

DELWP Position Paper for the Fire Services Review

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Introduction

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) is tasked with creating liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities. We focus on caring for and protecting the environment, and helping to respond to climate change through risk mitigation and adaptation strategies. We achieve this through the distinct portfolios of land, fire, environment, water, land-use planning, and Local Government Victoria.

Unlike the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB), DELWP is a land manager as well as an emergency manager. Together with its portfolio agencies and delegated land managers, including Parks Victoria, Catchment Management Authorities, Water Authorities and committees of management, DELWP is responsible for managing approximately 8.3 million hectares of land in Victoria.

The combined land and emergency management accountabilities within the DELWP portfolio incorporate prevention, preparedness, response and recovery functions for multiple natural hazards. These are established through emergency management legislation and the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV), as well as portfolio legislation and policy responsibilities for key risk drivers such as climate change, land-use planning and water and public land management.

DELWP delivers many of its fire and emergency management functions in partnership with Victoria's Emergency Service Organisations (ESO's), through integrated resourcing of state and regional control arrangements. This partnership approach means that DELWP is uniquely positioned to provide input to the current Fire Services Review, particularly where the terms of reference are directly relevant to the functions of the DELWP portfolio.

This submission provides background to the roles and responsibilities of the DELWP portfolio, and provides input into the sections a), d) and f) of the Review's terms of reference. These terms of reference are directly relevant to DELWP and its functions as a land management agency and emergency manager which is outlined below.

The DELWP Portfolio – Roles and Responsibilities

DELWP Portfolio Emergency Management Functions

Under the EMMV, DELWP is a control agency and a support agency for emergency management functions that relate to its role as public land manager. DELWP's control agency responsibilities are: wildlife affected by marine pollution, exotic marine pest incursion, cetacean (whale and dolphin) strandings or entanglement, water and sewerage, fire on State Forest, National Park or protected public land and dam safety. DELWP is a support agency in response for:

- electricity disruption (in respect of issues affecting critical water supply)
- food or drinking water contamination
- food supply critical infrastructure damage or disruption
- earthquake
- flood
- heatwave
- storm
- tsunami
- marine pollution oil spills in Victorian coastal waters out to three nautical miles
- mine / quarry rescue.

DELWP works in partnership with CFA, MFB, DEDJTR and Emergency Services Organisations (ESO's) to deliver emergency management functions. Collaboration and interoperability are crucial to effective delivery, particularly in terms of response functions.

DELWP Portfolio Land Management Responsibilities

DELWP's model of public land management is one of direct and delegated responsibility established through multiple statutory and policy mechanisms. DELWP and its partner land management agencies' workforces comprise professional public land managers with expertise in silviculture, biodiversity, hydrology, geology and geomorphology, environmental science, protected and remote area management, ecology, archaeology and cultural heritage, and recreation and visitor management, among other skill areas. Land and forest managers within these organisations manage diverse environments ranging from remote alpine areas, to grassland plains, to coastal reserves and marine parks. This expertise and capability is harnessed for land and emergency management activities.

DELWP also holds portfolio responsibilities for land-use planning, which provides significant opportunities for risk mitigation planning for various hazards on an all-tenure basis. The opportunity to advance strategic and long-term approaches to risk mitigation is a key priority for the State Crisis and Resilience Council (SCRC), and is a focus of the Productivity Commission's review into national disaster funding.

DELWP's Resourcing Model for Emergency Management

The model for resourcing emergency management functions within the DELWP portfolio sees a small number of staff with dedicated emergency management roles, seasonal staff over the peak planned burning and fire season, and a surge capacity team drawn from across the portfolio and agency workforce to meet emergency management resourcing requirements during events or periods of peak delivery (such as the autumn planned burning season). DELWP portfolio staff with emergency management roles form a critical part of Victoria's firefighting capacity.

The emergency management activities undertaken by the DELWP portfolio span the spectrum of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery activities, as summarised below.

Bushfire Prevention and Suppression

As Victoria's public land manager, a key function of the DELWP portfolio is the management of risks and emergencies on behalf of government. With respect to bushfires, the Secretary of DELWP is responsible for preventing and suppressing bushfires on public land. The *Forests Act 1958* requires the Secretary to carry out proper and sufficient work in State forests, national parks, and on protected public land to prevent and suppress bushfires. These activities are guided by the *Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land (2012)*.

