

Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Review

Local Government Survey Findings
Report
February 2023



Introduction

Western Australia (WA) is comprised of 139 Local Governments with approximately 22,000 Employees and 1220 Elected Members.

The WA Local Government Association (WALGA) is an independent, member-based, not for profit organisation representing and supporting the WA Local Government (LG) sector.

Zones are groups of geographically aligned WALGA Member Councils. There are 12 Country Zones and Five Metropolitan Zones (See Appendix 1 for Zone Maps).

LG Band allocations are determined by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (SAT) to set remuneration levels for LG Elected Members and CEOs. LGs are grouped into four band group classifications by SAT according to the roles, function, and size of a LG. Band allocation is good indicator of a LG’s size and resource capacity, with Band 4 indicating a smaller sized LG and Band 1 a larger LG.

Background

The aim of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Review Survey was to provide WA LGs with an opportunity to provide input into the LEMA Review and to validate the findings emerging from the LEMA Review interviews and workshops with LG representatives.

The LEMA Review Survey was open from October to November of 2022. **In total there were 79 LEMA Survey respondents with 66 LGs represented.**

There was representation in the Survey from both metropolitan LGs (43% Perth-Peel) and regional (57% Regional LGs), from all four LG Band groups, and from each of WALGA’s seventeen LG Zones. A full list of LG respondents by LG Zone is provided in Appendix 2.

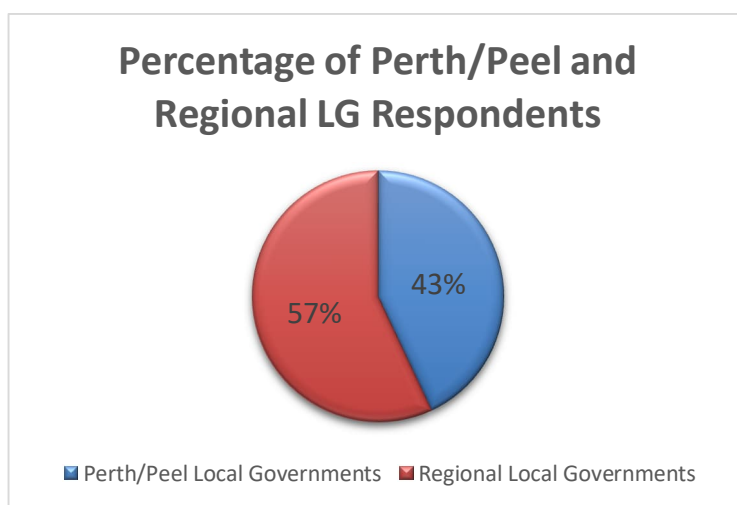


Figure 1: Percentage of Perth/Peel and Regional LG LEMA Review Survey Respondents

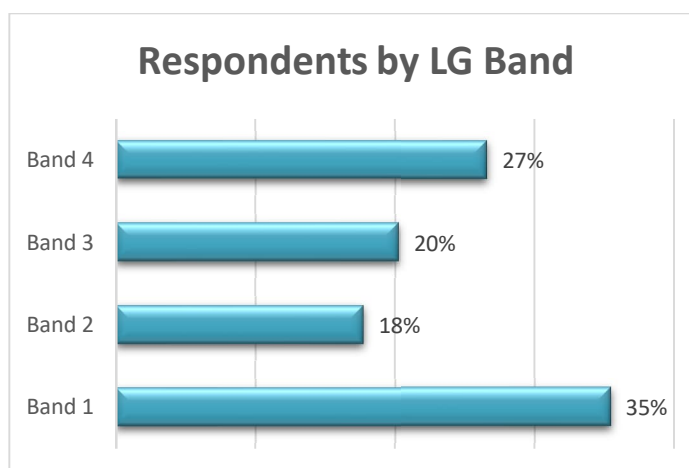


Figure 2: Percentage of LEMA Review Survey Respondents from each LG Band

Most of the Survey respondents (67%) were LG emergency management (EM) staff members. There were also responses from CEOs (13%), Elected Members (4%) and other LG staff (16%).

Table 1 Summary of LG Respondents by Role

Role	Number of respondents
CEO	10
Elected member	3
LG emergency management staff member	53
Other	13
Grand Total	79

Key Findings

1.1 The Purpose of LEMA

Overall, LG survey respondents agreed that the purpose of LEMA is:

- to support a strategic approach to local EM across Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PPRR) (79% agreed)
- to support a local collaborative multi-agency approach to EM (90% agreed), and
- to provide a practical operational guide for emergency response and early recovery (84% agreed).

According to some respondents, LEMA should also:

- inform new staff about EM roles and responsibilities
- record current EM contact details
- outline the operational functions that are the responsibility of LG
- provide all the information that may be required for an emergency event in one document
- enable collaboration between different stakeholders and neighbouring LGs to ensure community protection
- inform Hazard Management Agencies (HMAs) about the needs and context of the LG area
- support resource logistics during an event, and
- provide strategic direction for LGs across the PPRR spectrum, with some operational guidance.

Additional feedback indicated that to better fulfil its purpose LEMA documentation should:

- be separated into strategic and operational documents/templates
- be more clearly split into the areas of PPRR
- be simplified and made more user-friendly for an LG audience
- be scalable and flexible to accommodate different LG capacities and capabilities
- focus more on the legislative responsibilities of LG in recovery, prevention, and preparedness,
- remove generic state-level information, and
- enable more collaboration and resource sharing between adjoining LGs.

1.2 Practical use of LEMA

Overall, there was strong agreement (90% of respondents) that LEMA documents should be restructured so they are more practical for LGs to use.

