

FLYING MINUTE: SUBMISSION ON THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SECTOR ADAPTATION PLAN (EM-SAP)

By Simone Ruane, Project Lead, Emergency Management

That State Council endorse WALGA's submission on the Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) be provided to the State Emergency Management Committee.

RESOLUTION 238.FM/2024

CARRIED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) is developing an Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) to embed climate change adaptation into the WA emergency management sector.
- WALGA was engaged by the SEMC to consult with the WA Local Government sector on the content, questions and actions presented in the [EM-SAP Discussion Paper](#).
- 32 Local Governments participated in WALGA's EM-SAP consultation activities, and a consultation summary report was submitted to the SEMC as preliminary findings.
- WALGA has prepared a formal EM-SAP submission to be provided to the SEMC. The submission supports the development of the WA EM-SAP as an important milestone in strengthening the consideration of climate change impacts in emergency decision-making and provides comments and recommendations for improvement, including that that:
 - Local Governments do not have the capacity to lead any of the proposed sector actions;
 - the State Government should lead all the actions included in the EM-SAP;
 - incorporating climate change considerations in Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) would require substantial guidance and resourcing for Local Governments;
 - Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) are currently not the appropriate mechanism to incorporate climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements; and
 - a coordinated approach in the preparation and delivery of the 7 Sector Adaptation Plans at the State Government level is needed.
- The People and Place Policy Team have approved the recommendation that the submission to the SEMC on the EM-SAP be provided to State Council for endorsement.

ATTACHMENT

- Draft Submission on the Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This submission is aligned to [WALGA Advocacy Positions](#) as follows:

8.1 Emergency Management Principles

- 1. The State Government bears fundamental responsibility for emergency management and has the role of providing strategic guidance, support and services for emergency management activities in Western Australia.*
- 2. The State Government should provide financial and resourcing support as necessary to enable Local Governments to adequately deliver their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Framework.*
- 3. The Local Government Sector should be engaged as a partner in policy and legislative reviews that impact Local Government emergency management roles and responsibilities.*

8.2 State Emergency Management Framework

Local Governments are supported to undertake their emergency management responsibilities by a simple and streamlined State Emergency Management Framework with the primary objectives of:

- 1. Protecting people, the economy, and the natural environment from disasters;*
- 2. Supporting communities in preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies;*
- 3. Clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for Local Government and other emergency management stakeholders;*
- 4. Scalability and adaptability that supports Local Governments of varied capacity and capability; and*
- 5. Supporting agency interoperability through common systems and approaches to key activities including data management, communications, and hazard management.*

8.11 Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA)

- 1. The State Government should fund the implementation of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Improvement Plan endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).*
- 2. A reformed LEMA system should:*
 - a. Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of Local Governments in emergency management;*
 - b. Simplify the reporting processes and reduce the administrative burden of maintaining compliance;*
 - c. Provide a suite of scalable tools and guidance materials that are accessible through an online knowledge hub;*
 - d. Build the emergency management capacity and capability of Local Governments through the provision of targeted training, exercising support, human resources and sustainable funding;*
 - e. Assist Local Governments to continue to deliver their core business activities and provide public information during an emergency event;*
 - f. Improve the connectivity of Local Governments' various risk management and hazard planning processes through an integrated approach; and*
 - g. Enable resource sharing and collaboration across the Local Government sector.*

4.1 Climate Change

Local Government acknowledges:

- 1. The science is clear: climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.*
- 2. Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.*
- 3. Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.*
- 4. A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.*

Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.

Local Government is calling for:

- 1. Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.*
- 2. Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.*

5.4.3 Betterment (resilience)

The Local Government sector supports increased funding for the replacement or restoration of damaged assets to a more resilient standard following an event.

5.4.4 Planning for risk management and recovery plans

The Local Government sector supports access to additional expertise to assist with assessing and planning/designing for recovery projects and designated funding to Local Government for the development of emergency risk management plans and recovery plans.

BACKGROUND

The SEMC has identified climate change as a strategic priority for the Western Australian emergency management sector. In October 2022, the SEMC Climate Change Subcommittee (CCSC) was established, with WALGA CEO Nick Sloan appointed as the SEMC sponsor and Nicole Matthews as the Deputy Chair.

The SEMC CCSC is guiding the development of the Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) to embed climate change adaptation into the WA emergency management sector. The EM-SAP is one of seven sector-based adaptation plans required under the *Climate Change Bill 2023*¹ to help implement [Western Australian Climate Adaptation Strategy](#).

The SEMC released an [EM-SAP Discussion Paper](#) in December 2023, to provide the WA emergency management sector an opportunity to input into the development of the EM-SAP.

WALGA was engaged by the SEMC to consult with the WA Local Government sector to obtain feedback on the content, questions and actions presented in the EM-SAP Discussion Paper. Consultation was undertaken during February and March 2024. The EM-SAP Consultation Report (Appendix 1 of the Submission) summarises the feedback provided by representatives from 32 Local Government who participated in WALGA's EM-SAP consultation activities. The report was submitted to the SEMC Business Unit on

¹ See [Climate change legislation | Western Australian Government \(www.wa.gov.au\)](#)

22 March 2024 as preliminary findings and did not include WALGA recommendations or constitute a formal WALGA submission.

Submissions on the Discussion Paper were due on 29 March 2024. WALGA sought, and was granted, an extension until 24 April 2024 to enable the submission to be considered by State Council. On the 10 April, the People and Place Policy Team approved the recommendation that the submission to SEMC on the EM-SAP be provided to State Council for endorsement.

WALGA has been advised that it is likely that a draft EM-SAP will be released for further consultation.

COMMENT

The WALGA submission acknowledges the EM-SAP as an important milestone for the State Government in acting on climate change and supports the move towards a risk-informed and resilience-based approach to emergency management.

