

# FESA RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE INQUIRY – OCTOBER 2011

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## Inquiry into the recognition and adequacy of the responses by State Government agencies to experience of trauma by workers and volunteers arising from disasters

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### OVERVIEW

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia (FESA) employs over 1,400 staff and further supports more than 32,000 volunteers across Western Australia (WA) who undertake operational, administrative and functional support services. Volunteer numbers by service as at 30 June 2011 are provided at **Attachment 1**. Information relating to the role of FESA and interdependencies between services is provided at **Attachment 2**.

FESA has adopted an all hazards approach to emergency management – working in partnership with the community and other agencies to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. FESA is the hazard management agency in WA for:

- Fire – rural and urban fires in gazetted fire districts;
- Fire – on Department of Environment and Conservation-managed land in gazetted fire districts;
- Hazardous materials incidents;
- Collapse – landform or structures; and
- Natural disasters (including flood, cyclone, storm, earthquake, tsunami).

Since 2001 there have been 49 declared natural disasters within WA including flooding, bush fires, cyclones and severe storms. The impact of Declared Natural Disasters over this timeframe as relevant to numbers of personnel involved, structures damaged and member and civilian injury/fatality incidence is provided at **Attachment 3**. The nature of emergency services work presents FESA employees and volunteers (FESA members) with the potential for exposure to traumatic and hazardous events. The nature and severity of incidents and the significance of these upon the potential for trauma exposure and member reaction cannot be understated.

Incidents resulting in serious injury and/or loss of life are more typically associated with a greater report of traumatic response by members than those where the human impact is less readily apparent or significant. Historically natural disasters within the State have resulted in small numbers of fatalities and injuries to civilians and/or personnel as compared to other operational incidents requiring emergency response. The potential for psychological trauma arising from members responding to natural disasters and incidents warrants implementation of appropriate, timely and effective mechanisms of critical incident support response. It is important however that whilst beyond the focus of this inquiry, smaller scale incidents to which our members more routinely attend are recognised for the potential psychological trauma which they may present.

The nature of smaller and more routine operational incidents (e.g. road crash rescue response) combined with the potential severity of human impact, can present a traumatic incident which requires intense, dynamic and challenging emergency response efforts by an often discrete group of members. The potential for exposure to intense trauma is further exacerbated in those circumstances where the responders are likely to have known or had associations with the victims. This is a probable scenario for country road crash rescue responders who have close linkages to the communities they serve.

Providing for the health and welfare of our members is of utmost importance, not only during incidents including natural disasters, but throughout all operational and non-operational activities and areas of the organisation. FESA has and continues to provide a range of support services for

members in response to potential trauma exposure which may arise from or be associated with natural disasters and other emergency events. These services aim to support the psychological welfare of FESA members and span a range of needs which may exist amongst members. Whilst FESA (and prior to that the Western Australian Fire Board) has provided trauma related support services to members in varying contexts for over two decades, areas requiring further development to further benefit members continue to be identified. Areas identified as requiring further focus and review include services targeted to reach family of FESA members, retired officers and support mechanisms available to the State's volunteer Bush Fire Service (BFS) brigade members.

With respect to the BFS, local governments are vested with responsibilities under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, in relation to bush fire prevention, control and extinguishment, including the establishment and running of volunteer bush fire brigades. Independent of support mechanisms provided by local government, FESA may provide support to BFS volunteers in relation to specific incidents. FESA does not adopt a systematic mechanism for routine coverage nor is it resourced to do so. While FESA may engage with local government in relation to a specific incident involving BFS members, it does not have jurisdiction over the range, extent or application of trauma related services provided by local government agencies to BFS members.

### ADEQUACY OF SERVICES

The provision of welfare related support services to members by FESA has been influenced by a number of factors. The need to provide effective, accessible support mechanisms across the State in a resource efficient manner and maintain capability to potentially service significant member numbers has contributed over time to the development of a support model which draws from internal FESA welfare and volunteer service resources as well as contracting external professional services. The adoption of support service mechanisms which are largely informal have allowed a welfare response which is perceived by members to be:

- accessible;
- appropriate to identified and perceived member needs;
- sensitive and responsive to organisational culture across service groups; and
- supportive of confidentiality concerns.