- 75% of respondents agreed that structuring the main LEMA document into Prevention and Preparedness (before), Incident Operations (during) and Recovery (after) would improve usability. Agreement on this was higher for regional LGs (82%) than for Perth-Peel LGs (65%).
- 85% of respondents agreed that streamlining the main LEMA document to include critical information for operational response and to establish early recovery would improve usability.
- 80% agree that removing generic information on hazard management from the LEMA Model Guideline and using more links to the State EM Framework guidance documents would improve useability. Agreement was higher amongst regional LGs (90%) than Perth-Peel LGs (81%)
- Interestingly, Perth-Peel LGs (65% of respondents) were less likely to agree that structuring the main LEMA into before, during, after would improve its useability when compared to regional LGs (82% of respondents).

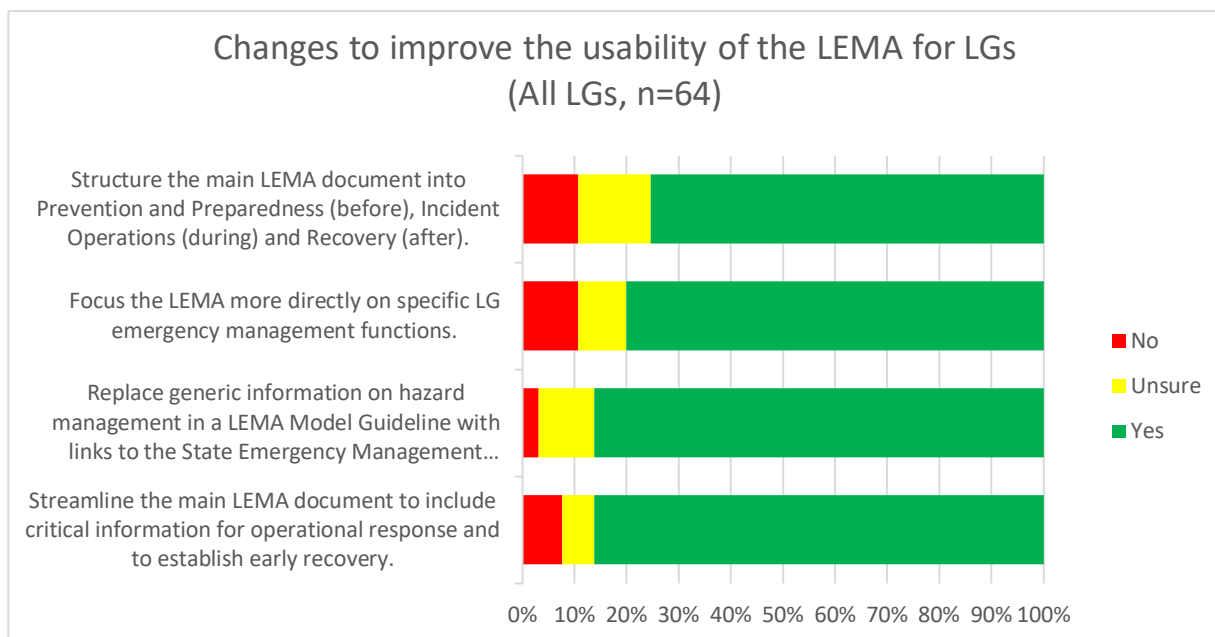


Figure 3: Changes to improve the usability of the LEMA for LGs

1.3 Critical Local Information for LEMAs

- The Survey found that the most critical local information that should be included in LEMA documentation is the EM roles, responsibilities and contacts, EM resources and step-by-step procedures for LGs when an event occurs.
- Most LGs respondents indicated that local welfare centre information, agreements, MOUs and commitments, critical Infrastructure, a risk register of priority hazards, demographics and at-risk groups, and local sites of high cultural, community or environmental values should be included in the main LEMA document.
- While still considered important by a significant proportion of respondents, Local EM strategies and policies, special considerations (e.g., events, times of reduced volunteers) and incident support meeting locations were considered the least important information.

The text responses to this question provided additional insight regarding critical information for LEMA.

- It was noted that the main LEMA document should only include critical information needed for an emergency event and provide a snapshot of the local context.
- Some respondents warned against including extraneous, duplicated and HMA response procedures that are recorded elsewhere. It was suggested that non-critical information could be put into an appendix or accessed via links.
- A few regional LGs also agreed that their LGs main LEMA document could be better connected with neighbouring LGs, to foster a more coordinated and connected district level approach.