The submission supports many of the actions proposed in the EM-SAP Discussion Paper, however, identifies several issues that need to be addressed and improvement opportunities to inform the development of the final EM-SAP. In particular, the submission highlights that more clarity is required regarding what constitutes an emergency management adaptation activity, how the EM-SAP will be resourced and implemented, and how the delivery of the 7 Sector Adaptation Plans will be coordinated to avoid planning and reporting duplication and inefficiencies.

In summary, the submission highlights that Local Governments require substantial support, guidance, data and tools provided by the State Government to help them better understand their local climate risks and inform their emergency management and adaptation planning. Importantly, the submission emphasises that WA Local Governments do not have the capacity to lead any of the proposed sector actions and that the State Government should lead all the actions included in the final EM-SAP. Furthermore, incorporating climate change considerations in LEMA would require a substantial level of guidance and resourcing for Local Governments and that Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) as they currently function, are not the appropriate mechanism to incorporate climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements.

FLYING MINUTE OUTCOME

Poll created: 10/04/2024 at 16:06

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The submission was endorsed.

Following feedback from State Councillors during the Flying Agenda process, minor changes were made to the submissions as follows:

- The following sentence was added to the conclusion: *It is imperative that Local Governments are engaged in adaptation planning as they are best placed to identify local challenges and conditions. However, the State Government should lead all EM-SAP adaptation actions and provide adequate resourcing to Local Governments to assist them with their local adaptation planning and implementation activities.*
- Recommendation 9 was changed from *Does not include any actions that make LEMCs accountable for incorporating climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements until changes to improve the functioning and structure of LEMCs and DEMCs are developed and implemented* to *Does not include any actions that make LEMCs accountable for incorporating climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements.*

Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan

WALGA Submission

1. Introduction

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) is an independent, member-based, not for profit organisation representing and supporting the WA Local Government sector. Our membership includes all 139 Local Governments in the State.

WALGA uses its influence, support and expertise to deliver better outcomes for WA Local Governments and their communities. We do this through effective advocacy to all levels of Government on behalf of our Members, and by the provision of expert advice, services and support to Local Governments. WALGA's vision is for agile and inclusive Local Governments enhancing community wellbeing and enabling economic prosperity.

Western Australian Local Governments are diverse in:

- size, ranging from less than 1.1 to over 372,000 square kilometres;
- population, of 89 to more than 224,000 people;
- the number of staff employed, from less than 13 to over 1200; and
- revenue received, which in 2019-20 ranged from just over \$2 million to just over \$256 million.

There are also vast differences in climate, demographics, industries and, hence, risk profiles between the Western Australian Local Government zones.

Climate change poses significant challenges for Western Australian Local Governments across all aspects of operations, particularly emergency management. While exposure and vulnerability to climate-related hazards varies greatly across the State, it is projected that the frequency of extreme heatwaves, bushfires, flooding, and storm events in Western Australia will continue to increase. Furthermore, many communities will be exposed to hazards they have not historically experienced. Effective and adequately resourced local emergency management, that enables Local Governments to adapt to the impacts of climate change and build disaster resilience, is imperative.

WA Local Governments are calling for:

- strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government (WALGA Advocacy Position 4.1);
- effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs (WALGA Advocacy Position 4.1); and

- the State Government to provide financial and resourcing support as necessary to enable Local Governments to adequately deliver their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Framework (WALGA Advocacy Position 8.1).

WALGA acknowledges the State Emergency Management Committee's (SEMC) commitment to acting on climate change. In October 2022, the SEMC Climate Change Subcommittee (CCSC) was established, with WALGA CEO Nick Sloan appointed as the SEMC sponsor and Nicole Matthews as the Deputy Chair, to guide the development of an *Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP)*.

The EM-SAP is one of seven sector-based plans required under the *Climate Change Bill 2023* to help implement the [Western Australian Climate Adaptation Strategy](#). WALGA considers the EM-SAP to be a significant strategic milestone in the State Government acting on climate change and broadening its focus from emergency services/response to emergency mitigation, preparedness, and disaster resilience. WALGA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the *Western Australian Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) Discussion Paper* that was released in December 2023.

The purpose of the EM-SAP Discussion Paper was to invite the Western Australian emergency management sector to have their say on the design and content of the EM-SAP. Feedback was sought on:

- current and planned adaptation activities undertaken by emergency management agencies and organisations;
- proposed adaptation objectives and actions for the emergency management sector;
- the role of the SEMC in supporting and accelerating climate change adaptation across the emergency management sector;
- potential reporting processes and governance structures for embedding climate change adaptation within existing emergency management arrangements; and
- guidance and support required by organisations to consider adaptation in preparing their emergency management arrangements.

Stakeholders were also asked to nominate their organisation as a leading or supporting organisation for the delivering specific sector adaptation actions.

This submission is informed by feedback obtained from a diverse cross-section of WA Local Governments who participated in WALGA's targeted EM-SAP consultation activities during February and March 2024. Overall, WALGA's EM-SAP consultation findings (See Appendix 2 for Summary Report) align with [WALGA's 2023 LEMA Review findings¹](#), and confirm that WA Local Governments are varied in their capacity for emergency management, and many are inadequately resourced to prepare for the increasing risk they face as a result of climate change.

WALGA's EM-SAP Consultation findings highlight that the capability of Local Governments for emergency management and climate change adaptation declines with decreasing Local Government size and increasing remoteness. Aligned with WALGA's 'Climate Resilient

¹ LEMA Review, [Summary Results for Climate Change Governance Assessment of Local Governments](#)

Councils - preparing for impacts of climate change' project,² the EM-SAP consultation emphasises that one of the biggest barriers to climate change adaptation and emergency management for Local Government is the lack of funding and dedicated human resources. Overall, WALGA's EM-SAP consultation findings substantiate WALGA's existing advocacy positions relating to Emergency Management, Climate Change and Betterment (Resilience) (See Appendix 1).