DELWP employs a risk-based approach for managing its responsibilities for bushfire prevention and suppression, including compliance, fuel management and response activities. The fuel management program on public land is a key strategy for prevention of bushfire risk, with almost one million hectares of public land treated through fuel management in the past five years.

Recovery

DELWP, as a land manager and emergency manager, is responsible for recovery activities on the public land estate, environmental impact assessments post-emergency and provision of recovery advice to local governments and other land managers. This responsibility is not limited to its public land estate and enables government to leverage the Department's existing expertise in environmental impact assessment, environmental planning, and recovery of public land.

The delivery of DELWP's role in environmental impact assessment is undertaken through its Rapid Risk Assessment Teams (RRATs), which are multi-agency, multi-disciplinary, specialist teams deployed to rapidly evaluate post-emergency risk to the environment and recommend prioritised, costed mitigation strategies. This model is scalable and adaptable to any large-scale emergency event, and draws team members from across government, including professional land managers, policy experts, and scientific and technical experts. DELWP's RRAT program has a national profile and has been deployed interstate on several occasions to support emergency management and recovery functions.

The Emergency Management Sector in Victoria

The devastating Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria led to a period of reform for Victoria's fire services. Responding to the recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC), the sector has made substantial progress towards greater integration and interoperability, with renewed focus on working with communities, across government, and businesses (including the not-for-profit sector).

Reforms include the establishment of Emergency Management Victoria, the Emergency Management Commissioner, and supporting governance arrangements through the State Crisis and Resilience Council and its sub-committees. The sector's vision and priorities are outlined in Victoria's Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan, which focusses on driving further enhancements through strengthened governance, an open and cohesive culture, interoperable systems and processes, and better connections with communities and business.

These reforms establish clear strategic direction to unify the sector - supported by legislative amendments. The sector has responded positively and swiftly, and there are many examples of improved integration across all aspects of bushfire management. There is more to be achieved, and the recently released Strategic Action Plan outlines the priorities for the next three years.

Proposed legislative amendments to require all-hazards emergency management planning set out an integrated planning framework for all agencies and relevant stakeholders at a state, regional and municipal scale. Integrated planning, based on international risk management standards, will provide a strong foundation for Victoria's future emergency management.

Internally, DELWP has implemented a series of reforms in response to the recommendations of the VBRC and the Government's emergency management reform agenda. Most relevant to this review are the introduction of a risk-based approach to bushfire management (focussing on fuel management), and transitioning to an all-hazards approach to emergency management within the department.

There are wide ranging reforms underway to improve emergency management in Victoria and DELWP is continuing to play a leading role. Our work with partner agencies is crucial in ensuring that community is at the forefront of defining our success.

DELWP response to Terms of Reference

DELWP is providing a submission with regards to a), d) and f) of the terms of reference provided for the Fire Services Review. These terms of reference are directly relevant to DELWP and its functions as a land management agency and emergency manager.

(A) An assessment of the resourcing requirements necessary to ensure Victoria is appropriately equipped and fire ready.

DELWP and its portfolio partners work with the CFA and others, under the leadership of the Emergency Management Commissioner, to prepare for, respond to and recover from bushfires and other emergencies. The effectiveness of this combined resource base depends on collaboration, integration and interoperability of systems and resources. There has been significant advancement in this regard, and the Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2015-18 sets out the priorities for enhanced cooperation into the future.

Beyond integration and interoperability of existing organisations, structures and systems, the overarching model for delivery of emergency management is fundamental to effectively and efficiently meeting emergency management requirements.

Key drivers of bushfire risk - such as population growth, demographic shifts, changing land use and climate change – presents significant challenges for Victoria, which is already one of the most bushfire prone landscapes in the world. To meet these challenges, Victoria needs to find ways to build the effectiveness and efficiency of its model for emergency management.