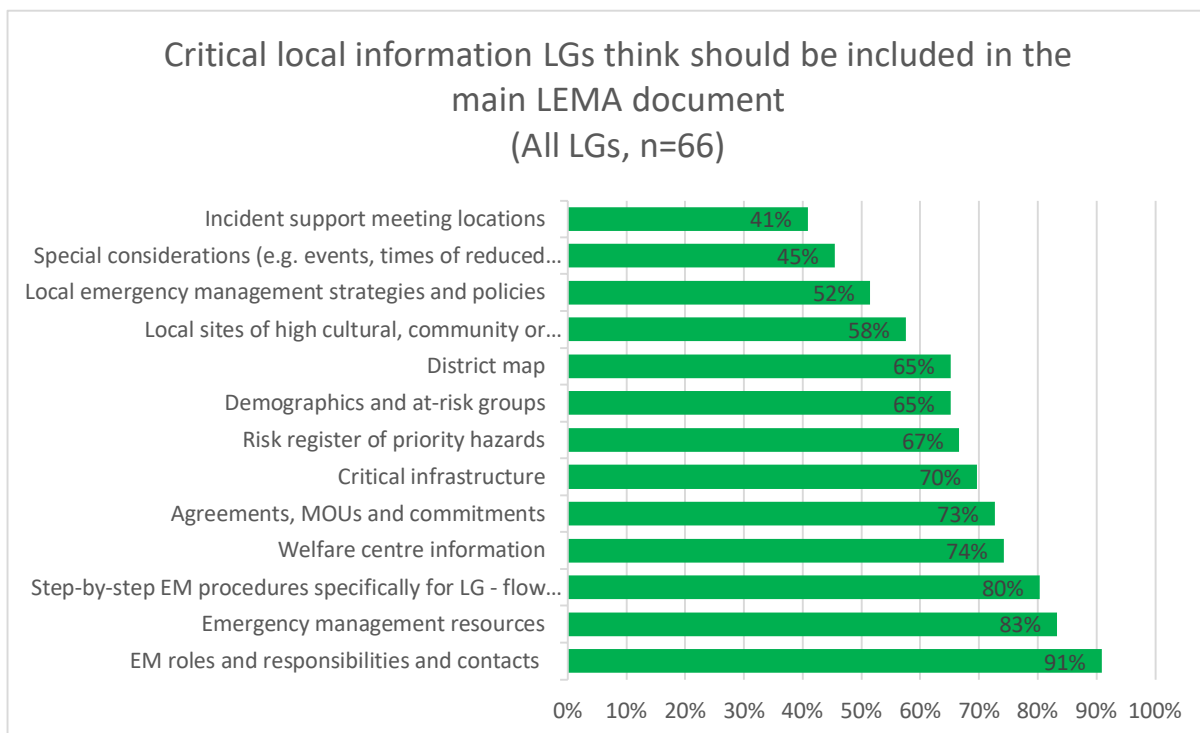


Figure 4: Critical local information LGs think should be included in the main LEMA document

1.4 Plans and Sub-plans included in LEMA

- Reflecting LGs legislative responsibilities and LEMA compliance requirements, a Local Recovery Plan is considered the most important sub-plan of LEMA (86% of respondents).
- Most respondents indicated that Local Communication Strategy/Public Information Plans (77%), Animal Welfare Plans (71%), Evacuation Plans and Welfare Plans (65%) were important sub-plans of LEMA.
- Responses regarding the inclusion of an emergency risk management plan (53%), hazard specific plans (50%) and local response plans (44%) were mixed.
- There was the less support for LEMA to include resource logistic plans (36%) and business continuity plans (35%).
- Only 17% of respondents believed Local Event Plans should be included as a LEMA subplan.

The related text responses provided further insights into LEMA plans and sub plans.

- The text responses highlighted that there is substantial confusion within the LG sector with regards to what LEMA constitutes. It is evident that some LGs consider the main overarching LEMA document as the LEMA and other LGs understand LEMA as the full suite of EM plans, processes and systems, that includes but is broader than the main LEMA document.
- Therefore, while some respondents indicated certain information and subplans should not be included in the LEMA they still indicated that the plans and information should be included as links or appendices.

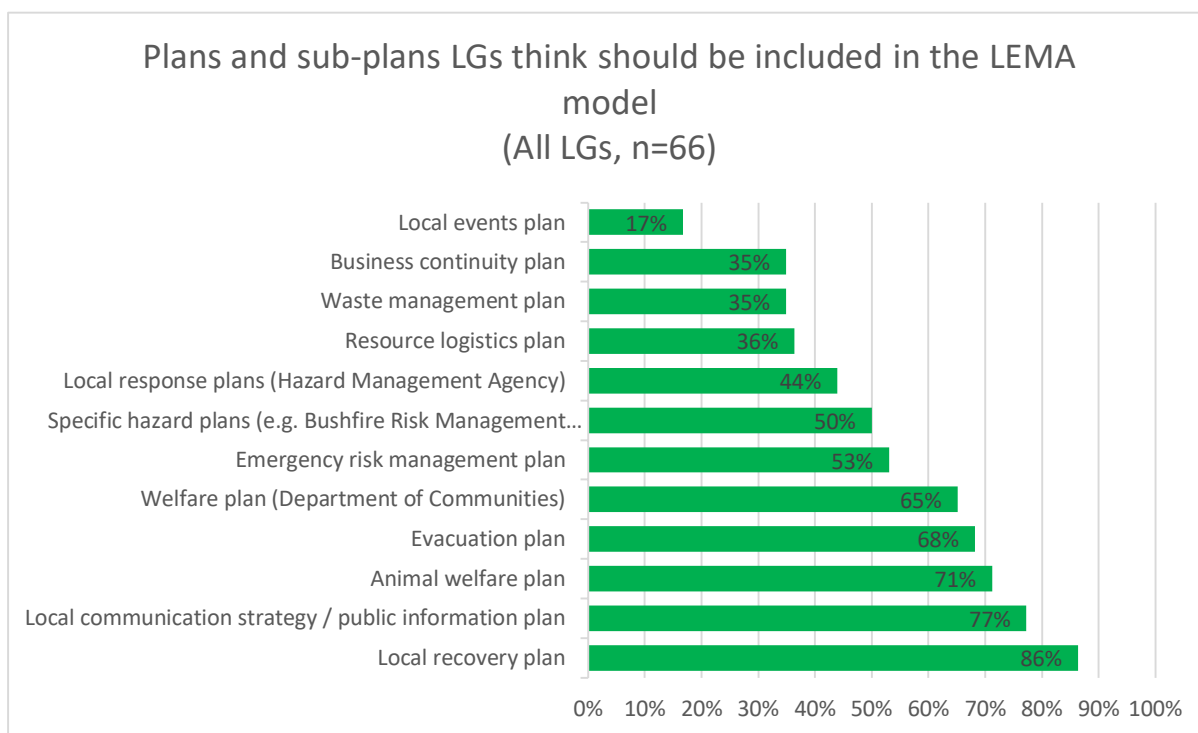


Figure 5: Plans and sub-plans LGs think should be included in the LEMA model

1.5 Other LEMA Structural Improvement Suggestions

Other structural improvement suggestions for LEMA included:

- separating the generic EM and State policy information out of the main LEMA document and placing into a separate guidance document for LG
- simplifying the main LEMA Document by only including **local** information relevant to the LG
- increasing the focus on public communication to vulnerable groups
- facilitating better connectivity and collaboration between stakeholders.
- remodelling the main LEMA document into a handbook that can be used by LGs in response.
- providing a Recovery Planning template for LGs for short, medium, and long-term timeframes.
- removing duplicated information that is repeated across various plans and subplans and make better use of links.
- providing checklists, flowcharts and templates that enable quick decision-making when an event occurs.
- focusing LEMA planning documents more discretely into before, during and after.
- providing more LEMA training for LG staff
- increasing EM human resources to LGs who require support to build their EM maturity and capability.