This submission which includes recommendations to inform the development of the EM-SAP to ensure it is fit-for-purpose for Local Governments was endorsed by WALGA State Council on 18 April 2024.

2. Summary of recommendations

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

1. Includes a clear definition and examples of what constitutes an emergency management sector adaptation activity/action versus other sector adaptation actions.
2. Provides more detail about what climate change information, data and Local Government adaptation activities/actions could be included in the Local Emergency Management Arrangements documentation and what adaptation activities/actions would be more appropriately documented in an overarching Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Plan or Climate Change Strategy.
3. Acknowledges that many Local Governments already plan and implement adaptation activities and that these are often documented in existing Local Governments Climate Change Adaptation Plans/Strategies.
4. Key Direction 3, Sector Action 6d proposed in the Discussion Paper, be reworded from *Promote collaborative partnerships between local governments to manage local and regional climate risks and implement adaptation to Support collaborative partnerships/regional alliances between Local Governments to plan and implement adaptation actions.*
5. Acknowledges that WA Local Governments vary greatly in their capacity and capability for emergency management and adaptation planning and implementation.
6. Includes a key objective/outcome specific to Local Governments that states:

All Local Governments have the capacity and resources to integrate climate change considerations into emergency management planning and specific actions that will enable this outcome including:

² Climate Planning (2020) [Western Australia Climate Change Adaptation Governance Assessment Summary Results for Climate Change Governance Assessment of Local Governments](#)

- a) *Develop a policy statement for Local Government that specifies the roles and responsibilities in incorporating climate change considerations in emergency management.*
 - b) *Produce guidelines, templates and tools for Local Government to integrate climate change considerations in emergency management planning processes.*
 - c) *Develop and adequately resource a consistent local risk assessment method (including treatment identification) so Local Governments can enhance understandings of current and longer-term climate risks.*
 - d) *Investigate resourcing options to build the capacity of regional and remote Local Government, including for shared advisor/coordinator positions to support emergency management/adaptation planning.*
 - e) *Develop exercises, training programs and professional development programs for Local Government staff and Elected Members on the links between climate change adaptation and emergency management.*
 - f) *Increase grant funding allocations and revise criteria to enable Local Governments to expand their mitigation works, risk reduction and community resilience activities.*
7. Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3d) proposed in the Discussion Paper, be reworded from *Provide support to Local Governments to incorporate climate adaptation into Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs) through the LEMA reform program of work to Provide resources and data to support Local Governments understand their climate risks and identify emergency specific adaptation actions in their Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs).*
 8. Acknowledges that currently LEMCs operate as an advisory body only, and members do not actively develop LEMA strategies or local emergency management plans (apart from the Department of Communities' Emergency Support and Relief Plans). Any EM-SAP actions associated with LEMCs will have resourcing and administrative implications for Local Governments that need to be addressed in the EM-SAP.
 9. Does not include any actions that make LEMCs accountable for incorporating climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements.
 10. Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3b proposed in the Discussion Paper, be reworded from *Provide support to Local and District Emergency Management Committees (LEMCS and DEMCS) to incorporate climate adaptation into emergency management arrangements to Reform the structure and functions of Local and District Emergency Management Committees (LEMCS and DEMCS) to strengthen the focus on emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation and disaster resilience.*
 11. Ensures that any local-level reporting of State Agency emergency management adaptation activities should be via the State Agency and not duplicated via LEMCs.

12. Ensures that any reporting requirements that are designated to Local Governments through the 7 Sectors Adaptation Plans (SAPs) being prepared at the State Government level by different departments is well-coordinated to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.
13. Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3c. proposed in the Discussion Paper be reworded from *Improve DEMC and LEMC accountability for monitoring the effectiveness and maturity of climate adaptation at district and local levels as part of emergency risk management* to *Develop tools to monitor the effectiveness and maturity of climate adaptation at district and local levels as part of emergency risk management*.
14. Retains the actions proposed under Key Direction 4: *Empower and support the climate resilience of Aboriginal people*
15. Includes an additional action under Key Direction 4: *Develop guidance material/best practice examples for Local Government on how to engage Aboriginal people in emergency management and adaptation planning*.
16. Use the word Objective (rather than Outcome) in the tables listed under each of the Key Directions to ensure the consistent use of terminology throughout the document.
17. Includes the priority actions identified by Local Governments in the EM-SAP Consultation, noting the recommendations to reword actions 3b and 3d.
18. Does not assign Local Governments as a leading organisation for any of the EM-SAP actions proposed.
19. Does not assign Local Governments as a supporting organisation to any of the actions prior to further consultation regarding what that responsibility entails.
20. Note that some actions included in the EM-SAP are relevant to other sectors that will develop SAPs, such as infrastructure and planning. Cross-sector actions require collaboration and a determination on which sector should lead.
21. Includes a clear implementation plan with roles, responsibilities, and timeframes and accountabilities at the State level.
22. Provides more information about the adaptation planning reporting mechanisms, accountability, and decision-making structures.
23. Includes sources of potential funding and resources for adaptation actions within the emergency management sector.
24. Provides more information about what leading or supporting adaptation actions will entail.
25. Uses images that are more representative of the diverse Western Australian landscape.

3. WALGA EM-SAP Consultation Process

Local Governments are prescribed various responsibilities under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*, and are considered a key Emergency Management Agency (EMA) stakeholder in the EM-SAP initiative. In July 2023, the SEMC Business Unit engaged WALGA to undertake consultation with the WA Local Government sector to obtain input on the content, questions and actions presented in the EM-SAP Discussion Paper.

