

Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Review

Draft LEMA Improvement Plan: Local
Government Testing Outcomes Report

May 2023



1. Introduction

In 2021, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) was granted National Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP) funding for a Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Review and WALGA was allocated AWARE Funding to lead a consultation with Local Governments to ensure a sector-led approach.

The LEMA Review officially commenced in March 2022 as a partnership between DFES and WALGA. To ensure that the LEMA Review findings were well founded and representative, WALGA set out with the aim to engage between 60% to 80% of the 139 WA Local Governments and to ensure the inclusion of a diverse cross section of Local Governments of different sizes, locations and risk profiles. From April to December 2022, WALGA investigated the strengths and weaknesses of the current LEMA model and explored several improvement opportunities in a consultation process that included 10 in-depth interviews, 10 interactive workshops and an online survey. One hundred Western Australian Local Governments (72%) participated in the consultation process. A detailed overview of the consultation methods and outcomes are presented in [WALGA's LEMA Review Issues Paper](#), [WALGA's LEMA Review Survey Report](#) and an independent [LEMA Review Workshop Consultation Report](#).

WALGA's [LEMA Review Consultation with Western Australian Local Governments: Project Summary and Recommendations Report](#) summarises the key findings of WALGA's LEMA Review project and makes the following recommendations to inform a LEMA Improvement Plan:

1. DFES and the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) approve and secure funding for a three-year LEMA Improvement Project to implement the LEMA Review improvement actions (August 2023 - August 2026).
2. As part of the LEMA Improvement Project, a position be established within WALGA to work closely with DFES to pilot new LEMA approaches with LGs.
3. The State Government increase the emergency management resourcing for Local Governments that currently lack emergency management capacity and capability.
4. The State Government develop a simpler and streamlined State Emergency Management Framework with improved communications, guidance and digital tools for Local Governments to assist them to meet their LEMA obligations.
5. SEMC abolish the current one-size-fits-all LEMA model template and develop a suite of LEMA guidance material and practical tools; and
6. The State Government develop new LEMA approaches that focus more on building the emergency management capacity and capability of the sector through the provision of training, exercising support and targeted investment, rather than a compliance focus.

Informed by WALGA's consultation with Local Government, DFES prepared a Draft LEMA Improvement Plan (the Plan) that responded to each of WALGA's recommendations. During April and May 2023, WALGA tested the Plan's proposed deliverables and schedule of tasks with a sample of diverse Western Australian (WA) Local Governments to evaluate the level of support from the sector and to identify any issues or gaps that should be considered.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of WALGA's Local Government testing outcomes to be considered by the DFES LEMA Review project team in the final revision of

the LEMA Improvement Plan. A LEMA Improvement Plan, which will include implementation actions, will be submitted to the SEMC for endorsement in August 2023.

2. Methods and analysis

To test the Plan with the Local Government sector, WALGA conducted 12 in-depth interviews with representatives from a selection of Local Governments and conducted one focus group session with WALGA's Local Government Emergency Management Advisory Group (LGEMAG), which was attended by EM representatives from a further 18 Local Governments. In total, 30 WA Local Governments were involved in testing the Plan (refer to Appendix 1).

Each of the interviews and focus group sessions included:

- A presentation of WALGA's LEMA Review consultation outcomes and key recommendations.
- A presentation of the objectives, key deliverables and schedule of tasks proposed in the Draft LEMA Review Improvement Plan developed by DFES.
- A constructive feedback discussion with Local Government emergency management representatives on the objectives, key deliverables, tasks, timeframes, risks and gaps of the Plan (See Appendix 2 for the guiding discussion questions).

The interviews and focus group sessions were recorded and then transcribed using voice-to-text software, Otter. The transcriptions were analysed thematically to determine the perceived strengths, concerns and priority actions of the Plan. Quotes were carefully selected to illustrate the key points that were raised in the testing discussions and to ensure that the voice of Local Government was captured.