1.6 Improving LG capacity to develop and maintain LEMA

- There was overwhelming and consistent agreement from both Perth-Peel and Regional LG respondents (95%) that a central online repository of reference materials, tools, templates, examples and case studies would support their LG to develop and maintain LEMA.
- 87% of respondents agreed that a more sustainable grant funding model to support the ongoing exercising and review requirements of LEMA would help their LG maintain LEMA. Support for this was higher in regional LGs (92%) than for Perth-Peel LGs (80%).
- 86% of respondents agreed that a scalable LEMA model that acknowledges differences in EM capability and maturity and guides continuous improvement would help LGs maintain effective LEMA.
- 78% agreed that improved LEMA training for LG staff and Elected Members would help their LG maintain more effective LEMA. Support was higher for this in regional LGs (82%) than Perth-Peel LGs (72%).
- 73% agreed that resources to employ an additional staff member with the skills and capacity to manage LEMA would help them maintain the LEMA. Support for this was higher in regional LGs (79%) than for Perth-Peel LGs (64%)

Other options for improving LGs capacity to develop and maintain LEMA that were suggested in the open responses include:

- WALGA developing an induction pack/training modules that is free for all staff and Elected Members on LEMA
- providing examples and support for LG representatives (including executive team and Elected Members) to test/exercise emergency communication and decision-making during an event.
- clarifying roles and responsibilities of HMAs versus LGs
- developing LEMA model templates for a range of different LG sizes and risk profiles
- encouraging and supporting ongoing minor reviews/external assessments to ensure LEMA currency and continuous improvement, rather than an onerous 5-year major review
- providing best-practice templates and examples of LEMA that can be easily accessed and shared
- storing critical and current LEMA information online for easy access by HMAs
- creating permanent EM specific positions for regional LGs.
- strengthening the multiagency/LEMC support
- empowering current LG staff in LEMA development rather than LGs outsourcing LEMA development/reviews to consultants
- continuing the DEMA program and supporting DEMAs to be more responsive to LG needs,
- expanding the CESM program.

1.7 Clarifying the Roles and Responsibilities of LGs

There was strong agreement from respondents (85%) that the State EM Framework should provide a single clear policy statement of the roles and responsibilities of LG in EM.

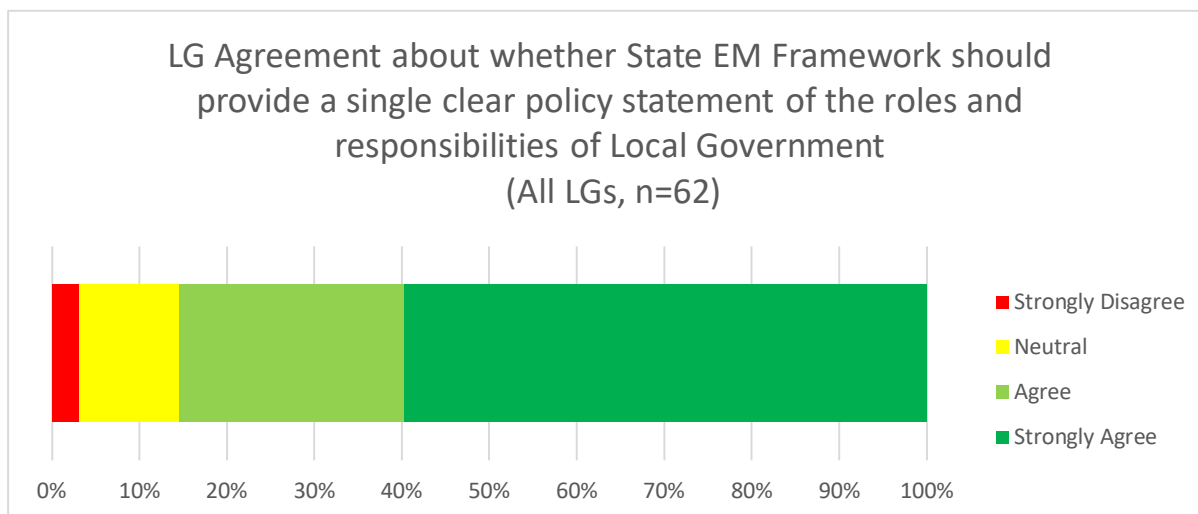


Figure 6: LG Agreement about whether State EM Framework should provide a single clear policy statement of the roles and responsibilities of Local Government

1.8 Clarifying LG's EM roles and responsibilities

There were several suggestions provided by LG respondents that could improve the clarity of LG's EM roles and responsibilities including:

- EM induction packs for new staff and CEOs
- More robust EM training for LG including online EM training modules for staff, annual training for LG officers and Elected Members, and training for staff who may not have direct EM responsibility but may be called upon during an emergency (could be informed by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Training)
- Provision of preformed training exercises and templates.
- More clarity around the local - state (and national) responsibilities particularly pertaining to incident escalation/de-escalation and recovery management and LGs responsibility in preparedness.
- An overview document of what LG roles and responsibilities are beyond the LEMA, and administration of Bushfire Brigades.
- A better understanding of what community-centred Emergency Risk Management really is, rather than a requirement to 'be complaint'.
- Greater clarity in the target audience for regional meetings run by DFES would be helpful.
- Clearly defining the operational boundaries of different agencies.
- Promoting, supporting, and assisting with funding for EM roles.
- A flow chart that shows what is a HMA responsibility and a LG responsibility.
- Action - the delay in making political/financial and sometimes difficult decisions impacts LG ability to stay interested - set the plan, implement it and adjust as necessary.