A mixed-method consultation process was undertaken during February and March 2024 with representatives from 32 diverse WA Local Governments participating.

The EM-SAP Consultation Report (Appendix 1) summarises the process and feedback from participants. The report was submitted to the SEMC Business Unit on 22 March 2024 as independent, preliminary findings and did not constitute a formal WALGA submission. WALGA was granted an extension until 24 April 2024 to enable the preparation of a formal submission endorsed by State Council.

4. Local Government Feedback and Recommendations

4.1 Current adaptation activities undertaken by Local Government

Climate change adaptation is not a new practice for Local Government, with some Local Governments having Adaptation Plans in place for over a decade.³ While not all explicitly referred to as adaptation actions, many Local Governments already undertake a range of activities that contribute to reducing the risks posed by climate change, building disaster and climate resilience, and supporting emergency preparedness.

Some examples of adaptation activities undertaken by WA Local Governments identified in the EM-SAP consultation include:

- developing corporate and community Climate Change Strategies, Adaptation Plans and Policies;
- undertaking emergency and climate risk assessments;
- working with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, Native Title Holders and/or Traditional Owners on Climate Change and Emergency Management matters.
- developing and implementing Coastal Hazards Risk Management Adaptation Plans (CHRMAs);
- developing Person-centred/Higher Risk/Vulnerable Communities in emergencies plans and programs;
- Bushfire Risk Management Planning (BRMPs) and mitigation activities;
- hazard specific planning – e.g. flood, heatwave, cyclone, storm events;
- heat island assessments and Urban Forest Plans/Strategies/Urban greening activities;
- evacuation centre mapping/upgrades;
- water security planning;
- community disaster resilience education/ preparedness/readiness campaigns and programs;

³ For example the [Town of Cottesloe](#) (2011), [The City of Fremantle](#) (2012) and the [City of Mandurah](#) (2009)

- participating in Local Government networks, regional alliances and adaptation partnerships that support climate adaptation planning and emergency management resource sharing;
- integrating climate resilience into housing and infrastructure strategies/plans;
- in-house training about climate change and emergencies; and
- emergency and early warning communications with the community.

While the adaptation activities listed above help build emergency preparedness and reduce disaster risk at the local level, many of these occur outside of Local Governments' Emergency Management Units/Departments/Portfolios (if indeed they are resourced to have one). Furthermore, apart from hazard-specific planning, mitigation activities and other LEMA-related plans, most adaptation activities of Local Government are neither informed by the Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) nor documented in a Local Government's Local Emergency Arrangements (LEMA). An important question that emerged from the EM-SAP consultation that needs to be addressed is: what constitutes an Emergency Management Sector specific adaptation action/activity versus the broader adaptation actions that Local Governments may already be undertaking across their different department areas, that are relevant to emergency management sector adaptation?

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

1. Includes a clear definition and examples of what constitutes an emergency management sector adaptation activity/action versus other sector adaptation actions.
2. Provides more detail about what climate change information, data and Local Government adaptation activities/actions could be included in the Local Emergency Management Arrangements documentation and what adaptation activities/actions would be more appropriately documented in an overarching Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Plan or Climate Change Strategy.

4.2 Feedback on what adaptation activities Local Governments could be doing.

WALGA's EM-SAP consultation identified several climate change adaptation activities/actions that Local Governments believe they could be doing or doing better, **if provided with appropriate resources and support**. These included:

- participating in Local Government climate partnerships/regional alliances to share resources and advance climate change adaptation;
- embedding climate change considerations/projections in existing hazard plans, such as Bushfire Risk Management Plans;
- developing plans for emerging hazards/climate risks (particularly heatwaves and floods);
- upgrading social housing and infrastructure to enhance energy efficiency and build resilience to climate impacts (including emergencies);

- education and awareness about climate change adaptation and emergency management within the community and internally for Local Government staff and Elected Members;
- better road transport planning to address various emergency events;
- working more closely with local non-government organisations (NGOs) and local industries to enhance climate resilience;
- strengthening the integration of emergency management and adaptation planning across various Local Governments departments, In particular, better alignment of emergency management with land use planning activities such as:
 - Coastal Hazard Risk Management Planning, and
 - Urban Greening/Forest Strategies;
- improving community engagement/input in the development of hazard plans;
- better road transport planning to accommodate a broader range of climate-related hazards;
- evacuation centre mapping and upgrades to accommodate hazards beyond bushfires;
- more effective engagement with Aboriginal people in emergency and climate change adaptation planning (for example in LEMCs) and initiating partnerships and cultural burning/climate resilience programs with and for Aboriginal people;
- local climate risk assessments and treatment identification; and
- assessing the trade-offs of emergency preparedness and climate adaptation activities. For example, reducing bushfire risk in the short term may result in longer-term heatwave risks through the loss of vegetation and tree canopy.

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

3. Acknowledges that many Local Governments already plan and implement adaptation activities and that these are often documented in existing Local Governments Climate Change Adaptation Plans/Strategies.
4. Key Direction 3, Sector Action 6d proposed in the Discussion Paper be reworded from *Promote collaborative partnerships between local governments to manage local and regional climate risks and implement adaptation to Support collaborative partnerships/regional alliances between Local Governments to plan and implement adaptation actions.*

4.3 What guidance or support would help Local Governments to consider adaptation in the preparation of Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA)?

A key emergency management sector action proposed in the EM-SAP Discussion Paper (Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3d) is to *Provide support to Local Governments to incorporate climate adaptation into Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs) through the LEMA reform program of work.* LEMA refers to the suite of emergency management documentation, systems, processes, agreements, and memorandums of understanding (MOU) that support a coordinated approach to emergency management at the local level. In Western Australia (WA), under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*, Local Governments are required to maintain Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) for their district.