3. Results

3.1 General sentiments

Overall, the LG representatives who participated in a testing session responded positively to the objectives, deliverables and tasks proposed in the Plan. Participant comments included:

By looking at [the Plan] I feel like you've captured it. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

I think there's a lot of good stuff in this overall.... It feels like we've been listened to... It takes into account the diversity of Local Governments and the diversity of our ability to respond... I'm really pleased to see what's happened so far; I just hope it continues. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

I think anything that happens in the future can only be an improvement...The idea that there will be a simplified LEMA is a great idea and that there will be an electronic LEMA, a knowledge hub and everything else in the Plan is fantastic (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

I think [the Plan] is really thorough. It covers a lot... I think a lot of really good work's been done in the [LEMA] review and the level of engagement and the extent you've gone to

include a huge variety of Local Governments, and in different ways, is really good. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

I think what is being proposed is great in trying to address some of the shortfalls and some of the confusion of Local Governments...I think [the Plan] covers things pretty well. It's a lot, a big scope... (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

From my perspective this is great...The deliverables and the way it's set out, it's all there. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

3.2 Components of the plan that will have the biggest impact for Local Governments

3.2.1 Digital Hub with updated and scalable templates and tools

The testing sessions confirmed that a LEMA digital knowledge hub, that provides a suite of scalable templates, guidelines, tools, case studies, grant opportunities and training modules, is considered the most important and impactful component of the Plan by Local Governments.

I think the most crucial component in this space in this first 12-month period is those templates that we can utilise. It will help make things easier and using the knowledge and having the hub of information that people can grab will make the role much easier. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

Local Governments with limited EM capability and maturity indicated that a digital knowledge hub would be particularly beneficial when inexperienced and new Local Government staff members are tasked with developing or reviewing LEMA.

Having the knowledge hub, and these resources in a centralised area will give Local Governments an opportunity to get up to the next level without having to put a lot of work into getting new staff members' knowledge base up. So, if they have questions, everything is in the same space, and they can look it up. At this point of time, you have to go through your DEMA or go ask another Local Government how they do things. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

I really think a knowledge hub for Local Governments to access is a great start... The hub is going to be a big impact for all Local Governments... If we had one place we could go to, I wouldn't have to go searching the SEMC [website and documents]. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

Some participants believed a knowledge hub would also help maintain the capability of Local Governments when it is reduced by the departure of key person dependent emergency management staff.

It's important to build up the emergency management [EM] capability within a Local Government. We've actually lost a lot of our EM capability [through staff members leaving] and it's important that those capabilities are maintained. Having the resources available through a digital hub, like the standard templates, will help at least maintain some level of expertise in the Local Government. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

While the digital knowledge hub was well supported by regional and remote LGs for reasons associated with staff capacity building, knowledge retention and resource sharing, participants representing Local Governments with greater EM capability and maturity also saw the benefit of a digital LEMA system. It was suggested that a secure online portal that enabled critical LEMA information to be updated and shared between Local Governments and Hazard Management Agencies (HMAs) was needed. A participant representing a large peri urban Local Government stated:

The real big ticket, which the sooner this can get done the better, is the digital and online access and portal, because this is the only way these arrangements will get used properly and people will be able to find them... If there's a way of having a portal that is for agency use only that would be ideal. A place where agencies could have access to the unrestricted LEMA with all the infrastructure information, contacts, all of the confidential stuff that people need to know when you're using the LEMA. (Large metropolitan LG, Band 1)

It was noted that the prospect of a digital portal and a knowledge hub is something that has been discussed for several years.

It's not new. It's been identified that all of this stuff should be digital and electronic. It's been discussed for 10 years, so they just need to fund it. (Large metropolitan LG, Band 1)

Some participants expressed frustration that the online platform to support LEMA development and review has in fact worsened during this time.

They've actually gone the other way with the SEMC stuff and put it on the WA.gov website which is super clunky and you can't find anything. (Large metropolitan LG, Band 1)

Other participants highlighted how valuable a digital knowledge hub could be in providing a platform for the sharing of lessons learned, exercising examples and case studies.

The things I've found most beneficial is when you hear from people who have been involved in an emergency; when you hear from people on the ground about the things they've learned. Making an effort to get the stories of people that have been involved in these roles, or on the ground...opportunities to share that type of learning is really good. (Large metropolitan LG, Band 1)

If after these big emergency events, you could develop some online case studies, lessons learned about what went well and what we learned from it, that would be so valuable. (Large metropolitan LG, Band 1)

Despite overwhelming support for an online LEMA system, a couple of participants raised questions around how a digital knowledge hub and online portal would be maintained and utilised.

I think that while people think [knowledge hubs] are good ideas, unless you dedicate time to it, people only go to it when there's a problem and then you might not have any ability to access it anyway. [If we get a knowledge hub] then I think there should be training around that, or workshops, like regional get togethers where we could go through go through the stuff on the knowledge hub and make use of it. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

3.2.2 EM training gap analysis and development of new modules

The training gap analysis and development of training modules was identified as a priority component of the Plan. Some participants expressed that many Local Government staff, Elected Members and Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) members lack the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles in emergency management effectively. Further, it was also mentioned that currently there is not a good understanding of what emergency management training is available for Local Governments and that the training that is available is not well classified into beginner, intermediate and advanced.