1.9 Transitioning from a local to a district or sub-district LEMA Model

There were very mixed responses regarding whether the LEMA model should be transitioned from a local to a sub-district/district level structure. Overall, only 45% of respondents support a sub-district/district LEMA model, with slightly more support for this from Perth-Peel LG respondents (50%) than regional LG respondents (42%). Further, many LG respondents from regional WA (45%) were unsure about whether a transition to a sub-district/district model would provide for a better LEMA structure, indicating that LGs require further information regarding how a sub-district/district model would function before deciding about this. No clear patterns across the different LG zones or bands emerged.

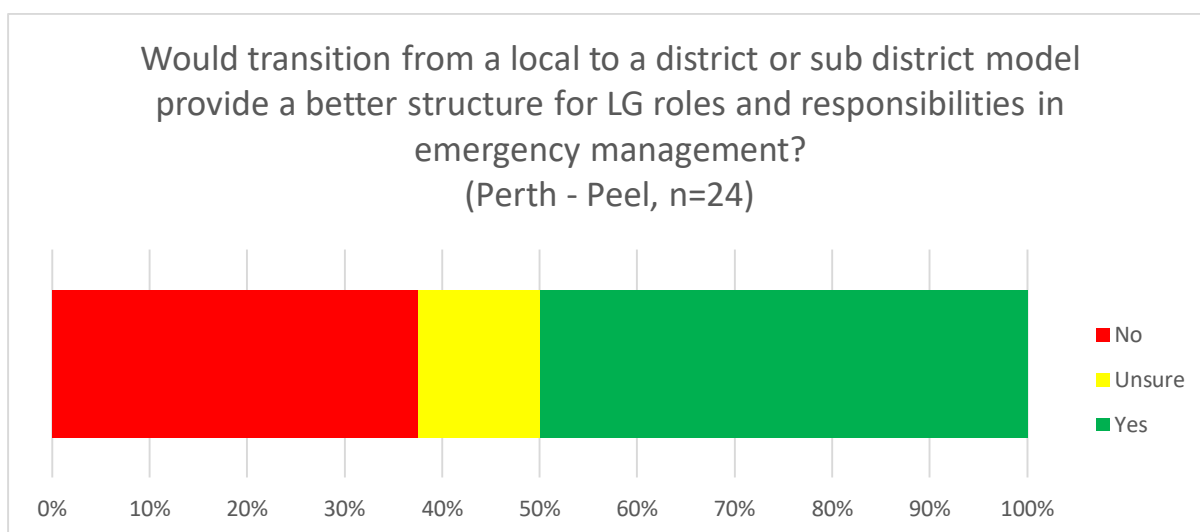


Figure 7: Perth and Peel LG support for transitioning from a local to a district or subdistrict model

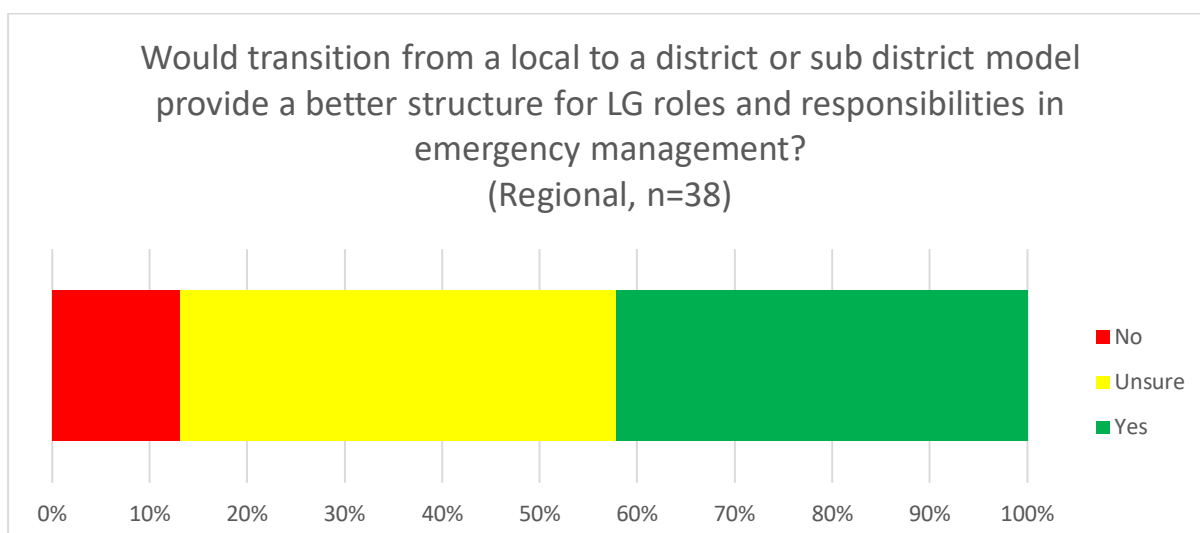


Figure 8: Regional LG support for transitioning from a local to a district of subdistrict LEMA model

LGs who supported LEMA moving to a district or subdistrict level approach provided the following reasons:

- Metropolitan LGs do not require individual arrangements for small geographical areas and small LGs.
- Metropolitan LGs struggle to get HMA attendance at LEMC meetings and they have no regard for LEMA, hence planning at the local level is of no value.
- A district approach would enable better consistency when incidents cross boundaries, particular with regards to evacuation.
- A district model would foster collaboration, resource and staff sharing, and connectivity.
- A district model would allow larger LGs to support smaller LGs in the preparation of LEMA and in the management and support of incidents

LGs who supported LEMA remaining at the LG level provided the following reasons:

- A district level approach risks losing important local knowledge.
- A district level would end up too large to be practical.
- A district level would increase the complexity of EM arrangements and add too many layers of responsibility.
- LEMA needs to be community led and community knowledge lies at the local level. An understanding of local context, including the vulnerabilities of the various sectors of the local community is vitally important.
- Each LG is different, size, staffing, roles, has different management styles and capacities and each LG knows their own area and can personalise the required information within the LEMA to best suits their LG.
- District plans would be useless for LGs that are hundreds of kilometres away from each other with very different risks and demographics.
- Moves to regional or subregional takes away the connection/relationship/responsibility for the local effort and in an emergency, this is everything.