The 2022-2023 [WALGA's LEMA Review](#) identified the urgent need to build the emergency management capacity and capability of the Local Government sector through development of new LEMA approaches and the provision of targeted investment. The LEMA Review findings underpin WALGA's LEMA Advocacy position 8.11 below endorsed by State Council in September 2023 and [2024-25 Budget Submission](#) requesting \$1 million per annum over 5 years to implement the [LEMA Improvement Plan](#) and \$9 million for a Local Government Emergency Management Grants Program to enable effective local emergency management arrangements.

8.11 Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA)

1. *The State Government should fund the implementation of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Improvement Plan endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).*
2. *A reformed LEMA system should:*
 - a. *Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of Local Governments in emergency management;*
 - b. *Simplify the reporting processes and reduce the administrative burden of maintaining compliance;*
 - c. *Provide a suite of scalable tools and guidance materials that are accessible through an online knowledge hub;*
 - d. *Build the emergency management capacity and capability of Local Governments through the provision of targeted training, exercising support, human resources and sustainable funding;*
 - e. *Assist Local Governments to continue to deliver their core business activities and provide public information during an emergency event;*
 - f. *Improve the connectivity of Local Governments' various risk management and hazard planning processes through an integrated approach; and*
 - g. *Enable resource sharing and collaboration across the Local Government sector*

The LEMA Review highlighted that the current system for local emergency management does not adequately consider the increasing risks associated with climate change. Aligned with WALGA's LEMA Advocacy position above, the EM-SAP consultation findings highlight that to strengthen climate change considerations in LEMA, a substantial level of guidance and resourcing for Local Governments would be required including:

- a clearer understanding Local Governments' legislative roles and responsibilities in emergency preparedness and climate change adaptation;
- guidelines/direction/tools to support Local Governments to integrate climate change considerations in emergency management planning processes;
- removal of co-contribution requirements to obtain disaster resilience funding, streamlined administrative grant processes and grant support to develop and administer climate change adaptation/emergency preparedness projects;
- access to relevant climate data to inform LEMA preparation and specific hazard plans;

- training and skills development opportunities for Local Government staff and Elected Members; and
- additional human resources to support emergency management and climate change planning.

Notably, some Local Governments that provided input into the EM-SAP consultation, particularly those in regional/remote areas, expressed concern that incorporating climate change adaptation in LEMA will be an additional impost on Local Governments already struggling to fulfil their LEMA responsibilities. Therefore, caution must be taken by the State Government when strengthening climate change considerations in local emergency management processes to ensure that any additional requirements are adequately supported and do not result in further resource strain and administrative burden for Local Governments.

WALGA's EM-SAP consultation indicates that climate change risk assessments, data and projections could help inform a Local Government's LEMA preparation. However, the consultation also highlighted that incorporating 'climate change adaptation' planning into LEMA risks the duplication of adaptation actions across Local Government functions and may result in confusion about how climate adaptation is considered and who has ultimate responsibility for implementation. Furthermore, it was highlighted that currently the LEMA model/documents are not actively used by many Local Governments, embedded in Local Government business as usual, or informing broader strategic planning processes. Systemic issues in the LEMA and LEMC need to be rectified by the SEMC prior to integrating adaptation planning into LEMA.

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

5. Acknowledges that WA Local Governments vary greatly in their capacity and *capability* for emergency management and adaptation planning and implementation.

6. Includes a key objective/outcome specific to Local Governments that states:

All Local Governments have the capacity and resources to integrate climate change considerations into emergency management planning and specific actions that will enable this outcome including:

- a. Develop a policy statement for Local Government that specifies the roles and responsibilities in incorporating climate change considerations in emergency management.*
- b. Produce guidelines, templates and tools for Local Government to integrate climate change considerations in emergency management planning processes.*
- c. Develop and adequately resource a consistent local risk assessment method (including treatment identification) so Local Governments can enhance understandings of current and longer-term climate risks.*
- d. Investigate resourcing options to build the capacity of regional and remote Local Government, including for shared advisor/coordinator positions to support emergency management/adaptation planning.*

- e. *Develop exercises, training programs and professional development programs for Local Government staff and Elected Members on the links between climate change adaptation and emergency management.*
 - f. *Increase grant funding allocations and revise criteria to enable Local Governments to expand their mitigation works, risk reduction and community resilience activities.*
7. Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3d) proposed in the Discussion Paper be reworded from *Provide support to Local Governments to incorporate climate adaptation into Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs) through the LEMA reform program of work to Provide resources and data to support Local Governments understand their climate risks and identify emergency specific adaptation actions in their Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs).*

4.4 How District and Local Emergency Management Committees (DEMCs and LEMCs) could assist Local Governments carry out adaptation activities.

Under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*, Local Governments are required to establish one or more Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) for their local district. Local Governments can also collaborate with other neighbouring Local Governments to form a joint LEMC that covers their respective Local Government jurisdictions. LEMCs are a non-operational committee, chaired and administered by Local Government and comprised of representatives from a range of hazard management agencies, organisations, industry and community groups who play a role in emergency management for the local area. The LEMCs are supported by, and report to, their respective District Emergency Management Committees (DEMC), which then reports to the SEMC.

In 2022, the SEMC initiated a Review into the District and Local Emergency Management Committees that aimed to:

- establish clear roles and responsibilities, functions, and governance for DEMCs and LEMCs in achieving the strategic objectives of SEMC;
- identify improvement opportunities to the governance arrangements and capabilities to increase effective and efficient emergency management outcomes; and
- create a shared understanding of SEMC expectations of DEMCs and LEMCs within the emergency management sector.

