

Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management

COMMUNIQUÉ

Creswick, Victoria, 23 November 2012

The Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management (SCPEM) met in Creswick on 23 November and was chaired by the Hon Peter Ryan MLA, Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The Council promotes a co-ordinated national response to law enforcement and emergency management issues, and comprises Australian and New Zealand ministers for police and emergency management and a representative of the Australian Local Government Association. The following is the emergency management extract.

Emergency Management

Ministers discussed the considerable progress that has been made in implementing Australia's resilience-based approach to emergency management, in line

with the objectives of the COAG endorsed *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*.

Ministers noted recent achievements and work underway in a range of areas including enhancing emergency warning capabilities, flood mapping, disaster risk communication, and community engagement.

Understanding and communicating disaster risk

Ministers discussed a range of projects that have been completed to help raise community awareness and understanding of disaster related issues. This included the practical aspects of effectively communicating hazard and risk information and the role that risk registers play in this context, as well as ways to promote disaster resilience.

Ministers noted that guidance to assist practitioners communicate risk to the broader community will be incorporated into a new section of the *National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines*.



Left to right

NSW The Hon Michael Gallacher MLC, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, NZ The Hon Chris Tremain MP, Minister for Civil Defence, VIC The Hon Peter Ryan MLA, Minister for Police and Emergency Services (Chair), CTH The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Management, QLD The Hon Jack Dempsey MP, Minister for Police and Community Safety, CTH The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Home Affairs and Justice.

Absent from photo

ACT Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, NT The Hon Terry Mills MLA, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, NZ The Hon Anne Tolley MP, Minister for Police, SA The Hon Jennifer Rankine MP, Minister for Police and Emergency Management, TAS The Hon David O'Byrne MP, Minister for Police and Emergency Management, WA The Hon Troy Buswell MLA, Minister for Transport, Emergency Services, ALGA Ms Felicity-Ann Lewis, President, Australian Local Government Association.

Ministers also agreed to a new national slogan to promote disaster resilience in Australia – *Get Ready*. This slogan is underpinned by the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience Communication Plan* six key messages

- disasters will happen
- disaster resilience is your business
- connected communities are resilient communities
- know your risk
- get ready, then act
- learn from experience.

Ministers considered that the use of a national slogan will contribute to more consistent disaster preparedness communication across Australia and will assist the public to recognise and retain key messages.

Research

Ministers acknowledged the importance of a whole-of-government approach to natural hazards and emergency management research. Research informs the understanding of risks posed by natural hazards and contributes to effective decision-making to respond to them. Ministers agreed to the development of a Disaster Resilience Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) application, incorporating the continuation of bushfire research. A multi-jurisdictional committee will be established to support the development of the CRC proposal to be chaired by New South Wales.

Knowledge management

Building disaster resilience through enabling jurisdictions, agencies and the community to access information and evidence is essential. To this end, the Commonwealth Attorney-General launched the Australian Emergency Management Knowledge Hub, a key online facility providing a research clearing house, cross-sectoral discussion forums and new media collaboration tools for the emergency management sector and the general community. The Knowledge Hub can be found at www.emknowledge.gov.au.

Enhancing disaster resilience capability

Recognising the importance of providing warnings during disasters, the Commonwealth Attorney-General and the Victorian Minister for Police and Emergency Services launched the deployment of major enhancements to the national telephone-based warning system, Emergency Alert. The enhancements will enable emergency services to send text messages to mobile phones based on the last known physical location at the time of an emergency. It is currently operational for Telstra customers and will be available for Optus and Vodafone customers by November 2013. This builds on the system's existing capability to send voice messages to landline telephones and text messages to mobile phones based on the user's registered address.

Ministers agreed in principle to commit to a nationally interoperable mobile broadband capability for public safety agencies and endorsed a national implementation plan. Ministers also agreed to align jurisdictional-specific public safety mobile broadband network planning with national interoperability principles. The successful delivery of this initiative will provide Australia's police and emergency service agencies with a robust capability that can be critically relied upon during natural disasters and other emergencies. This important body of work remains a significant priority for SCPEM.

Ministers noted progress made to strengthen the capacity of the Triple Zero emergency call service to handle surges in demand during extreme events. This includes the progressive roll out of a single, uniform telephone number across Australia for the State Emergency Service (132 500).

Disaster preparations for the 2012-13 summer

Ministers stressed the need for everyone within the community being prepared for the coming summer period. Ministers discussed the significant actions and investments that jurisdictions have undertaken to prepare for the 2012-13 summer, particularly in public education and awareness and in updating technical and hardware capabilities.

Ministers were advised that the Commonwealth will issue a new National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) Determination 2012 including matters arising from the Review of the Insurance Arrangements of States and Territories under the NDRRA Determination 2011 (Insurance Review). Ministers were also updated on the development of a national impact assessment framework to better target disaster relief and recovery assistance.

Learning from previous disasters

Previous disasters provide valuable lessons to governments, businesses and the community to ensure better preparation in the future. The Council is committed to ensuring that findings from significant reviews into previous disasters will be taken into consideration when enhancing Australia's disaster management framework.

Ministers noted issues of national significance arising from the *Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry Final Report*. These issues are being addressed through the ongoing implementation of the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*.

Ministers were also given a presentation on the findings from the *Review of the Civil Defence Emergency Management response to the 22 February Christchurch Earthquake* which was released on 5 October 2012. The Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee is currently reviewing the recommendations further to determine whether they apply to the Australian context.