FESA strongly recognises the importance of its response when trauma is experienced by employees and volunteers arising from natural disasters and incidents and has a range of services in place. However, it is difficult to determine the adequacy of these services due to a range of factors. These factors include:

- **Welfare services have historically been informal in nature in response to the organisational culture and identified member needs.** Anecdotally these services have been regarded by members as being largely effective however, the informal nature of a number of the services offered combined with cultural sensitivities around confidentiality has impacted the capacity of FESA to measure overall service effectiveness.
- **Individual response to traumatic events is regarded by members as a personal and highly sensitive topic.** This is further compounded by cultural, attitudinal and organisational factors which mirror prevailing societal perceptions and the stigmatising of mental health issues. It is therefore not entirely unexpected that the issue of resources to deliver optimum psychological support services to meet the needs of members deal with traumatic exposure is generally not openly discussed amongst members. The covert and sensitive nature of this topic limits FESA's ability to effectively gauge through user and member feedback the adequacy of services available and degree of unmet need.
- **Internal formal review of the breadth and extent of existing services provided by FESA to both career and volunteer members has not been undertaken.** Information regarding

existing services and barriers to accessing services has largely been anecdotal or informally obtained from members and volunteer services.

- **Formal mechanisms which currently exist are employed by FESA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providers, and seek member feedback pertaining to professional services accessed.** Confidential feedback provided from these sources whilst positive remains limited and cannot be viewed as indicative of FESA's range of welfare mechanisms as only relates to external services provided through EAP.
- **Limited strategic focus.** Critical incident systems have largely been focussed on addressing individual needs, thereby limiting available resources to focus on broader strategic planning and training protocols.
- **Limited internal resources.** The number of internal resources available to service the breadth of members who may have potential for exposure to traumatic events is limited, particularly in light of the degree of change associated with recommended models for psychological management for persons exposed to trauma.
- **Quantification of FESA budget allocated to pre and post event activities relating to trauma and critical incident needs since 2001 cannot be readily or reliably determined due to financial recording and cost centre methods.** Limitations exist in measuring the effectiveness of welfare related support services through a dollar value alone.
- **Access to trauma service related information and education within volunteer groups can be impacted by training pathways and opportunities for further training and development.** Adequacy of services cannot be accurately gauged through the effectiveness of methods employed to communicate existing services to members.
- **There is often a time delay between when exposure to a traumatic event may occur, and when the individual recognises a support need may exist and takes action to engage support.** Where a member delays access to services, it is difficult to determine the adequacy of service as a result of the delay, and / or if the service is recorded as relating to the disaster event.
- **Limited access to relevant benchmarking data exists amongst emergency service organizations and/or agencies to allow for valid and appropriate comparison of performance within the emergency services industry.** Comparative workers' compensation claims performance data provided by Riskcover for the 2010/11 year presents a valuable insight into FESA's current mental stress claims performance as compared to other State Government Agencies. Data indicates that whilst FESA has the highest incidence of all claims across the eight agencies reviewed, it has the lowest incidence of severe claims. FESA ranks third in the incidence of mental stress claims as compared with other agencies, has an average claims cost below the comparative average and a lower average of estimated days lost per claim as compared to other agencies. Riskcover has provided the "Claims Statistics for Top 8 Agencies in 2010/11" and this is provided at **Attachment 4**. Review of this comparative data will assist in focusing FESA's attention for the internal review and development of safety, health and welfare initiatives and programs.

FESA has recognised whilst there have been a range of individual benefits associated with welfare support services available for members, there are limitations associated with the adoption of an informal critical incident management system. A WorkSafe Plan Safety Management System Audit commissioned by FESA in late 2009 identified FESA's critical incident management system as a priority area for review. Recommendations from this audit were accepted in 2010, which resulted in greater focus on services and an increase in human resource allocation to FESA's welfare function in 2010 and 2011.

FESA commenced an internal review of its critical incident services and management response in August 2011 and is currently working with an external consultant to consolidate and further develop its critical incident management framework. The objective of this project is to develop a framework which delivers to both individual welfare needs and organisational risk and legal exposures. To meet the latter it is anticipated FESA's critical incident management framework will become more formalised, better reflect contemporary critical incident best practice methods, and provide a greater evidentiary mechanism and confidence that services available reach the intended audience. Identified opportunities for improvement include:

- Development of clear policy documentation pertaining to trauma related support services;
- Expansion and additional formalisation of support mechanisms which are currently employed;
- Development of formalised support mechanisms to span pre-incident, incident and post-incident stages; and
- Identification of response mechanisms and targeted training services for a broader audience, including family of members and retired officers.

There is also recognition that with proposed national harmonisation of safety legislation impacting the risk, regulatory and legal environment within WA, that FESA will require a more formalised critical incident management system. This will be necessary to support and demonstrate an evidenced based approach for provision of services to both career and volunteer members and formalise trauma related service arrangements with local government as relevant to volunteer bush fire brigades. FESA remains committed to the current and ongoing review of welfare services provided to both career and volunteer members and seeks to minimise the potential for harm to members which may arise from exposure to traumatic events during natural disasters and other emergency events.