An external consultant conducted targeted consultation for the DEMC and LEMC Review on behalf of the SEMC Business Unit, inviting input from WALGA and participation from Local Government (LEMC Chairs and Executive Officers) in focus groups in August 2023. WALGA informed the LEMC and DEMC Review of issues regarding the functioning of LEMCs that were identified in the LEMA Review including that:

- many Local Governments do not get regular attendance and active participation from members at LEMC meetings;
- LEMC membership size and composition can be problematic;
- LEMCs are not actively engaging in developing or maintaining LEMA despite it being a core function;

- the purpose and terms of reference of LEMCs are not well understood or executed;
- some Local Governments believe that a sub-district/district level committee structure for emergency planning would be more effective than the current LEMC model but there are mixed views from the sector about this; and
- LEMCs are an important networking forum but LEMC meeting agendas could be improved to be more engaging and productive.

WALGA notes that a report outlining the findings of the LEMC and DEMC Review was presented to SEMC in December 2023. At this stage no targeted improvements or changes to the current structure of DEMCs and LEMCs based on the findings of the Review have been announced.

WALGA's EM-SAP Consultation findings confirmed that:

- LEMC members often have very different levels of emergency management experience and understanding;
- many LEMC members have operational/response roles and experience, and focusing strategically on emergency management planning, disaster resilience and preparedness is not a priority;
- other LEMC members are volunteers (e.g. volunteer bushfire brigade members, Ambulance, SES, Country Women's Association) and therefore not being paid for their time to attend or produce work;
- LEMC meetings tend to be a forum for agency updates and not a strategic emergency management planning mechanism;
- Local Governments have designated responsibility for administering LEMCs and for developing and reviewing LEMA documents. While LEMCs core function is to assist Local Government with the development of LEMA, in practice, the LEMC Executive Officers (Local Government Officers or appointed consultants) undertake the LEMA work with limited input from their LEMC members;
- any EM-SAP planning or reporting requirements allocated to LEMCs are effectively allocated to the Local Government and Local Governments require resources to do any additional work;
- LEMCs are an advisory body only (not a Committee of Council) and do not have decision-making authority;
- in regional and remote areas, there is a high turnover of LEMC members due to the transient population; and
- the majority of LEMC members currently do not possess the skills, knowledge or interest required to progress climate change adaptation actions.

A sector action proposed in the EM-SAP Discussion Paper (Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3b. is to *[p]rovide support to Local and District Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs and DEMCs) to incorporate climate adaptation into emergency management arrangements*. Overall, **WALGA's EM-SAP consultation indicates that LEMCs, as they currently function, are not the appropriate mechanism to incorporate climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements** as they do not possess the relevant expertise or appetite for strategic, longer-term emergency planning. Improvements to the current structure and functioning of DEMCs and LEMCs need to be implemented prior to assigning any further responsibility to LEMCs.

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

8. Acknowledges that currently LEMCs operate as an advisory body only, and members do not actively develop LEMA strategies or local emergency management plans (apart from the Department of Communities' Emergency Support and Relief Plans). Any EM-SAP actions associated with LEMCs will have resourcing and administrative implications for Local Governments that need to be included in the EM-SAP.
9. Does not include any actions that make LEMCs accountable for incorporating climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements..
10. Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3b proposed in the Discussion Paper be reworded from *Provide support to Local and District Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs and DEMCs) to incorporate climate adaptation into emergency management arrangements* to *Reform the structure and functions of Local and District Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs and DEMCs) to strengthen the focus on emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation and disaster resilience.*

4.5 What reporting structure or process would best support adaptation reporting

WA Local Governments have strong reservations about assigning adaptation reporting to the LEMCs, emphasising that in practice such a requirement will result in Local Governments having additional responsibility to report on agency specific information from committee members, who may also be reporting the same information up through their respective agencies. Local Governments emphasise that LEMCs may be able to inform/ or be informed about Local Government adaptation activities, but they are not the appropriate mechanism for Local Government reporting and accountability.

The EM-SAP consultation highlighted that currently the LEMC Annual Reporting requirements are in a state of flux with the conclusion of the State Risk and Capability Project in 2023 and participants questioned what LEMC accountability means in practice, again reiterating that these committees are advisory body only and do not deliver activities/plans.

In addition to the EM-SAP, six other Sector Adaptation Plans are set to be developed under the *Climate Change Bill 2023*, including for health and human services, primary production, infrastructure and built environment, small and medium enterprises, natural environment and water security. The provisions of the Bill allow for establishing responsible Ministers for each SAP. While the EM-SAP Discussion Paper acknowledges the mutual interdependency and cross-sectoral nature of the different sector adaptation actions/activities, it is unclear from the Discussion Paper how this will be dealt with on a practical level and what the implications will be for Local Governments, who work across different sectors and State Government departments. There is concern that the delivery of the SAPs will result in Local Governments being required to deliver and report on adaptation activities for each SAP.

The EM-SAP consultation highlighted that:

- any adaptation reporting requirements should be streamlined and enabled through the provision of standardised online reporting tools and templates that are simple and user-friendly;
- expansion of the Regional Climate Alliance programs with dedicated coordinators would provide Local Governments with a resource to enable adaptation planning and reporting across different sectors;
- any adaptation planning reporting requirements need to be scalable and proportional to Local Government resource capacity; and
- Local Governments should report any adaptation activities through one overarching and centralised reporting location.

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

11. Ensures that any local-level reporting of State Agency emergency management adaptation activities should be via the State Agency and not duplicated via LEMCs.
12. Ensures that any reporting requirements that are designated to Local Governments through the 7 Sectors Adaptation Plans (SAPs) being prepared at the State Government level by different departments is well-coordinated to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.
13. Key Direction 2, Sector Action 3c. proposed in the Discussion Paper be reworded from *Improve DEMC and LEMC accountability for monitoring the effectiveness and maturity of climate adaptation at district and local levels as part of emergency risk management* to *Develop tools to monitor the effectiveness and maturity of climate adaptation at district and local levels as part of emergency risk management*.