DELWP has a small dedicated emergency management workforce, and a (larger) professional workforce with fire and emergency management roles. The DELWP portfolio has approximately 3000 staff registered as available for fire and emergency management roles during the summer season. This includes approximately 600 seasonal Project Firefighters. Whilst not all of these staff are available for all deployments, the DELWP portfolio makes a substantial contribution to resourcing Victoria's emergency management efforts.

DELWP takes shared organisational responsibility for resourcing Incident Management Teams (IMTs) to required preparedness levels and operating from designated Incident Control Centres maintained to a prescribed standard.

Mutual aid agreements exist in all DELWP regions between DELWP and CFA, which cover resource sharing with respect to emergency response accountabilities to better protect community and the environment from impacts of large-scale emergency events. DELWP works with both CFA, MFB and other government departments to meet resourcing requirements of State-level operations.

The summer season response effort has a significant impact on the portfolio's ability to maintain business as usual functions, including important portfolio based activities that contribute to emergency management prevention through 'upstream activities' such as climate change adaption, land-use planning, water and land management planning.

Much of Victoria's emergency management reforms to date have focussed on driving interoperability of the traditional emergency responders, including CFA, MFB, State Emergency Services (SES) and DELWP. As demands on the emergency management sector increase driven by a range of environmental, social and economic factors, and increased community expectations, a more comprehensive review of the model for

resourcing emergency management will be needed. This is reflected in the capacity and capability projects under the Strategic Action Plan.

(D) The interoperability across fire agencies responsible for preventing and suppressing all types of fire in Victoria, whether on public or private land.

The DELWP portfolio works with other fire services organisations to prevent bushfires on land across jurisdictional boundaries. This has been a focus for enhancing effective interoperability when managing bushfire risk.

Compliance activities

As DELWP and the CFA both administer regulatory controls to prevent bushfires in line with responsibilities under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, we work jointly to streamline the delivery of these responsibilities and leverage collective capability to reduce bushfire risks.

Fuel management activities

A key strategy for bushfire risk prevention is the fuel management program on public land. The VBRC recommended a substantial increase in Victoria's fuel management program – recommending a rolling annual target of 5% of public land be treated annually. DELWP responded to the recommendations of the VBRC by significantly increasing its fuel management program, whilst also investing in capabilities required to quantify the effectiveness of fuel management activities in reducing risk to life and property.

Based on these advancements, DELWP now uses world leading, predictive fire modelling technology to plan and deliver fuel management based on its effectiveness in reducing risk and its ability to enhance Victoria's ecosystems. This is supported by greater involvement of communities in strategic planning for fuel management on public land - so that their values can guide our activities - and comprehensive monitoring and reporting on our actions and outcomes.

The DELWP portfolio and the CFA are working for greater cross tenure collaboration on delivery of the State's planned burning program. DELWP and CFA have piloted co-delivery of fuel management on public land, with the aim of increasing integration between the agencies, and of expanding fuel management to address bushfire risk on private land. This has seen the CFA more actively involved in the planning and delivery of the planned burning program, particularly in areas of high risk close to communities and private land. CFA has recently invested in building their capability in risk modelling to guide fuel management activities on private land, and is co-locating staff with DELWPs bushfire risk landscape teams to enhance collaboration and integration.

Information Technology

Recent years has seen the development of enhanced information technology systems to improve interoperability between emergency management sector agencies, these include:

- Introduction of EM WebMail
- Use of a shared drive for access and storage of electronic documents
- Development of the EM Portal as a 'one stop shop' for emergency management related information for agencies
- Development of the Vic Emergency website for public access to incident information and warnings

There are continuous improvements occurring in this area, coordinated through the program of works established through the Emergency Management- Common Operating Picture.