## **BACKGROUND**

Trauma response support commenced in 1989 within the then Western Australian Fire Brigades Board through provision of a Chaplaincy service. Shortly thereafter a Peer Support program was commenced to provide member access to a network of peers with basic training in critical incident support. An EAP service was also commissioned for the provision of confidential and independent 1:1 counselling support for members.

These support services were further developed after the inception of FESA in 1999 and an internal Peer Support Coordinator role (which later became the Welfare Coordinator role) was established to provide for the overall coordination of peer support, welfare and chaplaincy services. Annual training for FESA's career and volunteer Peer Support Network spanned the period from 1989 through to 2006 and resulted in the development of a functional network of both career and volunteer members with capability to provide welfare support to co-members as required. The Peer Support Network has been an effective support mechanism amongst FESA members being both generally positively perceived and utilised.

FESA has a five person Welfare Team currently comprised of a Welfare Co-ordinator, 2 x Welfare Officers and 1 x Chaplain. Services provided by this team combined with those of the existing EAP services are accessed in day to day operations as well as during major incidents including natural disasters. The nature of support provided by the Welfare Team to members is generally consistent across both employee and volunteer member groups and dependent upon appropriate advice regarding significant and traumatic incidents when they arise. It should be noted that the provision and acceptance of specialist support in response to traumatic events and critical incidents remains culturally a sensitive issue both within career and volunteer environments. Whilst there is growing acceptance amongst our members that psychological hazards are inherent to emergency service work, sensitivities around this topic continue to exist and require ongoing consideration and education.

## FEEDBACK

Whilst FESA does not formally collect information from members to identify barriers to accessing support services it is recognised that some barriers may exist. The following is anecdotal information collected through interviews with selected stakeholders including representatives from volunteer services, FESA Health, Safety and Welfare employees, FESA management and operational employees. Anecdotal feedback indicates there may be a number of barriers to accessing welfare related support services which broadly relate to the following areas:

- Attitudinal factors;
- Cultural and generational perspectives;
- Financial factors;
- Organisational factors; and
- Individual factors.

In general, members vary in their perspective regarding access to and use of psychological support services. Some members report to prefer to access personal networks in response to trauma, for example from their faith based organisations, cultural groups, or friends. Whilst others, in smaller communities report that this approach may present issues with privacy. Some members report a perceived stigma in seeking help, particularly as FESA career and volunteer members are often regarded within the community as playing the role of 'helper' and/or 'rescuer' in times of need. Some members reported the cost of travelling from regional centres, associated costs with lost time from work, difficulty with childcare arrangements and the general time delay between exposure to a traumatic event and opportunity to debrief as barriers to seeking trauma related support.

At a Volunteer Service level, a number of potential barriers were identified to include:

- a general lack of awareness of the extent and accessibility of services available to volunteer members;
- an increasingly transient volunteer complement across regions and the challenges this presents in keeping volunteers adequately trained and informed of services available;
- limited engagement by Volunteer Associations in the systematic planning of trauma related services and educational programs available to members; and
- a reduced focus by FESA in recent years on the training, development and maintenance of the Peer Support network across and within service groups.

From an organisational perspective, members identify the absence of formal processes as one of the key barriers to accessing services and specifically:

- A lack of formal policy to address critical incident stress and trauma management;
- The absence of structured peer support programs and other formal protocols;
- Inconsistent management skills in responding to welfare needs;
- Lack of uniform organisational training specifically related to critical incident stress and trauma management across the organisation;
- Existing training pathways may limit access to information for some members;
- Limited resources within the welfare team can impact access and availability of support; and
- Lack of formal protocols for engagement with and support available to member's families.

Feedback pertaining to existing services was identified as positive and includes:

- Welfare and EAP support services are generally well promoted throughout the organisation; Members note use of internal media publications, notice boards, brochures and other mechanisms for communicating available welfare services;

- Members are generally aware of FESA's Chaplaincy and Welfare services, are appreciative of and positively regard the efforts of individuals who function within this team;
- Members report the presence of the Chaplain at the incident ground during major incidents to be generally positive, and reassuring;
- Members view the Peer Support program positively (where it is in place);
- Members report information presented from the Welfare team (pertaining to trauma) to be of relevance and useful to them personally;
- Overall feedback regarding welfare support is positive; and
- There is a recognised culture within FESA to help each other out.

A number of the themes identified by FESA through engagement with relevant stakeholders are consistent with those identified within "The Attraction, Support and Retention of Emergency Management Volunteers" report of 2009, commissioned by Emergency Management Australia (a division of the Attorney-General's Department) in response to a request by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management.

