

Government Response to the Inspector-General for Emergency Management's *'Review of impact assessment and consequence management'*

The Government welcomes the Inspector-General for Emergency Management's (IGEM) *'Review of impact assessment and consequence management'* (the review).

The observations and findings within the IGEM's review are generally consistent with EMV's own assurance observations, and are aligned with the current identified improvements to the functions of impact assessment and consequence management.

Overview

The IGEM has acknowledged there is significant work being undertaken in the areas of impact assessment and consequence management by agencies and departments to resolve the identified challenges highlighted in the review. The IGEM does however, observe there is a need for continued work across components of the 'EM-Impact' impact assessment program, led by Emergency Management Victoria (EMV). This includes data collection, timing, collation, and the coordination and communication of this complex function. These factors have also been identified by the program leads and working groups. Addressing these identified factors will be considered as part of the ongoing work for EM-Impact program.

EM-Impact is establishing, for the first time, the ability to gather and compare consistent impact information against baseline community resilience data to support decision making and recovery planning.

Consequence management is included in the State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) and the SERP sub-plan guidelines to ensure consequence management is included during preparedness and response to support the management and reduce the potential impact of major emergencies.

Since 2012, the Victorian emergency management sector has participated in the Executive Consequence Management course. Since the introduction of the course, over 790 participants from more than 80 organisations have participated to enhance consequence management awareness, understanding and capability, with the additional benefit of improved relationships and cross agency networks.

The IGEM's review found that the sector values the new and evolving consequence management approach and that it is spreading and being understood more broadly through the emergency management sector, however there are aspects that still require refinement. Ongoing improvement, including those identified in the IGEM's review will be made as part of the ongoing work related to consequence management.

The review identified common themes across both programs including, purpose clarification, process, systems and capability. Further clarification and understanding of these requirements across the sector will emerge as the capability assessments for both Impact Assessment and Consequence Management are undertaken. These assessments form part of the work being undertaken through the [Victorian Preparedness Framework](#) implementation. The design of these assessments are utilising the findings from the sectors assurance functions, including this review.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) recommends that Emergency Management Victoria, in liaison with producers and users of impact assessment data, coordinate a thorough analysis of the fundamental purposes of impact assessment.

This activity should aim to produce, publish and share the following outputs:

- a needs analysis for impact assessment that describes the specific purposes of impact assessment and identifies the data, metrics and timeframes required to adequately serve these purposes
- sets of core impact data that should be prioritised for urgent collection in Class 1 and Class 2 emergencies
- agreed reporting metrics including consideration of the use of ranges or caveats where timelines for urgent and specific data are unrealistic
- updated impact assessment guidelines and related emergency management manuals for all emergencies that outline the data collection, reporting and sharing responsibilities of all organisations across the sector
- agreed reporting metrics to inform relief and recovery (both short and long-term) efforts
- information-sharing guidelines through consideration of personal and non-personal data sharing across all tiers in both Class 1 and Class 2 emergencies.

IGEM considers this activity to be a priority that will rationalise ongoing and future activities aimed to produce an end-to-end impact assessment process.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE – SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The Emergency Management Act 2013, requires the Emergency Management Commissioner to coordinate data collection and impact assessment processes. This is a critical function of emergency management, with information gathered across all phases of emergencies by various departments and agencies to inform a collective understanding of the impacts of an emergency.

It is broadly acknowledged across the emergency management sector that data collection and sharing of impact assessment information has often lacked standardisation and effective coordination across agencies and organisations. To improve these aspects EMV's EM-Impact program (Strategic Action Plan, Priority G Action 6) has developed a comprehensive impact assessment model to operate across all hazards and all phases of an emergency. This includes development of processes to collate, analyse and communicate impact information about emergency events. The project is a partnership with key emergency management agencies and departments.

Significant progress has been made to deliver:

- agreed core impact data prioritised for urgent collection;
- agreed reporting metrics/data for class one emergencies including agreed reporting metrics/data for relief and recovery;
- a data collection portal and a tool to visualise impact assessment data collected; and
- identification of potential barriers to sharing data and information across agencies.