We're asking people to become Recovery Coordinators and experts in emergency management, developing LEMAs and running LEMCs, with only the basic amount of training. I think that's one area across the State where EM falls down. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

DFES needs to make it clear to all Local Governments what training is on offer, apart from the WALGA training. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

Training is something that the sooner it can be developed and delivered the better. It doesn't need to be a whole day or even a half day. Maybe an hour or two. Something that's delivered online or through Teams...Most people in Local Government don't understand or are a bit apprehensive of what their role is in Emergency Management. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

Training was viewed by some participants as critical for clarifying local level emergency management roles and responsibilities:

We have WALGA's training for Local Recovery Training and Emergency Management Introductions, otherwise there is not much else. You've got a lot of key personal that sit on LEMCs that are supposed to be involved with LEMA but they don't actually know what it means. The training should be about identifying the roles within those arrangements and making sure people are aware of what roles they need to play. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

I think the training part will have the biggest impact... We need to make sure that [emergency management] training is part and parcel of the [Local Government] organisation and is promoted as part of the reporting framework to make sure people [across departments] know that these emergencies are real and don't just wait until it happens. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

While the development of new online training modules was supported, particularly for training that could be easily accessed by Local Government staff and LEMC members, some participants emphasised the value of face-to-face EM training and raised concern that this was missing from the Plan.

For point number 4 [Objective 1], the wording in the Plan should be training online or in person based on need... I know we're going onto the digital world, but what WALGA delivers in person is very, very effective and that personal engagement you just don't get online...When you put people in a room together, it sparks discussions, it builds relationships. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

I remember towards the end of last year, myself and a few other staff members came to Perth for WALGA training. I found that to be very, very important because the lead person [trainer] was someone who's an expert in EM. We go a lot out of that. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

While the development of formal training was supported, some participants emphasised that emergency management learning and skills development comes in many forms, particularly through mentoring and exercising. Moreover, the role of the District Emergency Management Advisors (DEMA) was highlighted by many participants as critical to LEMA learning and development for Local Governments and the success of the roll out of a new LEMA model:

The DEMAs have a wealth of experience, they are so helpful. (Large metropolitan LG, Band 1)

The DEMA representative is amazing. I can ring her, email her for anything... In terms of advice from DFES, the DEMA is our source of truth. She knows everything and I can ask her a question and get an answer... It's an important thing in the region that we have some sort of support, and someone we can talk to who's got all the information and knowledge. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

Participants representing other Local Governments however, expressed that they had minimal mentoring support from their DEMA, indicating that the level of LEMA support provided by the DEMA position is currently key person and district dependent.

Exercising support was also presented as an important aspect of training that needs to be emphasised in the Plan.

Going back to exercising, the more effort that can go into supporting, encouraging, following up on exercising at all levels and between Local Government, State agencies and individual teams the better... People really enjoy it, it gathers a lot of energy and you learn stuff out of it, it's very tangible... I think [exercising] could be emphasised in [the Plan] and that it includes all levels of operation of Local Government: Elected Members, the executive team, lower-level staff, staff on the groups... It works on so many levels. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

3.2.3 A LEMA Maturity Model

While most participants were unfamiliar with the terminology and needed further explanation, a maturity model assessment for LEMA that could help Local Governments identify their current EM maturity, capacity and capability, inform investment decisions and guide improvement was well supported.

I haven't seen [a maturity model] applied anywhere, but it certainly made a lot of sense when I read it. I thought it was a really good idea because I think it will help that focus on resourcing. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

From a management point of view, the maturity assessment - an understanding where we sit in the context of the rest of the sector - would be useful, because frankly I wouldn't have a clue and I'm sure most other Local Governments don't either. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

I think the [maturity model] is a great idea, particularly for smaller Local Governments to see where they're at. It's not a term I'm familiar with but the way you've explained it, I think there are a lot of benefits associated with that. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

The maturity assessment and guidelines to how you get from maturity level A to B and what that might look like will have big effect. It would be really good to understand what the scale is and if I'm currently level one what we need to do to be level 2... As a Council you could then determine whether it's worth the investment in or not. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

While supported, it was highlighted that if the maturity model is a self-evaluation tool it may not provide accurate or comparative results. It was also emphasised that any maturity model should be simple and function as a checklist of best practice:

...so you don't have to write long swathes of information to try and sell the fact that you are doing or not doing something. Just a simple process about things like: if you've got a policy document, sub-plans, are all your recovery roles appropriately trained, what's the attendance of the meetings like. A tick box of best practices. (Large metropolitan LG, Band 1)

While it was suggested that Local Government band size could be a good indicator to use in a LEMA maturity model framework, one participant cautioned against this approach noting that despite being a Band 4, they considered their Local Government to have a high level of emergency management maturity.