## ***SPECIFIC QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE***

### **i) What pre-planning and training activities do you undertake with your staff and volunteers to deal with trauma before a disaster?**

FESA has a documented commitment to the health and safety needs of its members outlined within the FESA Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Statement of Commitment to Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare. FESA does not currently have a documented policy specifically relating to trauma and critical incident stress response and management pertaining to normal operations or natural disasters and incidents. Notwithstanding the absence of a formalised policy specific to this area, a strong focus on member welfare is inherent to the values of FESA and all volunteer services. This focus is reflected within training material and activities developed by FESA, and FESA welfare and operational practices. Potential exposure to trauma is inherent to emergency services work. To help address this potential hazard, both pre-incident briefings and training are undertaken with members. Briefings are generally provided by senior operations or volunteer members to help prepare members for tasks to be undertaken when attending an incident. Briefings provide opportunity for health, safety and welfare considerations to be reinforced and to provide some context to members as to the environment and situation within which they will be providing an emergency response.

Another measure by which FESA seeks to mitigate the inherent risks associated with trauma and critical incident exposure is through the development of training material for use by FESA members. FESA training material pertaining to trauma and critical incident response comprises:

- Training modules and presentations developed by specialised Welfare resources within FESA's Health Safety and Welfare Branch (HSWB) for use with career members;
- Training presentations developed by specialised Welfare resources within FESA's HSWB for use with volunteer members/Brigades; and
- Information incorporated within Training Resource Kits (TRKs) developed by the FESA Training Centre for use with volunteer members from a range of volunteer services.

The nature and volume of training material provided by FESA to members is dependent upon a number of variables including:

- Whether members are employees or volunteers:
  - Employees receive targeted information which is delivered across induction, recruit training and career levels.
  - Volunteers have access to TRK information developed by FESA, and implemented by an accredited FESA or Brigade trainer.
- The volunteer service to which a volunteer member may belong;
- The training pathway associated with the role the member fulfils within the volunteer service with which they are involved; and
- Whether training programs are linked to nationally accredited certification programs:
  - national competency training modules developed by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council are reviewed internally by FESA Operations to determine training content made available to career fire fighters and incorporated within TRKs; and
  - SES volunteers adopt nationally accredited training programs which include elements pertaining to critical incidents and welfare.

An overview of training activities and material available to both **career** and **volunteer** members is outlined as follows:

### **(1) Training - Career Fire and Rescue Service**

It is recognised that career fire and rescue employees have a greater potential for exposure to trauma given the full time nature of the role. Subsequently, there is a broader range of training material provided to career members which specifically addresses trauma and critical incident stress, which includes:

- **Induction Night** – Presentation of Psychological Safety for Emergency Services Video to new recruits and their family;
- **Trainee Firefighter Program** – Presentation of 1 ½ hour critical incident stress management course as part of the Occupational Health and Safety unit;
- **Station Officer Training Program** – Presentation of 1 ½ hour session on how to detect and handle mental health issues in the workplace as part of the Lead, Manage and Develop Teams module;
- **Awareness Training** – Presentation of 1½ hour critical incident stress management and mental health awareness session for career firefighters. This training program commenced in early 2011 and has been delivered to all shifts across FESA's 28 career Fire and Rescue Stations; and
- In addition to the above, the need to ensure for member welfare during operational response is identified to varying degrees within general operations and training documentation made available to members throughout their training and development.

### **(2) Training – Volunteers**

Volunteers generally receive information regarding FESA Welfare Support Services upon Service Induction. Service Induction Manuals generally cover this type of information, however it is noted that there is some variation between volume and content across different services. General information pertaining to critical incident stress, trauma and welfare information is captured within a number of TRKs available to members. More detailed and specific information is contained within higher level TRKs and targets areas where exposure to traumatic incidents is more likely to arise. Such TRKs include Road Crash Rescue, Fire Control Officer and SES Local Manager. Completion of TRKs is dependent upon the specific learning pathway adopted by individual members within the Brigade, Group or Unit, hence there is potential that not all volunteers are exposed to detailed training information pertaining to trauma and critical incidents.

In 2011 the FESA Welfare Branch expanded educational welfare services available to volunteers with the introduction of a 1 ½ hour critical incident stress management and mental health awareness session. Since April 2011, 30 Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service brigades state wide have been recipients of this training, with the proposed extension of this program planned for early 2012. In addition to the training programs already outlined, FESA's Welfare team regularly conducts support visits to Career Stations and Volunteer BGUs. The Welfare team comprises a registered psychologist, Chaplain and two uniformed Welfare Officers who function together to provide on-site education and support to members who may potentially have trauma related needs.

On average, approximately 250 visits are conducted by the Welfare Coordinator, Welfare Officer and/or Chaplain each year. The Chaplain personally undertakes a minimum of 112 site visits per year to make contact with each shift on all of FESA's 28 career stations. Welfare information brochures relating to welfare services, EAP, stress management and other relevant information are also regularly distributed to all Career Stations, Regional Offices and Volunteer BGUs. All Career Stations and Volunteer Units have access to brochures that outline how welfare services can be accessed by members.