The open responses indicated that a district/subdistrict LEMA model would be most suited to:

- smaller LGs who share a similar risk profile with neighbouring LGs and have similar populations, industries and infrastructure.
- Groups of LGs with established relationship and desire to pursue a district LEMA.

Responses indicate that district/subdistrict LEMA model may be less suitable for LGs that are:

- geographically isolated from neighbouring LGs particularly for Kimberley, Pilbara and some Larger Mid-West Gascoyne LGs (e.g. Shark Bay, Exmouth).
- have unique risks, demographics and vulnerabilities.

LG respondents who were unsure as to whether a subdistrict/district model was warranted noted:

- There are pros and cons for both, as LGs size, risk, context, capacity vary. It makes sense from a response and widespread recovery perspective.
- A sub-district is already possible under the current model via joint LEMAs and MOUs.
- A detailed sub-district/district model would need to be presented to LGs for further consideration/consultation.

- Procedures and contact information should remain local but roles, responsibilities and escalation should be transparent and easily visible at a district level.
- Communication is the key no matter who has the responsibility
- LGs need to input into response and a district model may create a big brother feeling.
- While agency response could work well at a district or subdistrict level a local-level EM plan/information that includes local resources, contacts and procedures is still required.

1.10 Involvement of LEMCs in LEMA

- Overall, 73% LG respondents agreed that LEMCs should be more involved in the LEMA.
- There was a significant difference between Perth and Peel (54% agree) and Regional (84%) LGs, with much stronger agreement from regional LGs than Perth and Peel LGs that LEMCs should be more involved in LEMA.
- When asked what would improve the engagement of LEMCs in LEMA, only 24% of respondents felt that legislative change would increase LEMC engagement.
- 52% of respondents indicated an increased role of the LEMC in exercising and reviewing the LEMA would improve engagement and this improvement option received more support from regional LGs (61%) than in Perth and Peel LGs (38%).
- The most popular mechanism for improving LEMC engagement in LEMA was through the provision of more training and resources (81%). Again, this received more support from regional LGs (87%) than Perth and Peel LGs (71%).

There were several suggestions provided in the open responses to enhance the engagement of LEMCs in LEMA. These include:

- Providing LEMCs additional LEMA resources and exercise examples.
- Elevating EM to a district level in metro areas to increase the attendance and engagement of HMAs/State agencies at LEMC meetings.
- Ensuring the right person is appointed as LEMC Executive Officer.
- Joint LEMCs and LEMAs with rotating LG chairs
- LEMA training and skills development for LEMC Executive Officer and Chair.
- Clearer LEMC expectations/terms of reference/role descriptions.
- Less prescriptive agenda template and meeting requirements (focus on quality over quantity).
- Clearly state in that LEMCs are NOT a Committee of Council under the Local Government Act but a statutory obligation under the EM Act.
- Provide more Funding for LEMC meeting activities
- Mandate compulsory online training for LEMC members about LEMC and LEMA roles and responsibilities.
- Simplify LEMA to make it easier for LEMC members to provide input.
- Recognise that LEMCs comprise of HMAs and volunteers and LEMA who do not have the time to contribute to LEMA and therefore the LEMA administrative burden will fall to the LGs.

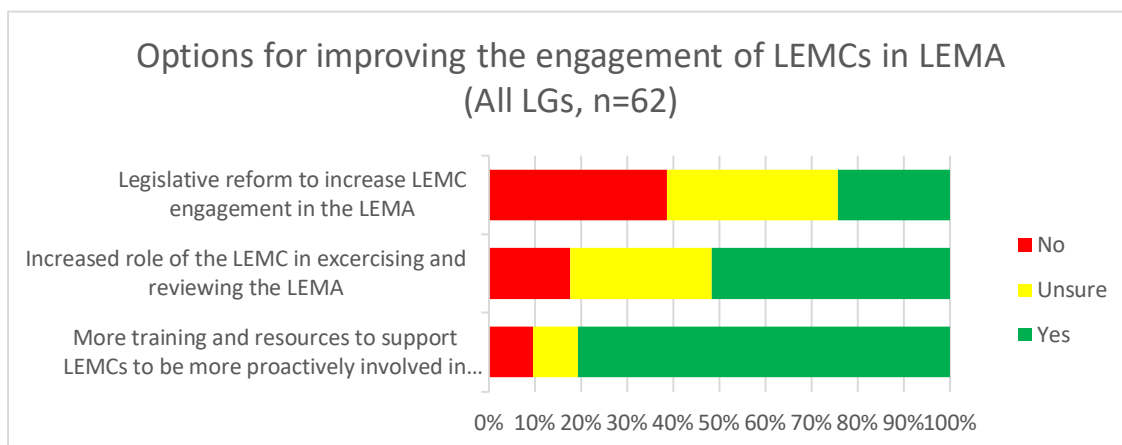


Figure 9: Options for improving the engagement of LEMCs in LEMA

1.11 Integrating LEMA into LG business as usual

Overall, 88% of respondents agreed that LEMA should be better integrated in LGs Business as Usual (BAU), with no significant difference between Perth and Peel LGs and Regional LGs.