3.2.4 A Local Government Emergency Management Policy

A single policy statement that consolidates all Local Government emergency management roles and responsibilities in one document was well supported by participating Local Government representatives.

The more that the information [that Local Governments need] is in one place and easy to understand and access the better. It makes more sense. It is complex the way it is at the moment that different parts of information for Local Governments sit all over the place, so you have to join the dots with it all. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

I look at our own policy and think to myself 'what is missing?'. So, if we had an authoritative document that we can take from, use as a proforma, that would be very, very helpful. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

Knowing exactly what [Local Governments] are responsible for doing and should be doing can only help.... We've got 150 other things to do under legislation...An understanding of our emergency management responsibilities, with all the Work, Health and Safety changes, it's important that that's all ironed out. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

Some participants, however, raised the challenge of consolidating all the roles and responsibilities of LG in EM into one policy document when Local Governments' emergency management obligations are specified across several different pieces of legislation. It was

questioned whether the policy statement would attempt to cover the breadth of Local Governments' EM and preparedness responsibilities or just those stipulated by the *Emergency Management Act 2005*.

There's the Emergency Management Act, then the Bushfires Act and you get all these nuances... The constant interactions between all that different legislation means you are often not sure what piece you're actually meant to be looking at. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

Despite strong support for a single policy document, there was some concern expressed that focusing too much on changing the SEMC policy and procedures framework might deflect attention away from the practical LEMA changes that Local Governments are seeking.

[The Local Government policy statement] would be a nice to have... [but] my biggest worry is that it's reinvented and we're starting again. Like changing the whole status of the State (EM) Plans just to extract the Local Government information... You would hate SEMC to spend two years turning all those plans back again to what they were [i.e., a single Local Government Policy Statement]. That would be a nightmare... I think if they can extract out the Local Government aspect and consolidate the information that would be good... a cut and paste. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

It needs to be simple and it needs to be sitting with your Emergency Management officer or your deputy CEO. One place that outlines what our LEMA needs to be doing, what our Local Government needs to have in place. Really simple. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

3.3 Components of the plan with the least impact for Local Government

Participants did not strongly oppose any of the objectives, deliverables or tasks proposed in the Plan.

I don't see any flaws in anything in the Plan that's been provided. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

As long as [the Plan] delivers on all of the objectives from beginning to end it's fine. It's fascinating you've got 72% buy in [from Local Government]. There's obviously a lot of us that want to see this done. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

However, reflecting the consultation findings, opinions regarding the integration of emergency management into Local Government business as usual and with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IPR) were mixed.

I need a bit more clarity about the integration into business as usual. Because to me, emergencies are not part of everyday operations, and what's required to recover is very dependent on the [scale and type] of emergency. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

I struggle with the alignment between LEMA and our IPR [proposed in the Plan], because for me our integrated planning is around our strategic long-term planning, whereas our emergency management is very operational and very reactionary. While I think Local Governments should certainly be resourcing emergency management in the long-term

budgeting, I see these as quite separate processes. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

Yes, you could integrate emergency management into Local Governments planning frameworks and strategic community plans, but you've got to think about how the LEMA and the LEMC are integrated with other agencies, because that's actually the piece that's missing from my perspective. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

I think the ideas of making emergency management part of the business as usual is a great step forward. Unfortunately, what usually happens is that people don't give emergency management much thought until such time there is an emergency. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

We have to do all these things because of the requirements of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework but unfortunately emergency management is not part of it. I wish it could be integrated. It's not only about streamlining reporting, it's about making sure that emergency management is actively being promoted in the organisation, so that the executive can be aware and the staff members can be aware, that it's part and parcel of the organisation's risk management. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

3.4 Schedule of tasks and timeframes

Overall, participants supported the schedule of tasks and the overarching timeframe of the proposed LEMA Improvement implementation project, however there were some insightful comments and questions raised by participants that warrant consideration.

Most notably, it was observed that the Plan was ambitious, particularly with regards to what has been proposed to be delivered in the first year as part of Objective 1.

