when multiple agencies need to be coordinated at a district level or multiple incidents are occurring simultaneously within one operational area.

### COVID19 Response

- For COVID-19, the HMA has established OASGs aligned to the Health borders. The OASGs are convened and chaired by the HMA. Membership of these OASGs includes the designated District Emergency Coordinator, Combat Agencies, Support Organisations, essential services and organisational representatives. Members assist in the strategic management of COVID-19 through provision of agency specific information, expert advice, resources and support.

## **INCIDENT SUPPORT GROUP**

The Incident Support Group (ISG) consists of representatives (liaison officers) from organisations involved in the incident and relevant service providers, such as ambulance and representatives for essential services e.g. phone, water and electricity. The function of the ISG is to assist the IC through the provision of information, expert advice, support and resources relevant to their organisation.

### COVID19 Response

- Emergencies are often geographically limited, COVID19 has impacted the whole state.
- For COVID19 the ISG has been established to support the Incident Controller at the State level, as the arrangements suggest.

## **COVID-19 SPECIFIC STRUCTURES**

The below teams / structures were established to support the COVID19 response. The EM arrangements are appropriately structured to enable flexibility. Equally, the EM arrangements following a comprehensive process of consultation prior to being approved by SEMC, allowing for understanding and questioning prior to emergency response.

- The Pandemic Coordination Unit was established by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.
- The Public Sector Leadership Council was established prior to COVID19, and presumably without the intent of it having emergency management functions. The PSCL was used as a coordinating body across the public sector for both response and recovery.
- The State Emergency Coordinator's Directorate has the purpose of providing support to enable the SEC - Mr Chris Dawson, to fulfil his responsibilities in relation to the current Emergency: COVID-19 Pandemic and any future emergencies.

## RECOVERY

Western Australia's recovery arrangements are established under the EM Act and associated regulations and the SEMC State EM Framework. The latter outlines escalation factors for recovery, which determine what level of recovery arrangements are put in place for a given event.

- The State's recovery activities are underpinned by the National Principles for Disaster Recovery outlined in the National Community Recovery Handbook.
- Section 36 of the EM Act assigns the function of managing recovery following an emergency affecting the community in its district to the local government of that district. Local governments are to ensure the preparation of Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) including the identification of a Local Recovery Coordinator and the inclusion of a Local Recovery Plan
- Where State level recovery support is necessary, the factors taken into consideration and arrangements put in place.
- Hazard Management Agencies (HMAs) must include recovery arrangements in the State Hazard Plans.
- The suite of emergency management documents establishes the policy and practical arrangements for recovery.

### STATE EM PLAN RECOVERY COORDINATION STRUCTURE

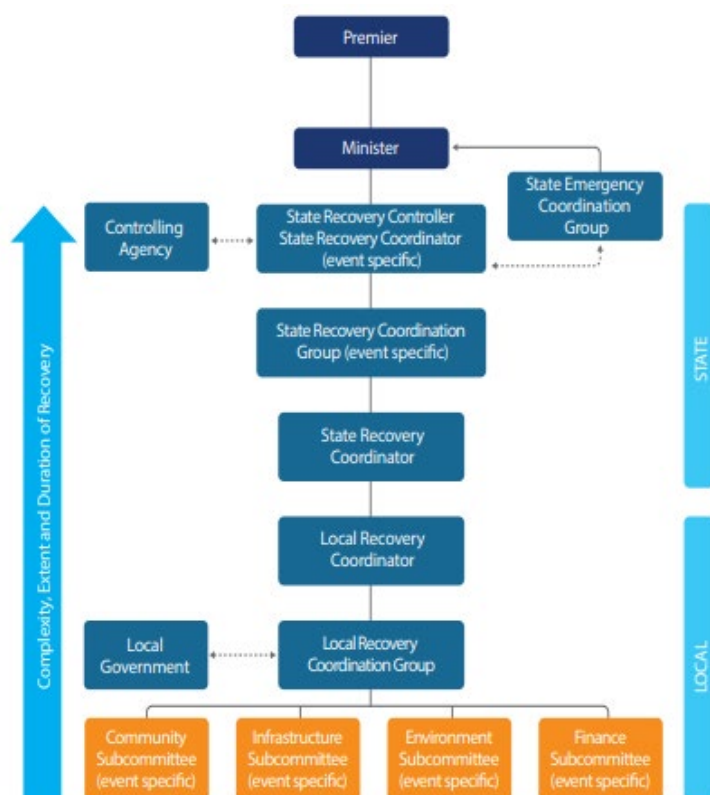


Figure three: Recovery Coordination Structure<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> State EM Plan, May 2016 v 02.05, figure 12.