4.6 How Aboriginal representation could be bolstered in LEMCs to inform adaptation actions

WALGA is committed to supporting the efforts of WA Local Governments to foster respectful partnerships and strengthen relationships with local Aboriginal communities. Furthermore, WALGA's EM-SAP consultation established that Local Governments recognise the importance of incorporating Aboriginal knowledge and ensuring representation in emergency management and climate change adaptation planning. However, it was emphasised that WA Local Governments require additional support and guidance to do this effectively.

While consultation participants generally agreed that Aboriginal representation should be bolstered in Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) to inform adaptation actions, some respondents noted:

- the challenges faced in engaging with Aboriginal communities, including time constraints, difficulties in identifying appropriate representatives, and language and other barriers;
- that more consideration on how Aboriginal people want to engage in emergency management and adaptation planning is necessary; and
- that Reconciliation Action Planning processes/advisory groups may be a better mechanism for Aboriginal people to inform Local Government emergency management and adaptation planning than LEMCs.

Local Governments require assistance to identify the most appropriate Aboriginal representatives for emergency management and adaptation planning for their local area and how to engage in a culturally appropriate and respectful way.

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

14. Retains the actions proposed under Key Direction 4: Empower and support the climate resilience of Aboriginal people
15. Includes an additional action under Key Direction 4: *Develop guidance material/best practice examples for Local Government on how to engage Aboriginal people in emergency management and adaptation planning.*

4.7 Proposed sector adaptation objectives and actions

The EM-SAP Discussion Paper proposes 8 adaptation outcomes and 38 actions for the emergency management sector that align with the state-level adaptation priorities (key directions) outlined in the Western Australian Climate Adaptation Strategy.

WALGA's EM-SAP consultation was designed to identify the priority actions proposed under each of the key directions that would support Local Governments advance climate change adaptation and emergency management goals together. Participants were also asked to consider if there were any actions Local Governments could nominate as a leading organisation and to propose any additional actions that they felt were missing.

Overwhelming feedback provided during the consultation was that **WA Local Governments do not have the capacity to lead any of the proposed sector actions and that the State Government should lead all the actions included in the final EM-SAP**, reinforcing WALGA's position that the State Government bears fundamental responsibility for emergency management and has the role of providing strategic guidance, support and services for emergency management activities in Western Australia.

Local Government's priority State-led emergency management sector adaptation actions proposed under Directions 1-4 are as follows:

Key Direction 1: Produce and communicate credible climate information and resources

- 1e. Develop robust scenarios, exercises, and other learning approaches that improve understanding of hazard-specific and systemic climate-related risks.

- 1d. Develop vulnerability assessment methods to enhance understanding of climate risks for groups differentiated by social and economic risk factors.
- 2a. Produce communication materials, including visualisation tools, to make climate risk forecasts (hazard-specific risks and systemic risks) more accessible for communities, non-profit organisations, businesses, and at-risk groups.

Key Direction 2: Build emergency management sector climate capability and strengthen accountability

- 3b. Provide support to Local and District Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs and DEMCs) to incorporate climate adaptation into emergency management arrangements. (Noting that LEMCs should only play an advisory role and it is not recommended that LEMCs are the accountability/reporting mechanism for Local Governments' adaptation activities)
- 3d. Provide support to Local Governments to incorporate climate adaptation into Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs) through the LEMA reform program of work. (Noting that Local Governments have varying capacity to maintain LEMA and require adequate resources for emergency management planning)
- 4d. Augment emergency risk management reporting structures in the State Emergency Management Framework to support sector-wide adaptation reporting and transparency.
- 4e. Develop a sector-wide monitoring framework to facilitate sector adaptation reporting.

Key Direction 3. Enhance sector-wide and community partnerships to unite and coordinate action

- 7b. Support Infrastructure Western Australia to develop and implement a statewide approach to climate change adaptation for existing infrastructure as recommended in the 2022 State Infrastructure Strategy.
- 7d. Provide advice on building-related plans and infrastructure projects, as well as relevant codes, standards, and statutes.
- 5a. Support the implementation of data sharing legislation and standards to enhance accessibility and interoperability of data for climate adaptation and emergency risk management.

Key Direction 4: Empower and support the climate resilience of Aboriginal people

- 8a. Explore options for strengthening the inclusion of Aboriginal voices in the SEMC, including an independent Aboriginal representative.

- 7c. Develop governance arrangements to ensure government parties engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives before, during, and after emergencies as per Priority Reform Three of the Closing the Gap Report.
- 8b. Expand membership of Local and District Emergency Management Committees to include independent Aboriginal representatives.

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

16. Use the word Objective (rather than Outcome) in the tables listed under each of the Key *Directions* to ensure consistent use of terminology throughout document.
17. Includes the priority actions identified by Local Governments, noting the *recommendations* to reword actions 3b and 3d.
18. Does not assign Local Governments as a lead organisation for any of the EM-SAP *actions* proposed.
19. Does not assign Local *Governments* as a supporting organisation to any of the actions prior to further consultation regarding what that responsibility entails.
20. Note that some actions included in the EM-SAP are relevant to other sectors that will *develop* SAPs, such as infrastructure and planning. Cross-sector actions require collaboration and a determination on which sector should lead.