The timeframe could be a challenge, because looking at what's there, it's a lot, and if it's going to be crammed into that time, into 3 three years, it might be a struggle. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

I'm a little worried about the timeline of the implementation, just because these things don't usually go to plan. Particularly, the first 12 months is quite ambitious. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

While most participants agreed the deliverables proposed for the second year (i.e., listed under Objective 2) were critical components of the Plan, there were some comments regarding the scheduling of Objective 1 and Objective 2 tasks. Notably, some participants indicated that the deliverables and tasks set out in Objective 2 should precede or be delivered simultaneously to the deliverables proposed as part of Objective 1. Other participants considered the tasks listed under Objective 2 as underpinning support actions and State-level system changes that should be embedded into the project from the onset, rather than practical project outputs per se.

It almost feels like you're starting at the end point. I'm wondering if Objective 1 might be better off being done first and then the other stuff developed based on that... The online resource and everything else are just to make it easy. It's just a tool at the end. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

It was also suggested that the emergency management maturity assessment, that includes an audit of all Local Governments internal and supporting EM human resources (i.e., Local Government EM officers and access to CESMs, DEMAs, DFES Preparedness Advisors etc) should be delivered as the first implementation action of the Plan. The rationale was that this knowledge would help inform the development of scalable templates, identify resource gaps and inform Local Government EM investment priorities. Other participants noted that Objective 2, Key Deliverable 4 (review of the grant processes and renewing the funding model) that is currently scheduled for 2025 is far too late in the project timeline and should be given precedence.

It's a pity that the review of the grant processes isn't starting in the first year... The majority of Local Governments just don't have the capacity, the knowledge or experience with grants. You've got to be a wordsmith, you've got to know how to do research... I think one component should be to help Local Governments prepare grant documentation, and also the acquittal side of things. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

I've had grants acquitted for a quarter of a million dollars that are less onerous than a \$2500 Aware grant. Seriously, it's not worth the effort to apply for it. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

Why a grant process? That question has got to be asked. Another simple, more appropriate process for allocating funds needs to be considered. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

Despite the comments indicating that the deliverables of Objective 2 should be addressed earlier on in a LEMA Improvement project, most Local Governments emphasised the importance of seeing some practical outcomes as soon as possible and some were wary of the components in the plan that proposed further consultation and review.

I'm cautious of objectives from the State saying that we're going to do further review. This Plan should not be about identifying and implementing strategies, it should be about really improving [LEMA], making it better, making it more streamlined. We're looking for really clear outcomes in terms of the six areas WALGA is recommending...I just hope by July 2024 there's a better way and clear solutions and you're not coming back to me again and saying what do you need or can you share. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

3.5 Gaps

Several participants highlighted that WALGA's recommendation that the State Government increase emergency management resourcing for Local Governments that currently lack capacity and capability is not adequately addressed in the Plan. One Local Government representative noted that despite WALGA recommending additional human resources for Local Governments for emergency management officers and to retain and expand the support provided by DFES positions such as the CESMs, DEMAs and the Community Preparedness Advisors, this is not explicitly addressed in the Plan and should be emphasised.

In addition, while the views on scaling up some aspects of LEMA planning to a District Level are mixed, some participants noted that District Level planning was an area in the Plan that should receive more attention. One participant felt that it would be useful if the Plan included an action to:

... assist with the management of emergency management coordination at a district level. For this part of the world, it would be very, very beneficial if some of those decisions could be made at a district level rather than just waiting for the event to happen... I think the whole of Deliverable 2 [Objective 2] should say 'Investigate district level planning. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

The District Level planning that DFES highlighted in their presentation doesn't seem to be part of the Plan. Considering that a lot of the deliverables of Objective 2 mirror what a district plan should have in it or do, is that [component] going to be held off, or discussed at any stage? (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

A couple of Local Governments also questioned whether the Plan should include further consideration of legislative change to transfer some of Local Governments responsibility from to the State or the district level.

Was there a consideration in the Plan for legislative amendment, so instead of the State having to allocate all these resources to upskill in or training for Local Government they are just made responsible for our emergency management, and we just become stakeholder who has a role to play just like the hospital or the Police...Even for the LEMC, for forming them. There's no real value that they play in most small towns. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

3.6 Concerns and risks

The biggest concern that emerged from the testing discussions related to the potential failure to implement the proposed deliverables of the LEMA Improvement Plan.

There's a risk to leaving things exactly as they are and I think that risk is probably greater than the risk of trying to put this plan in place. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

Participants expressed concern that there is currently no funding to implement the Plan and that the delivery of the Plan is contingent on securing Commonwealth Grant Funding.