## COVID19 Recovery Arrangements

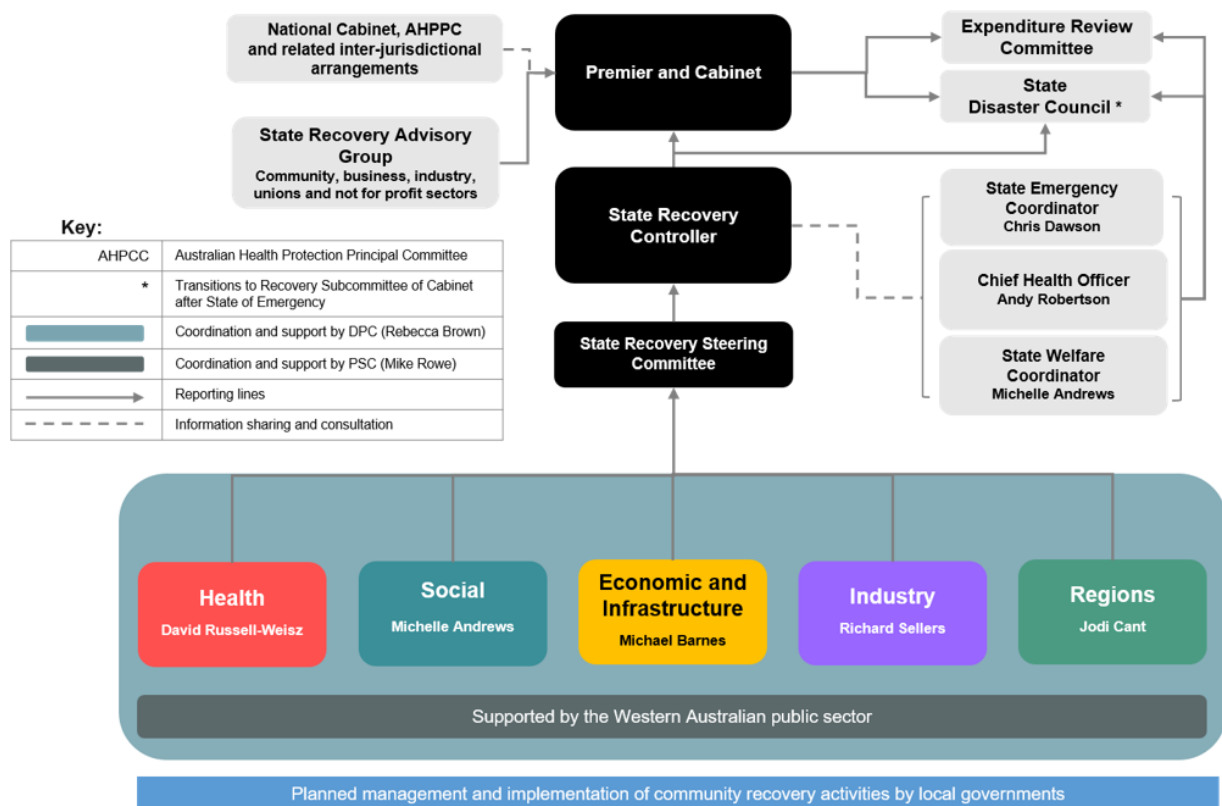


Figure four: COVID -19 State Recovery Structure prior to the release of the WA Recovery Plan

### STATE RECOVERY COORDINATION GROUP

The membership of the SRCG will be tailored to ensure that State-level recovery operations can identify and respond to recovery needs in all recovery environments and may include the Controlling Agency and/or HMA.

Roles and functions include:

- assess assistance required across the various recovery environments,
- assist local governments to implement local recovery plans,
- identify a public authority to lead recovery in each of the recovery environments,
- develop a state level recovery plan,
- monitor progress,
- advise the Government as necessary,
- identify and recommend specific assistance measures for consideration by Government,
- coordinate state level financial arrangements.