4.8 Assumptions presented in the Discussion Paper (p. 10) and other issues for consideration in the development of the final EM-SAP include:

- The EM-SAP Discussion Paper assumes all Local Governments have the capacity for adaptation planning through emergency planning processes. Not all Local Governments have dedicated emergency management or climate change/sustainability staff to support adaptation planning.
- The proposed actions assume LEMCs and DEMCs are the appropriate mechanism for incorporating climate change adaptation into emergency management arrangements despite it having been established that functions and structure of these committees require reform.
- Local Governments have various capacities for emergency preparedness and adaptation planning and any EM-SAP actions for Local Governments need to be scalable, resourced and not assume a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Local Governments already undertake a lot of adaptation work that influences emergency outcomes. The paper does not clearly define Emergency Management Sector Adaptation actions versus other adaptation actions that also reduce emergency and disaster risk.

- The Discussion Paper assumes there are discrete adaptation activities/actions for the emergency management sector when in practice there are substantial overlaps/mutual interdependencies across sectors.
- The Discussion Paper assumes the SEMC is best placed to drive Local Government adaptation planning when indeed many adaptation actions need to be driven by land-use planning, infrastructure and building sector decisions.
- The EM-SAP Discussion Paper does not clearly stipulate how the actions and reporting requirements of the different SAPs will be coordinated.
- The EM-SAP Discussion Paper is metro-centric and coastal centric (especially in the choice of images).
- More information regarding who is leading and who is supporting each of the actions, and the implementation approach is required for Local Government to provide further comment.

WALGA recommends that the EM-SAP:

- 21. Includes a clear implementation plan with roles, responsibilities, and timeframes and accountabilities at the State level.**
- 22. Provides more information about the adaptation planning reporting mechanisms, accountability, and decision-making structures.**
- 23. Includes sources of potential funding and resources for adaptation actions within the emergency management sector.**
- 24. Provides more information about what leading or supporting adaptation actions will entail.**
- 25. Uses images that are more representative of the diverse Western Australian landscape.**

5. Conclusion

In summary, WALGA considers the EM-SAP is an important initiative to advance the considerations of climate change in emergency management decision-making and supports several of the actions proposed in the EM-SAP Discussion Paper, noting that more information about the resourcing and implementation of these actions is required. It is imperative that Local Governments are engaged in adaptation planning as they are best placed to identify local challenges and conditions. However, the State Government should lead all EM-SAP adaptation actions and provide adequate resourcing to Local Governments to assist them with their local adaptation planning and implementation activities.

Overall, Local Governments welcome the provision of additional support, guidance, data and tools that will assist them in better understanding their climate risks and ability to plan emergency management adaptation actions. However, WALGA's EM-SAP consultation identified issues to be addressed and opportunities for improvement that can inform the development of the final EM-SAP. In addition, this submission highlights the importance of a coordinated approach to the preparation and delivery of the 7 SAPS.

WALGA appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the EM-SAP Discussion Paper and looks forward to continuing to work with SEMC to ensure the final EM-SAP incorporates WALGA's feedback and meets the needs of Local Governments as an essential emergency management sector partner. WALGA also acknowledges the valuable input of WA Local Governments in the EM-SAP Consultation.

For more information on this submission, please contact WALGA's Executive Manager, Policy, Nicole Matthews via email on nmatthews@walga.asn.au or phone 08 9213 2039.

6. APPENDIX ONE Relevant WALGA Advocacy Positions

8.1 Emergency Management Principles

1. *The State Government bears fundamental responsibility for emergency management and has the role of providing strategic guidance, support and services for emergency management activities in Western Australia.*
2. *The State Government should provide financial and resourcing support as necessary to enable Local Governments to adequately deliver their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Framework.*
3. *The Local Government Sector should be engaged as a partner in policy and legislative reviews that impact Local Government emergency management roles and responsibilities.*

8.2 State Emergency Management Framework

Local Governments are supported to undertake their emergency management responsibilities by a simple and streamlined State Emergency Management Framework with the primary objectives of:

1. *Protecting people, the economy, and the natural environment from disasters;*
2. *Supporting communities in preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies;*
3. *Clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for Local Government and other emergency management stakeholders;*
4. *Scalability and adaptability that supports Local Governments of varied capacity and capability; and*
5. *Supporting agency interoperability through common systems and approaches to key activities including data management, communications, and hazard management.*

8.11 Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA)

1. *The State Government should fund the implementation of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Improvement Plan endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).*
2. *A reformed LEMA system should:*
 - a. *Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of Local Governments in emergency management;*
 - b. *Simplify the reporting processes and reduce the administrative burden of maintaining compliance;*
 - c. *Provide a suite of scalable tools and guidance materials that are accessible through an online knowledge hub;*
 - d. *Build the emergency management capacity and capability of Local Governments through the provision of targeted training, exercising support, human resources and sustainable funding;*
 - e. *Assist Local Governments to continue to deliver their core business activities and provide public information during an emergency event;*
 - f. *Improve the connectivity of Local Governments' various risk management and hazard planning processes through an integrated approach; and*
 - g. *Enable resource sharing and collaboration across the Local Government sector.*

4.1 Climate Change

Local Government acknowledges:

- 1. The science is clear: climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.*
- 2. Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.*
- 3. Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.*
- 4. A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.*

Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.

Local Government is calling for:

- 1. Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.*
- 2. Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.*

5.4.3 Betterment (resilience)

The Local Government sector supports increased funding for the replacement or restoration of damaged assets to a more resilient standard following an event.

5.4.4 Planning for risk management and recovery plans

The Local Government sector supports access to additional expertise to assist with assessing and planning/designing for recovery projects and designated funding to Local Government for the development of emergency risk management plans and recovery plans.

7. APPENDIX TWO Local Government Consultation on the Western Australian Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) Discussion Paper: Summary Report

[Local Government Consultation on the Western Australian Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan \(EM-SAP\) Discussion Paper: Summary Report](#)