The biggest risk would be a lack of funding over the three-year period or the timeframes get pushed back. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

I'll believe it when I see what the funding is and where they're going to get their people from and how they're going to train them to ensure we're all singing off the same song sheet. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

It would be a shame if the State Government, DFES and the SEMC does not recognise the need to allocate the budget for the implementation [of the Plan], because if we don't get the funding and things don't progress, everything that's been done to date has been a waste of time. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

Other participants touched on the risk of creating unintended consequences or developing a new LEMA model that is less fit-for-purpose than the current model.

The risk is that you don't do it or you do a crap job of it and everyone goes 'well that was a bit of a waste of time'. So, it's all good going through this consultation process and doing this work but if nothing actually comes of it there is a reputation risk. Next time there's a

consultation or review everyone goes 'what's the point'. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

The risk is that we're so focused on simplifying things that we stuff it up. That by trying to reduce red tape you create an unintended consequence... We need to be careful that if we are going to declutter the system we consider what the unintended consequences are likely be. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

A couple of smaller Local Governments expressed concern that while the LEMA Improvement project may result in changes to templates and tools, it may not result in the systematic change needed to address the underlying structural issues and capability gaps.

The only risk is that the State tailors the templates and plans but the expectations still remain the same. That is, if an emergency occurs, we're still expected to perform all these functions that we don't have the resources for. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

Conversely, some of the larger and more mature Local Governments were concerned about a complete overhaul of the LEMA system and that the new LEMA model may be too restrictive.

We just need to keep things as simple as we can.... My biggest worry with any review is reinventing/starting again. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

We agree that that the LEMA must include a template that's scalable. We don't want to be forced to dumb ours down. If a new template was legislated, we would want to keep our document, it just works so well for us. We used a lot of the templates that SEMC provided in the LEMA model template, the big one. (Large metropolitan LG representative, Band 1)

A few participants expressed concern about the timeframes and the risks associated with meeting expectations, retaining stakeholder interest and communicating LEMA improvement outputs with the sector.

About the timeline, it's important to keep the ball rolling, I think that is the key. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

I think there's a risk around a three-year program and people losing interest. You'll get resource changes and people will come and go. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

There was also some concern expressed about the proposed staff resourcing to the LEMA Improvement Project.

A lot of resources are allocated to DFES policy officers. State government people write a lot of stuff that becomes bureaucratic, indoctrinated... More DFES Staff is not a good idea. Half the money will be spent on overheads and not actually delivering the results and then if there is a flood or a fire they'll get pulled off this project to go and assist.... The funding should be allocated to expert consultants as opposed to in house staff which leads to other outcomes. They say they're spending time on this, but they are actually spending their time on other things. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

In regard to the resourcing of the LEMA Improvement Project, it's very DFES heavy. It would be great if there were a couple more people in there that were Local Government

centric... We're talking about getting assistance from this person and that person from DFES. I can understand that from a State perspective but what about the opportunity for WALGA being provided with funding to employ its own emergency management officers to assist. (Small regional LG representative, Band 2)

3.7 Other comments

There were a couple of final comments made by participants that warrant consideration.

Two participants suggested that a Communication Strategy should be included in the LEMA Improvement Plan that specifically outlines how the Local Government sector will be engaged throughout the duration of the project and updated on outputs.

I think it's very important to have regular updates on where the [LEMA] Project is up to: What's been achieved? Has the timeframe been achieved? Has a budget been made available? I think that it's very important to maintain interest. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

People are obviously interested and keen to be involved. But three years is a long time to run a project... I think you need some sort of regular process to check in, to make sure that you're on track against those objectives. (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

A participant also suggested that given the official role of LEMCs in LEMA development and review, the committee could play a role in inputting, piloting and testing new LEMA products and processes as they are developed. This may be an effective mechanism to strengthen the engagement and productivity of the LEMC meetings that was identified in consultation as lacking.