In recent years FESA has supplemented existing educational programs relating to trauma and critical incidents through address of this topic within corporate conferences. In 2010, FESA held an inaugural Health Safety Welfare Summit for elected Safety and Health Representatives, Managers and external stakeholders. This forum included a presentation on stress management as relevant to an emergency services environment, and was delivered by FESA's Welfare Coordinator. The subject matter was further addressed within FESA's 2011 Safety Summit with a presentation on "Critical Incident Stress and Trauma" provided by a specialist Clinical Psychologist with extensive experience in the field. A similar session entitled "Trauma and the Brain" was also incorporated within the 2011 WA Fire and Emergency Conference targeting an audience of both staff and volunteer members.

To assist with the dissemination of access to and uptake of welfare information, FESA works closely with the:

- United Firefighter's Union of Australia - Western Australia Branch;
- WA Volunteer Fire & Rescue Services Association;
- Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades of WA;
- State Emergency Service Volunteers Association;
- Volunteer Emergency Services Association; and
- Volunteer Marine Rescue of WA Association.

**ii) What annual budget would you spend on these pre-event activities.**

**Note: Response covers questions (ii) and (v)**

Quantification of the FESA budget allocated to pre and post event activities relating to trauma and critical incident services since 2001 cannot be readily or reliably determined. Limitations in quantifying expenditure for this period relate to a number of factors including:

- Cost centres that reflect welfare and chaplaincy costs capture overall costs and do not separate costs which pertain to different elements of service;
- Cost centres that reflect welfare and chaplaincy costs exist from 2002 onwards however, prior to this time, specific cost centres for these areas did not exist;
- Costs associated with travel of welfare resources to provide member training and education in metropolitan and regional areas is not captured within the existing welfare budget. These costs are borne by other areas of the business and cannot be identified;
- Costs associated with the provision of trauma related support by regions or operational management (pre or post event) are unable to be identified within current budget and cost centre arrangements;
- Incident related welfare costs are embedded in the overall cost of an incident;
- Costs associated with trauma related training and development of TRKs addressing this topic, are not transparent as are integrated within overall FESA training costs; and
- Some courses which capture trauma related training are implemented by accredited volunteer trainers, which do not incur FESA a direct cost.

Beyond these limitations, high level interrogation of cost centre records indicate that \$2,500,000 has been spent since 2002. FESA's annual budget for its welfare function for the 2011-12 year is \$575,000. In addition to these internal costs, FESA has spent approximately a further \$365,000 for the engagement of EAP services for members across the state since 2001. Whilst there is an annual budget for provision of EAP services, member access to the EAP would not be restricted due to budgetary considerations. The EAP budget for the 2011-12 year is \$35,000. These costs are conservative estimates of FESA's total investment in welfare services and resources to support members who may be exposed to trauma related incidents for the 2001-11 period as traceable direct costs associated with the Welfare Team and EAP service.

**iii) What programs do you undertake during a disaster to assist your staff and volunteers deal with trauma**

The composition of emergency services resources available to support an emergency response to a disaster varies with the nature, scale and location of the disaster itself. Under the State Emergency Management Plan, FESA has a responsibility to fulfil the role of a Hazard Management Agency or Combat Agency depending on the nature of the emergency. Under these arrangements the Department for Child Protection (DCP) has been assigned responsibility for the provision of Welfare Support (WESTPLAN WELFARE). Where disasters result in enactment of the State Emergency Management Plan, arrangements under WESTPLAN WELFARE as coordinated by the DCP come into effect to meet the welfare needs of the community. During these events FESA volunteer members as members of the community are eligible to access the WESTPLAN WELFARE services available. As FESA volunteer members they are also entitled to access services available through FESA and their volunteer service both during and after the event.

Generally speaking volunteer members access trauma related support services provided through FESA, their associated volunteer service or alternately through private services rather than those coordinated at a community level by the DCP. The rationale for this is not conclusive, however it is thought to pertain to the fact that the need for support is often not recognised until well after the emergency response effort has occurred and when the services coordinated by DCP have concluded. Further rationale is the view that there may be a lower level of confidence existing amongst members to access trauma related services within their own community due to confidentiality concerns.

When responding to disasters FESA works closely with participating volunteer services to provide a coordinated and effective emergency response. The close working relationship allows for the communication of critical information (including fatalities) between services and for the identification of individual members who may have been subject to traumatic events to be identified for follow up. FESA's Chaplain is advised of all fatalities which arise from any incident including natural disasters. This allows for Chaplain and Welfare engagement to occur as a matter of routine when significant incidents and loss of life arise. The initial 'follow up' provided to members following exposure to traumatic incidents and/or events is not formally mandated. The response is generally determined by one or a combination of the following:

- a FESA manager and/or BGU Captain involved in the response to the incident;
- FESA's Chaplain or Welfare coordinator; and
- a member of the Peer Support network.