### COVID19 Recovery:

- The State Government's approach to recovery provides that coordination and decision making will be undertaken at the highest levels of government, with central leadership maintained by the Premier and Cabinet.
- The role of the State Recovery Coordination Group (SRCG) has been integrated into State-level recovery coordination and facilitation.

## **STATE RECOVERY CONTROLLER**

If extraordinary arrangements are required for a specific emergency, the State Recovery Coordinator may, in consultation with the Controlling Agency/HMA and SEC, recommend that the Premier appoint a State Recovery Controller and identify any legislative support and resources required, as detailed in the State EM Plan section 6.7.

The roles of the State Recovery Controller include:

- responsibility for ensuring the provision of a coordinated recovery support to emergency affected communities through the direction and coordination of the resources made available by public authorities and other persons;
- reporting directly to the Premier/Minister as determined by the Government, keeping the SEC and Controlling Agency/HMA informed on the recovery progress;
- Representing relevant Ministers during consultation with local government(s) on recovery and reconstruction matters;
- Facilitating the sharing of information to support local and regional recovery activities.

## **STATE RECOVERY COORDINATOR**

- supports a whole-of-government approach for recovery,
- coordinates the maintenance of State recovery arrangements and plans through the SEMC Recovery and Community Engagement Subcommittee, in partnership with the State Recovery Team and the SEMC Business Unit,
- supports the operation of state-level recovery coordination through a State Recovery Coordination Group (SRCG), if established, and
- the Deputy SRC supports the SRC's roles and responsibilities.

### COVID19 Recovery

- Following the appointment of the State Recovery Controller the State Recovery Coordinator became responsible for coordinating the district and local level recovery.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CONTROLLING AGENCIES**

- assess impacts and prepare an impact statement outlining impacts and a treatment plan across the various recovery environments,
- the Local Recovery Coordinator coordinates local level recovery activities in conjunction with the Local Recovery Coordination Group (LRCG) in accordance with the plans, strategies and policies that are in place,
- for large recovery events, additional recovery subcommittees may be established to assist the LRCG, and
- when more than one local area is impacted, Local Recovery Controllers will work together assisted by the State Recovery Coordinator (SRC).

### COVID19 Response

- The Government's approach to recovery provides that the State Recovery Controller is responsible for coordinating the development of impact statements. This has been agreed with the Director General, Department of Health.
- Given the scale of the impact of COVID-19 at a state, national and international level the Government has determined that Western Australia's recovery is most appropriately coordinated at a State, rather than local government, level. However,

the important role of local government and community members in specific recovery activities is recognised by the State-level recovery governance.

- Local government also form an integral part of the stakeholder engagement process. Local government is represented on the State Recovery Advisory Group, as well as at relevant Ministerial roundtable discussions. A dedicated forum on local government was held on 9 June 2020, and existing mechanisms will also be used to engage with local government on recovery matters.

## **LOCAL RECOVERY COORDINATOR**

- Under the EM Act a Local Recovery Coordinator must be appointed by each local government.
- The Local Recovery Coordinator is responsible for coordination of local-level recovery activities in conjunction with the Local Recovery Coordination Group (when formed) and in accordance with plans, strategies and policies that it determines.

## **KNOWLEDGE GAINED FROM MANAGEMENT OF THE PANDEMIC IS BEING DEPOSITED**

- EM is premised on committees and structures that have cross agency representation at the correct level to make the required decisions and influence their implementation.
- Each structure will have captured observations and insights from their own deployment and experience
- In due course these will be collated, assessed and implemented where appropriate, this will not occur while significant resourcing remains allocated to the response phase.
- Examples include:
  - State Emergency Coordinator's Directorate running lesson learnt workshops throughout deployment
  - State EM and legislation teams running continuous improvements registers to capture changes and queries raised through COVID
  - Constant reviews of operation procedures through structures following incidents, such as hotel quarantine at SHICC.
  - Interviews with key stakeholders on their learning for consolidation into the 2020 emergency preparedness report.

## **KEY LEARNINGS**

- There will be number of learnings from COVID19.
- It is too early to commit to the learnings that will be implemented following these events. Changes to the State EM Arrangements undergo a vigorous process of consultation with the over 200 emergency management agencies in the state to ensure they are consistent, understood and able to be implemented.