No one knows the purpose of what the LEMC is, what they're doing, it becomes an update thing. There's no work being done, there's no outcomes. Could you use the opportunity of all these people getting together at these committee meetings to help? If you come back to the purpose of the LEMC, it's supposed to guide, inform, advise and make decisions in terms of putting these LEMA things together. Is there an opportunity for the LEMCs to help deliver this Plan. We're all obligated to hold a LEMC, maybe this needs to be part of the delivery model? (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

3.8 Local Governments LEMA Visions

To inform the wording of a LEMA Strategic Vision, participants were asked what their hopes were of an improved LEMA model. The participants were critical of the wordy LEMA vision examples provided and emphasised that any vision statements included in the Plan should be succinct, plain English and practical. Moreover, some participants were disapproving of the vision statement example provided by DFES that stated that Local Governments will be supported to “drive a shared sense of community responsibility in the development of effective LEMA”. These participants noted that this is not the responsibility of Local Governments nor the main objective of LEMA. The hopes that some participants have for an improved LEMA model include:

I'm just hoping for a user-friendly document that is actually of value if there is an emergency and it is a reference guide that can be utilised. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

A simple and practical document that is aligned with PPRR, that when an emergency occurs we are using, and there is benefit in having these documents” (Large regional LG representative, Band 1)

Our hope is that an improved LEMA model will be something that can be utilised by all Local Governments through WA. You could pretty that up [in a vision statement] but when boiled down to the basics [we hope for] something that’s useful and effective. (Small regional LG representative, Band 3)

I hope Local Governments will really understand the reasons why they need to be part of the emergency management space; understand the role we play in the response and preparedness space. That they understand the ancillary role we play there and how that influences how we rebuild our communities after something actually occurs. (Small regional LG representative, Band 4)

4. Summary and LEMA Improvement Plan revision suggestions

In summary, the Draft LEMA Improvement Plan testing session discussions validated the support for WALGA’s LEMA Review Recommendations that:

1. DFES and SEMC approve and secure funding for a three-year LEMA Improvement Project to implement the LEMA Review improvement actions (August 2023 - August 2026).
2. As part of the LEMA Improvement Project, a position be established within WALGA to work closely with the DFES to pilot new LEMA approaches with Local Governments.
3. The State Government increase the emergency management resourcing for Local Governments that currently lack emergency management capacity and capability.
4. The State Government develop a simpler and streamlined State Emergency Management Framework with improved communications, guidance and digital tools for Local Governments to assist them to meet their LEMA obligations.
5. SEMC abolish the current one-size-fits-all LEMA model template and develop a suite of LEMA guidance material and practical tools; and
6. The State Government develop new LEMA approaches that focus more on building the emergency management capacity and capability of the sector through the provision of training, exercising support and targeted investment, rather than a compliance focus.

Many participants commended the LEMA Review consultation process and outputs and expressed support for the objectives, key deliverables and tasks proposed in the Plan. There were no objectives, key deliverables and tasks that were strongly opposed by the sector.

Components of the Plan that participants believe will have the biggest impact are:

- A digital hub with updated and scalable templates and tools
- EM training gap analysis and development of new modules
- A LEMA Maturity Model
- A Local Government Emergency Management Policy

While supportive of all the objectives and deliverables proposed, there were some questions about the scheduling of tasks that need further consideration. Moreover, there was some concern that the Plan might be too ambitious, and questions about the feasibility of meeting the task targets proposed in the first 12 months were raised.

Many participants noted how comprehensive the Plan was in addressing the consultation outcomes, and the only gaps that were mentioned related to:

- an understated focus on actions to increase resourcing for Local Governments who lack EM capacity and capability;
- the exclusion of a key deliverable to investigate options for district level emergency planning to address the resourcing constraints of smaller Local Governments; and
- consideration of legislative change for local level EM planning to transfer some responsibility for EM from the local level to the State or district level.

Clearly, the biggest concern that participants expressed relates to the current absence of funding to implement LEMA Improvement Plan actions. If the State does not allocate or secure the Disaster Ready Fund or National Disaster Risk Reduction grant funding for a LEMA Improvement Project there is a risk that Local Governments will disengage from State level EM project consultations and reform processes. There was also some concern that even if funded, the resources may be swallowed up in DFES staffing and policy development and fail to deliver the practical changes that are needed.

Informed by the feedback from Local Government emergency management representatives presented in this report, WALGA makes the following suggestions for the final revision of the LEMA Improvement Plan:

1. The key deliverables and tasks proposed in the final LEMA Improvement Plan are mapped to WALGA's six LEMA Review recommendations and related subpoints that are outlined in [LEMA Review Consultation with Western Australian Local Governments: Project Summary and Recommendations Report](#).
2. The structure of the plan is revised so the Objective 2 key deliverables and tasks are delivered simultaneously to Objective 1, and the Objective 1 key deliverables and related tasks are spread out over a two-year timeframe.
3. Prioritise the early development of a Draft Local Government Emergency Management Policy and scalable templates that can be piloted with Local Governments of various emergency management maturity and capability identified through the LEMA prioritisation process.
4. Amend the key deliverable on training to include both face-to-face and online training and emphasise the focus on exercising support for Local Governments.
5. Specify that if Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) or National Disaster Risk Reduction (NDRR) funding for a LEMA Improvement Project is approved, WALGA will be involved in the development of a project management plan that details which key deliverables will be included and what components are beyond scope and require additional funding.
6. Include contingencies in the Plan for the event that the LEMA Improvement Project is not funded through the 2023 Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) or the National Disaster Risk Reduction (NDRR) grant. Outline if and how any of the deliverables and tasks proposed can be progressed through other State funding streams.