An initial support response provided to FESA member may comprise of:

- 1:1 discussion with a FESA manager or Brigade member;
- A telephone or 1:1 discussion with the FESA Chaplain, a member of FESA's Welfare Team or the Volunteer Peer Support network; and/or
- Advice to the member and/or significant others that access to FESA's EAP Service provider is available.

A formalised documented process that dictates specific welfare related practices where a disaster or incident occurs does not exist. Current practice involves the consideration of individual disasters/events on their own merit and the evaluation of the potential impact of these on FESA members and resources. FESA considers the scale, impact and context of each disaster when determining the best way to support the psychological needs of members providing an emergency response. This approach has allowed for Welfare support to be offered through a variety of means, including but not limited to:

- the deployment of Chaplaincy/Welfare services to environments affected by natural disasters or incidents;

- deployment of Welfare services and management support to meet members upon return from a site response; and
- Provision of support service via telephone link up and referral to other services.

For disasters and incidents in which FESA and its members may be involved, FESA supports the welfare of its members through aiming to ensure that all members are aware of and have access to:

- internal FESA Welfare and Chaplaincy services;
- Peer support networks where they exist and/or
- existing EAP service providers.

**iv) What post event activities do you undertake with your staff and volunteers to deal with trauma arising from a disaster?**

Trauma arising from a disaster or event may be dealt with through two primary means. Current mechanisms which activate formal welfare support services relate to the incident involving a fatality (or fatalities). Events which do not involve fatalities generally activate informal welfare support. The FESA Chaplain is on-call 24/7. Following Standard Operating Procedure 1, the Communications Centre notifies the Chaplain or his nominated Associate by means of a pager message if an incident is a “code 90”, which means it includes one or more fatalities. Where a “code 90” applies, the Chaplain will make contact with the relevant operational personnel to determine an initial response to the incident. This may involve the Chaplain personally visiting the site, unit or station, to meet with involved members or making alternate contact arrangements through use of associated support services. Subsequent to providing initial support, a determination will be made on the provision of follow-up support in terms of the type of support required, its frequency and duration. This will occur regardless of whether or not the Chaplain has attended the incident. Follow up support is usually coordinated in consultation with, and by, the Welfare Branch.

Where an incident does not involve a fatality, a formal notification to the Welfare Team to provide support services does not routinely occur. In these instances the significance of traumatic events is determined by responding senior operational personnel who make direct contact with FESA welfare services to determine and activate internal welfare support services. Once contact has been made with the Welfare team, a response to members involved with the incident is determined. This may involve a member of the Welfare team visiting or making telephone contact with the relevant member(s) and discussing an appropriate support strategy. The Welfare team may engage with members for an initial period to provide them with support, and will then refer and co-ordinate for member’s appointments to attend the EAP service where acute professional or ongoing support services needs are identified.

Currently FESA have two contracted EAP providers. Access to these services can occur through the following mechanisms and specifically by members:

- Contacting an EAP provider directly;
- Contacting a member of the Welfare team directly to obtain support to arrange an EAP appointment; and
- Discussing the matter with a colleague or manager and asking that person to request support on their behalf.

Where an EAP service has been requested to respond to a critical incident, they will provide to FESA a high-level general counselling report at the completion of the assignment. While specific names and details are not provided on the reports, this feedback mechanism allows FESA to gauge the level of support services utilised to support members following major incidents.

It is important to note that support services provided to members from the Welfare Team are supplementary to the internal support mechanisms which exist within the member’s own Platoon, Brigade or service and through those provided from within the chain of command. Members generally meet as a group or crew after an incident and talk through their experiences and the

incident in general and anecdotally derive significant support from their colleagues. In circumstances where member needs for psychological support results in a compensable injury claim or worker's compensation claim, members are provided with support through FESA's internal Rehabilitation Coordinator. The Rehabilitation Coordinator liaises with relevant stakeholders including but not limited to members, treating medical and service providers etc to support medically determined rehabilitation treatment goals including fitness to return to work.

Operationally, post-event activities undertaken by FESA in response to incidents vary with the nature, scale and significance of the event. Standard operational responses are formally documented within FESA's Incident Analysis Policy and include localised Incident Debriefs, Post Incident Analysis (PIA) and Major Incident Review (MIR) processes. Incident debriefs are operationally the lowest level incident review and are generally routinely applied for all small scale incidents and responses. These generally occur on site and are utilised to conduct an initial review of the operational response to the incident. Typically psychological support needs are not canvassed as part of this process.