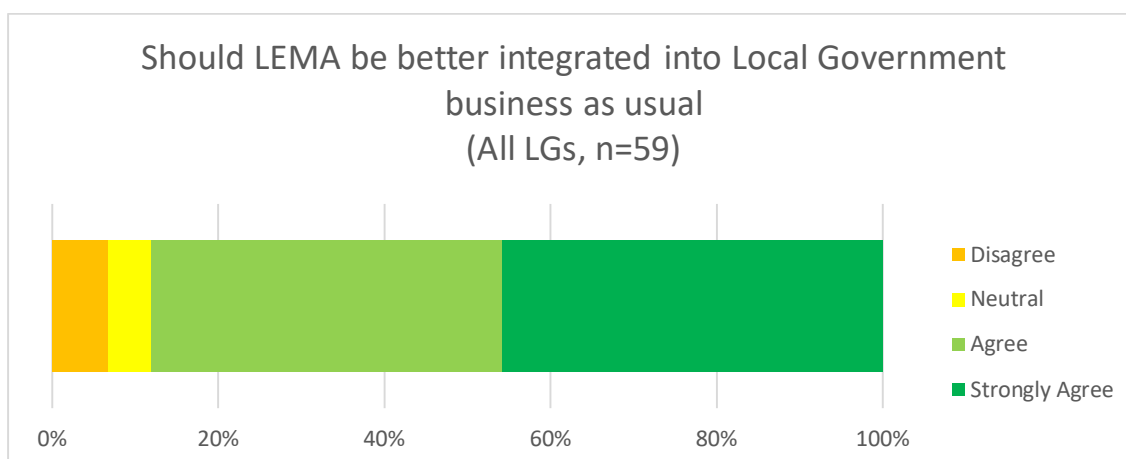


Figure 10: Support for integrating LEMA in LG BAU

When presented with different options that could improve the integration of LEMA with LG BAU, 86% responded that improved training for Elected Members and Local Government staff on the LEMA would help integrate the LEMA into LG BAU.

The other options in this question received mixed responses. 55% agreed a public facing EM plan or resilience strategy would help, 44% agreed engaging the community in the development of the LEMA would help, and 44% agreed that an LG EM framework linked to the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework would help integrate LEMA with LG BAU.

The open responses relating to the integration of LEMA and LGs BAU are as follows:

- A LEMA model that provides a practical guide to LG EM responsibilities.

- Improved LEMA training for LG staff.
- Prioritising and resourcing exercises that integrate LEMA and LGs activities/core business.
- LEMA is not what needs to be integrated into LG BAU – it should be the overall EM Sphere integrated.
- Making LEMA a simplified, living document with ongoing updates of critical information and online portal for all agency access.
- Increasing the focus on community engagement.
- Annual EM exercises for the LG’s management and leadership team.
- Including a generic EM task in ALL LG position descriptions e.g. “Staff to assist with EM duties as required”
- Establishing LG EM networks to share thinking, foster collaboration and show case examples of EM integration in LG BAU.
- Do not try to focus too much in one document – LEMA should remain focused on the critical information needed to inform HMAs.
- Combining EM Consultation with Strategic Planning would be a distraction.
- Making LEMA a more public facing could be problematic as it could create panic.
- Any additional plans for integration would increase the workload for LGs that lack capacity.
- There needs to be a distinction made between LEMA and Business Continuity plans. If the LEMA is community focused and it includes the LG Business Continuity Plan it would logically need to include the Business Continuity Plan of every other organisation involved with the LEMA.
- Assess emergency preparation report and the risk assessment in the LG Annual Report.

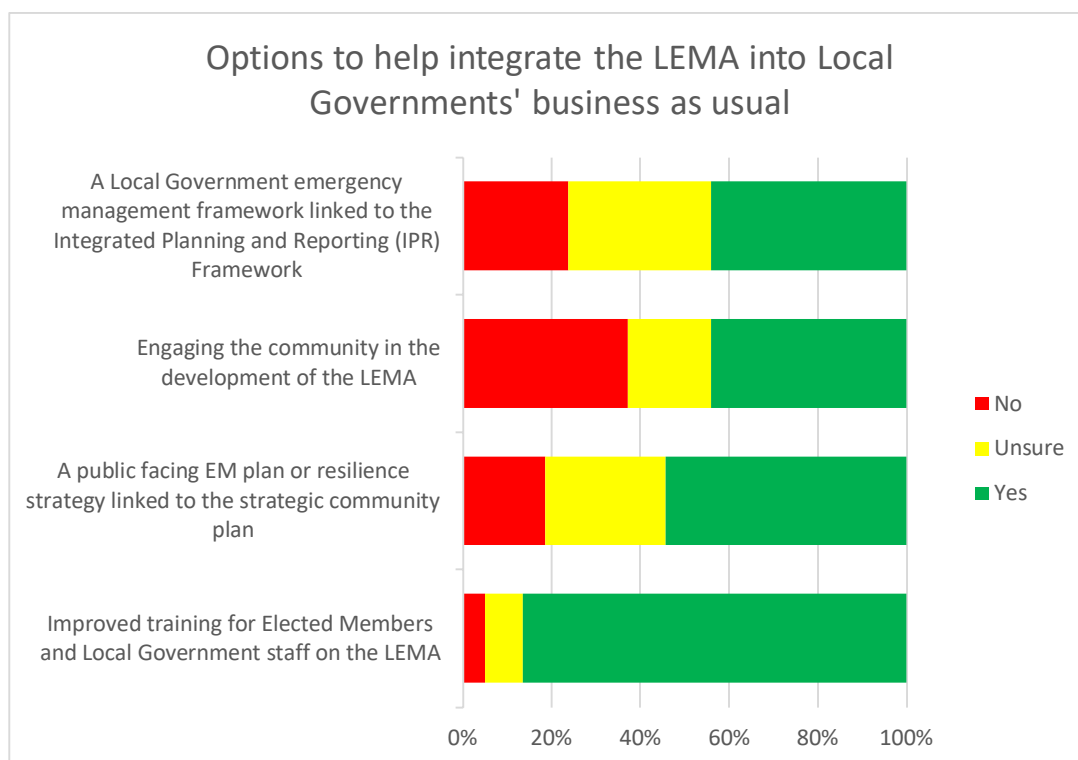


Figure 11: Options to help integrate LEMA in LG BAU

1.12 Other support LGs require to manage their EM responsibilities effectively

In the open responses LGs provided several examples of the types of support that would assist them to manage their EM responsibilities more effectively including:

- annual EM training for Council staff and Councillors
- access to generic LG EM plans that are scalable to suit the needs of an LG
- additional funding for dedicated EM personnel to conduct reviews, updates and exercises
- access to the Local Government Grant Scheme (LGGS) funding for LEMC/LEMA related activities
- a whole of local government resource management App to input and develop plans and store contact directories that can be produced on hard copy but also be on mobile devices for access in response
- trained EM staff and the ability to obtain experience and support
- improved community engagement/public information so the community knows about LEMA, the roles of LG in EM and how they can participate
- a comprehensive review of the ESL and the Bush fire Act
- a CESM
- more DEMA roles and support to guide the development of LEMAS and to assist with exercises
- dedicated EM staff, and
- shared EM officers.