7. Provide more detail in the Plan regarding which tasks can be achieved through the proposed LEMA Improvement Project staff resourcing, and which tasks will require the engagement of professional/expert services and additional funding.
8. Include a Communication Strategy in the LEMA Improvement Plan that outlines how DFES will continue to inform and engage the Local Government sector on LEMA Improvement actions once the LEMA Review project has been finalised.
9. Include a risk management strategy in the Plan to mitigate against the proposed DFES LEMA Improvement Project staff being deployed for emergency response, transferred internally to another project or resigning during the course of the project timeline.
10. Include a key deliverable to further investigate district emergency management planning options.
11. Include a specific task to review the roles of the DEMAs, Community Emergency Service Managers (CESMS) and Preparedness Advisors in providing targeted support to Local Governments for LEMA development and review.
12. Commence the review of the grants processes (particularly for AWARE) and reviewing of the LEMA resource model at the start of the LEMA Improvement Plan.
13. Include a task in the LEMA Improvement Project to develop a guideline for Local Governments on embedding emergency preparedness into Local Government business as usual, to raise awareness of the connections between emergency management, IPR and climate change adaptation.

WALGA acknowledges the DFES LEMA Review Project team for their preparation of the Draft LEMA Improvement Plan that has comprehensively responded to WALGA's LEMA Review Recommendations. In addition, WALGA is grateful to all the Local Government representatives who provided valuable feedback on the key deliverables, tasks and timeframes proposed in this Plan. This Local Government Testing Outcomes Report was submitted to DFES on the 24 May 2023 for the DFES LEMA Review Team to consider in the development of a final LEMA Improvement Plan. A final LEMA Improvement Plan will be presented to the LEMA Review Steering Committee in June 2023 for approval and then submitted to SEMC for their endorsement in August 2023.

Appendix 1: Local Governments represented in the Draft LEMA Improvement Plan

City of Armadale	City of Swan
City of Belmont	City of Mandurah
City of Cockburn	Shire of Morawa
Shire of Irwin	Shire of Coorow
Shire of Carnamah	Shire of Shark Bay
Shire of Lake Grace	City of Busselton
Shire of Mundaring	City of Wanneroo
City of Perth	Shire of Yalgoo
Shire of Victoria Plains	City of Greater Geraldton
City of Rockingham	Shire of Coolgardie
Shire of Northampton	Shire of Broome
Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale	Shire of Murray
City of Stirling	Shire of Harvey
Shire of Dundas	Shire of Ashburton
Shire of Capel	Shire of Coorow

Appendix 2: Draft LEMA Improvement Plan: Testing Questions

1. “What do you hope is achieved through the LEMA Improvement Plan?” i.e., your vision statement
2. How well do the objectives of the draft LEMA improvement plan address:
 - a) the issues and opportunities identified in the LEMA consultation with LGs?
 - b) the challenges your LG faces in fulfilling its LEMA obligations?
3. Can you suggest any ways these objectives could be improved to better meet the needs of your LG?
4. How well do the key deliverables and tasks proposed in the draft LEMA improvement plan address:
 - a) the LEMA issues and opportunities identified in the LEMA consultation with LG?
 - b) the needs and requirements of your LG?

5. Can you suggest any additional LEMA improvement actions that have not been included in the draft LEMA improvement plan that should be?

6. What are your views on:
 - a) the timeframe of the improvement plan implementation?

 - b) the schedule/order of key tasks to be delivered?

7. Overall, to what extent do you think the LEMA improvement plan/implementation actions will support your LG to prevent, prepare, respond, and recover from EM events?

8. What components of the plan will have the biggest impact?

9. What components of the plan will have the least impact?

10. Are there any gaps in the draft LEMA improvement plan you think necessary to improve the LEMA model?

11. Are there any risks associated with:
 - a) the implementation of actions outlined in the draft improvement plan

 - c) transitioning to new LEMA approaches?

12. Other comments/feedback