PIAs generally occur off the incident ground and engages a number of member stakeholders. PIAs are applied following events where there is a:

- Multi agency response;
- Multiple casualties and/or near misses, injuries / death of FESA personnel etc;
- Incurred loss of a significant dollar value;
- Significant infrastructure damage;
- Significant social disruption; and
- A coronial enquiry may be required.

A MIR reflects the highest level of incident review that can be undertaken. A MIR is undertaken where the event is of such significance that it warrants the review by an external party and/or by a party separate from the Portfolio and operational response. Theoretically incident specific matters pertaining to welfare needs and/or services can be addressed during a PIA or MIR. It is understood that currently, addressing of welfare matters is by exception and is not routine. This presents FESA with an opportunity to further review existing processes and identify ways by which welfare needs can be consistently identified, captured and addressed following major incidents. After a major incident a General Circular is posted on the Intranet and Volunteer Portal and makes reference to the availability of welfare support services to members.

**v) What annual budget would you spend on post events?**

See response for question (ii).

# ATTACHMENT 1 – FESA Volunteer Numbers by Service as at 30 June 2011

Volunteers	Number of Brigades, Groups or Units	Volunteer numbers as at 30 June 2011		
		Operational	Support	Total
Volunteer Bush Fire Service	585	25,165	613	<b>25,778</b>
Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service	88	1,971	171	<b>2,142</b>
State Emergency Service	65	1,950	44	<b>1,994</b>
Volunteer Marine Rescue Services	34	1,298	20	<b>1,318</b>
Volunteer Emergency Service	16	621	4	<b>625</b>
Volunteer Fire Service	9	370	7	<b>377</b>
FESA Education and Heritage Centre	1	0	18	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>31,375</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>32,252</b>

## ATTACHMENT 2 – Background information pertaining to role of FESA

## **Background**

FESA has an overarching role in ensuring effective emergency management in WA that embraces a comprehensive approach which includes arrangements and planning for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from emergencies.

FESA directly manages or supports fire and emergency service delivery with in excess of 1,400 career staff and 32,000 volunteers across WA involved in emergency service delivery. FESA also plays a leading role in emergency management in WA by maintaining collaborative arrangements with other state and federal agencies which support emergency management. FESA advises and supports WA's 141 Local Governments to meet their emergency management responsibilities.

## **Legislative Arrangements**

WA's emergency management arrangements necessitate service delivery by a number of emergency services organisations, the majority established and empowered through agency level legislation. FESA derives its legislative authority from the following emergency services Acts:

- *Bush Fires Act 1954 (and supporting Regulations)*
- *Emergency Management Act 2005*
- *Emergency Services Levy Act 2002*
- *Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia Act 1998*
- *Fire Brigades Act 1942 (and supporting Regulations)*
- *Fire and Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1985 (and supporting Regulations)*

The emergency services Acts provide FESA and Local Government with the functions and powers necessary to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from an emergency. Local Governments are vested with responsibilities under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, in relation to bush fire prevention, control and extinguishment, including the establishment and running of volunteer bush fire brigades.

## **FESA'S Roles**

FESA is the hazard management agency in WA for:

- Fire – rural and urban fires in gazetted fire districts;
- Fire – on Department of Environment and Conservation-managed land in gazetted fire districts;
- Hazardous materials incidents;
- Flood;
- Cyclone;
- Storm;
- Earthquake;
- Tsunami; and
- Collapse – collapse of landform or structures.

FESA is also the combat and support agency, including communications, for:

- Marine search and rescue;
- Land search;
- Air search and rescue (including emergency casualty transport);
- Urban search and rescue;
- Cliff, cave and confined space rescue;
- Road transport emergencies;
- Rail transport emergencies; and
- Animal disease outbreaks.

FESA is responsible for the development of the State emergency management capacity through:

- Development of State policy and plans;
- Management of the Western Australian Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements; and
- Development of mitigation initiatives.

### **Funding Arrangements**

FESA's principal funding source is the Emergency Services Levy (ESL) which is charged to each property owner through the local government. The rate charged to each property owner will depend on the category of services delivered to that property. In ESL Categories 1 to 4 the ESL rates are struck annually, based on the Gross Rental Value of each property in order to raise the amount of ESL funding required. The annual ESL rate is determined after FESA's annual budget has been approved by Government. Increases in the FESA budget directly impacts the ESL charged to households.

The annual budget includes the cost of operating and maintaining all of the following FESA services including:

- Career Fire & Rescue Service;
- Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service;
- Volunteer Fire Service Brigades;
- Volunteer Emergency Service Units;
- Bush Fire Brigades;
- State Emergency Service Units;
- Volunteer Marine Rescue Services (prescribed service - State Government funded); and
- Aerial fire fighting and rescue services (prescribed service -State Government funded).