Concluding and Additional Comments

The additional comments on LEMA provided by LGs respondents provide further insights to inform a LEMA improvement plan. These are summarised below:

- Current LEMA in metropolitan areas are inefficient and fail to engage HMAs.
- LEMA are important but need to be more practical with generic information removed.
- Keep it simple.
- Consistent reviewing and updating is very time-consuming without dedicated EM staff.
- LEMA needs to consider the diversity of LGs across WA.
- Is it necessary for LEMA to be endorsed by the Council? This is challenging for a joint LEMA.
- Does Welfare Centre information need to be duplicate across the LEMA, Department of Communities Welfare Plans and the Recovery planning documents?
- Resource lists are difficult to keep up to date.
- It is one thing to come up with the concept of a plan but the administrative support to establish and maintain it is often not considered.
- Community engagement and participation should be improved and promoted.
- LEMA cannot be a one size fits all approach.
- The LEMA Review is needed to simplify things and remind LGs of their obligations.
- Building and maintaining local relationships is the most important function of LEMA.
- Access to best practice examples would be useful.

- The LEMA should be a reference tool with contacts, arrangements and aide memoire to assist in the response process. Preparation and preparedness should be done long before the LEMA is required and should be incorporated into other LG operations.
- Currently this is only a small part of the LG activities and is under resourced in rural shires.
- The resources of the ESL are being used to fund what the State has responsibility for, and LG has less and less resources to be an active and valued player in LEMA. Address the imbalance and the resource availability to LGs will significantly ramp up the effectiveness of LG preparation, response and recovery.

Appendix 1: WALGA Zone Maps



Figure 12: WA Zone Map 1



Figure 13: WA Zone Map 2 Southwest

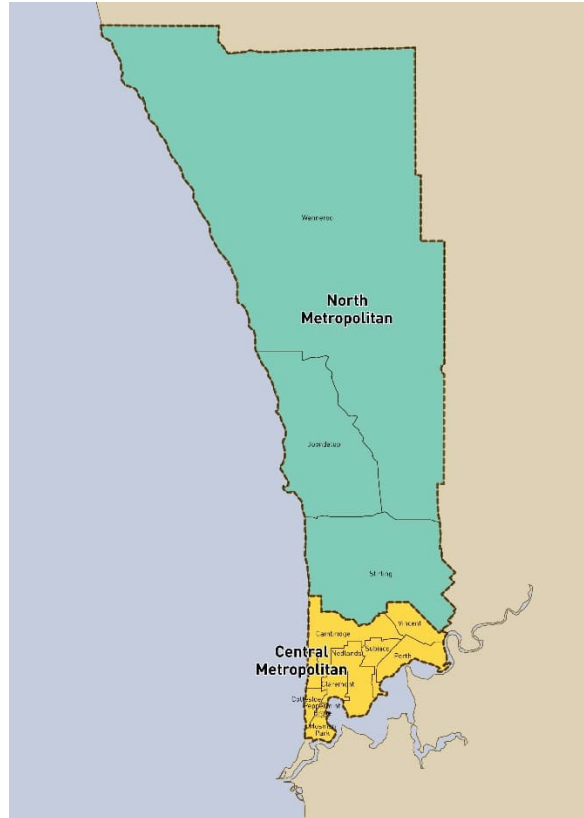


Figure 14: Zone Map 3 Metropolitan



Figure 15: Zone Map 4 Metropolitan

Appendix 2: Summary of LG Survey Respondents by Perth-Peel and Regional LGs and Zone

	Number of respondents
Perth / Peel Local Governments	34
Central Metropolitan Zone	5
Claremont	2
Nedlands	1
Peppermint Grove	1
Perth	1
East Metropolitan Zone	7
Bassendean	1
Bayswater	1
Belmont	2
Kalamunda	1
Mundaring	1
Swan	1
North Metropolitan Zone	5
Joondalup	2
Stirling	1
Wanneroo	2
Peel Country Zone	4
Mandurah	2
Murray	1
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1
South Metropolitan Zone	5
Cockburn	1
East Fremantle	1
Melville	1
Rockingham	2
South-East Metropolitan Zone	8
Canning	1
Gosnells	4
South Perth	2
Victoria park	1
Regional Local Governments	45
Avon-Midland Country Zone	2
Gingin	1
Northam	1
Central Country Zone	6
Cuballing	2
Lake Grace	1
Pingelly	1
Wandering	1
Wickepin	1
Gascoyne Country Zone	2

Exmouth	1
Shark Bay	1
Goldfields Esperance Country Zone	5
Coolgardie	1
Dundas	1
Esperance	1
Leonora	1
Menzies	1
Great Eastern Country Zone	5
Dowerin	1
Koorda	1
Mt Marshall	1
Narembeen	1
Wyalkatchem	1
Great Southern Country Zone	5
Albany	1
Broomehill-Tambellup	1
Denmark	1
Kent	1
Woodanilling	1
Kimberley Country Zone	1
Broome	1
Murchison Country Zone	1
Yalgoo	1
Northern Country Zone	5
Greater Geraldton	2
Irwin Coorow & Carnmah	1
Morawa	1
Northampton	1
Pilbara Country Zone	2
Ashburton	1
Port Hedland	1
South West Country Zone	11
Augusta Margaret River	1
Boyup Brook	1
Bunbury	1
Busselton	2
Capel	2
Collie	2
Donnybrook Balingup	1
Harvey	1
Total	79