Process management, improvement and innovation

There have been multiple business process and system improvements introduced to enhance interoperability across fire agencies, some of which are outlined below. Many of these have been enabled by the establishment of Emergency Management Victoria as the key coordinating body for the sector. Key process improvements already in place include:

- Implementation of command and control arrangements at regional and state levels to support the Incident Controller. The command and control framework is fully integrated across the emergency management sector with all services working toward a common goal. This is supported by the establishment of the Emergency Management Team at the three tiers of management, establishment of joint level 3 incident control centres across the state and the establishment of regional control centres.
- Common training standards and assessment for Level 3 Incident Controllers, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Public Information Officers. Previously agencies accredited individuals to the standards of each agency. Post 2009 there has been progressive work towards integration of training standards. Standards and assessments are now fully integrated. Joint training program initiatives are also common practice.
- Implementation of state-wide readiness standards for Incident Management Teams and aviation services as prescribed in the Joint Standard Operating Procedures (JSOPs). The rostered Regional Controller (agency blind) has responsibility for ensuring readiness arrangements are met at the regional level across the fire services.
- Shared regional pre-fire season briefings are held each year in September/October, which include DELWP, CFA, MFB, Victoria Police and local government. These pre fire season briefings are supported by common doctrine, the JSOPs and the Victorian Bushfire Handbook. Joint exercises to test command and control arrangements are held within each region and across the state. This brings together all agencies in responding to an emergency scenario.
- Coordinated response to requests for interstate and international resource support. This year marked the establishment of a fully integrated expression of interest process for overseas/interstate deployment. Victoria has successfully led the deployment of Australian crews to Canada and U.S.A this year.

As evidenced above, significant work has been undertaken post 2009 within the emergency management sector in Victoria to achieve greater interoperability. Work continues towards a seamless approach to emergency management for the benefit of the Victorian community.

The Strategic Action Plan also identifies the priority actions for continued integration and interoperability through improvements to systems and process.

(F) Enhancing workplace culture, including fostering greater respect and cooperation between management and its workforce, as well as enhancing workplace innovation and diversity.

People

DELWP is committed to gender equality and generational and cultural diversity within its workforce and in ensuring that its workforce's involvement in emergency management reflects the diversity of its workforce.

DELWP and its partner land management agencies are engaged actively in a number of programs to promote and foster gender equality and cultural diversity within its day-to-day workforce and its emergency workforce. DELWP is currently undertaking a project to explore and seek improvement in gender diversity in fire and emergency leadership roles within the DELWP portfolio. This project aims to foster greater diversity within our fire and emergency roles to support a diverse workforce that better reflects the community we serve. It will also provide an inclusive and fair workplace in which we can utilise the full potential of our people.

Enhancing workplace culture and fostering a culture of interoperability and collaboration with the fire services agencies is illustrated in the co-location of DELWP staff within a shared office at Casterton. This office houses DELWP staff as well as the CFA District 4 Headquarters. The facility supports a radio tower donated by DELWP and constructed by CFA which ensures state of the art communications at this joint facility.

Previously, DELWP and CFA operated from separate locations in the Casterton area. This new co-location has greatly improved working arrangements and is an example of interoperability and cooperation at the local level. This shows that a culture of collaboration and interoperability can be built from the ground up at the local level, and is not the result of a Melbourne / head office mandate.

Changes to the sector since 2009, together with strong commitment and leadership has engendered a shared vision ('safer and more resilient communities') and goal ('we work as one') where safety of fire-fighters and the community is paramount. Significant changes in the sector have led to changing organisational cultures that reflect greater collaboration in the preparedness arrangements and response to major fire and other emergencies.

Conclusion

The DELWP portfolio is an integral part of fire and emergency service delivery within Victoria. In partnership with CFA and MFB, DELWP and its portfolio partners play a crucial role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from fire and emergency events in Victoria. As a result of this joint approach, the outcomes of the Fire Services Review are of relevance to the land and emergency management functions within the DELWP portfolio.

The Victorian community expects effective integration and interoperability across fire agencies all emergency management activities. There has been significant progress in this regard over the past several years, and the Strategic Action Plan sets out the forward agenda for sectoral reform. Key to this will be the ability to effectively leverage the skills and capabilities of a broader range of contributors to emergency management – drawn from across government, communities, business and the not-for-profit sector.

A more comprehensive review of the model for resourcing fire and emergency management is needed to extend this interoperability across a broader range of stakeholders beyond the traditional emergency responders of CFA, MFB, State Emergency Service (SES) and DELWP. This should include increased focus on prevention activities as a means of more effectively managing the drivers of future risk. Whilst not within the terms of reference for the Fire Services Review, this is a direction established in the Strategic Action Plan.

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