It also includes the cost of FESA's support staff, staff and volunteer training, fire investigation, the building inspection program, community safety programs, the '000' and 132 500 emergency call centre, emergency management planning and FESA's corporate support costs.

FESA directly administers the finances for most of its services. However, local governments have responsibility to manage and operate their Bush Fire Brigades and State Emergency Service Units. Local governments are also responsible for recruiting, training and equipping BFS volunteers. FESA provides the funding via the ESL to local government for the operation of bush fire brigades and provides the training curriculum and training resource materials.

It should be noted that some BFS brigades are quite active, attending many incidents, conducting regular training and scheduled pre-planning and preparation for the coming fire season whilst other volunteers (e.g. pastoral response units) have limited engagement with the local brigade/bush fire control officer.

# ATTACHMENT 3 – Impact of Declared Natural Disasters (2001 -



Government of Western Australia  
Fire & Emergency Services Authority



## Impact of Declared Natural Disasters 2000/2001 to 2010/2011

		2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	TOTALS
Bush Fire	Personnel Hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Number of Personnel	0.00	0.00	395.00	449.00	326.00	183.00	0.00	0.00	241.00	30.00	1,624.00
	Damaged/Destroyed Structures	0.00	0.00	4.00	3.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	121.00	0.00	129.00
	Civilian Injuries	0.00		6.00					0.00			6.00
	Civilian Fatalities	0.00		2.00				3.00	0.00			5.00
	FESA Personnel Injuries	0.00		1.00	2.00		1.00		0.00	1.00		5.00
	FESA Personnel Fatalities	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00
Cyclone	Personnel Hours	0.00	0.00	1,562.75	499.00	862.50	595.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.00	3,528.75
	Number of Personnel	0.00	0.00	168.00	12.00	77.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	281.00
	Damaged/Destroyed Structures	0.00	0.00	51.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	61.00
	Civilian Injuries											0.00
	Civilian Fatalities											0.00
	FESA Personnel Injuries											0.00
	FESA Personnel Fatalities											0.00
Flood	Personnel Hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,828.65	0.00	248.00	263.00	4,339.65
	Number of Personnel	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	385.00	0.00	79.00	166.00	630.00
	Damaged/Destroyed Structures	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	233.00	0.00	10.00	3.00	246.00
	Civilian Injuries											0.00
	Civilian Fatalities											0.00
	FESA Personnel Injuries											0.00
	FESA Personnel Fatalities											0.00
Storm	Personnel Hours	0.00	0.00	0.00	925.15	0.00	946.50	0.00	426.00	5,660.20	1,112.55	9,070.40
	Number of Personnel	0.00	0.00	0.00	174.00	0.00	102.00	0.00	96.00	395.00	353.00	1,120.00
	Damaged/Destroyed Structures	0.00	0.00	0.00	81.00	0.00	142.00	0.00	105.00	698.00	116.00	1,142.00
	Civilian Injuries											0.00
	Civilian Fatalities											0.00
	FESA Personnel Injuries											0.00
	FESA Personnel Fatalities											0.00



## ATTACHMENT 4 – Claim Statistics for Top 8 Agencies 2010 - 11

(Provided by RiskCover 25 Oct 2011)

	FESA	Rank	Top 8 Agencies
Claims per 100 FTE	16.2	8 <sup>th</sup>	5.2
Percentage of Lost Time Injury (LTI) Claims	65%	4 <sup>th</sup>	64%
Percentage of Severe Claims	9%	1 <sup>st</sup>	18%
Percentage of Mental Stress Claims	5%	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8%
Average Estimated Cost per Claim	\$15,097	3 <sup>rd</sup>	\$15,373
Average Estimated Cost per FTE	\$2,450	8 <sup>th</sup>	\$795
Avg. Estimated Days Lost per Claim	21.1	2 <sup>nd</sup>	33.7
Avg. Estimated Days Lost per FTE	3.4	7 <sup>th</sup>	1.7

### SUMMARY

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia in recent years has maintained a low number of severe injuries which has helped keep Average Claim Costs relatively low. Despite this, the high - and rising - incidence rate (claims per 100 FTE) has caused Estimated Costs to increase rapidly. This suggests that while current Injury management procedures are proving effective, the implementation of injury prevention strategies may provide further opportunities to reduce claim numbers and costs.

HIGHLIGHTS	ISSUES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very low proportion of severe claims.</li><li>• Number of claims decreased in 2010/11.</li><li>• Maintained low number of mental stress claims.</li><li>• Proportion of LTI claims has fallen in recent years.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very high proportion of employees lodging claims.</li><li>• Estimated costs rising rapidly each year.</li><li>• Sharp increase in mental stress costs for 2010/11.</li><li>• Days lost per claim increased significantly in 2010/11.</li></ul>