The work achieved through the EM-Impact program will be implemented through new documentation and procedures for people involved in impact assessment, and will also be considered through the implementation of the emergency management planning reforms. The

emergency management sector will continue to capture improvement opportunities from debriefs and observations through the lessons-learning processes that are a part of Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) engage relevant organisations to continue to leverage current impact assessment capacity and capability.

EMV should coordinate this work through existing impact assessment working groups to:

- clarify current capability and capacity for impact assessment (including built, social, economic and natural impacts)
- identify opportunities to better leverage existing agency and department expertise and resources to greatest effect
- identify current systems in use and the technical requirements and constraints to be addressed to transition to an integrated portal for collection, collation and reporting of data.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE – SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The Victorian emergency management sector relies on robust information, data and intelligence to inform decisions across all tiers (local, regional and state) and phases (preparedness, response and recovery) of an emergency. Accurate, reliable and timely impact assessment data can improve outcomes for the community and the sector.

The IGEM review found that responder agencies had developed strong capabilities delivering initial impact assessments for Class 1 emergencies, and opportunities existed to leverage this strength to build capability in other classes of emergencies and agencies.

Two key programs that are working to build this capability across the broader emergency management sector are EMV's EM-Impact program and the Victorian Preparedness Framework. These programs have identified the current capabilities and approaches used across the emergency management sector, and established working groups to share information and identify process improvements.

EMV acknowledges there is further work required to achieve streamlined processes across the multiple agencies and departments involved in impact assessment, however significant progress has been made to deliver:

- an online portal and visualisation tool to enable departments and agencies to report and share critical impact data with the broader sector and access community resilience information; and
- sector understanding and utilisation of the tool's capabilities and on-ground value-add through a sector-wide project control group.

Additionally, the Victorian Preparedness Framework (Strategic Action Plan Priority G Action 4) is leveraging emergency management sector engagement to assess current capability and capacity for impact assessment. This includes evaluation and estimation of capability, gap analysis, and where additional capability and capacity can be leveraged through new and existing partnerships.

Addressing the review's findings through existing capability, capacity and working group coordination supports the ongoing development of the impact assessment system and broad

sector adoption. EMV will continue to coordinate and work with the emergency management sector to progress the opportunities identified in the review's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria, with the support of Local Government Victoria, update, publish and share relevant impact assessment plans, operating procedures, manuals and impact assessment guidelines to ensure Incident Controllers or Incident Management Teams formally consult relevant local personnel.

Appropriate local representation should be identified during pre-season activities and/or in the initial stages of an emergency through a brief consultation with local government emergency management personnel.

Local representation should extend from response through to recovery to better align emergency management with community requirements.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE – SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

Local knowledge and information is an important part of informing impact assessment and understanding the context of the impacts of emergencies on individuals and communities. Before each summer, pre-season forums, coordinated by local agency representatives, engage relevant agencies and organisations in preparation for operational activity. During emergency events, local representation, including local government, occurs through Incident Emergency Management Teams and local planning arrangements.

The Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018 has established a new framework for integrated, coordinated and comprehensive emergency management planning at the state, regional and municipal levels across the spectrum of emergency mitigation, response and recovery. One of the overarching principles within the legislation is that community needs are at the centre of planning, this is supported by the improved collaboration in the development of local, regional and State plans.

The Emergency Management Common Operating Picture or EM-COP is a web-based communication, planning and collaboration tool that has been rolled out across Victoria to enable emergency personnel to quickly share information and make strategic decisions. Through enhanced access to real time information, the sector can now make better and more timely decisions, resulting in better outcomes and a safer community. EM-COP is for everyone involved in an emergency, including first responders, emergency management agencies, personnel in the field, control centres, local government, not-for-profit relief organisations, essential service providers, and others. EM-COP currently has almost 10,000 users across more than 170 agencies, organisations and government entities right across the state. Through being able to access a common operating picture, everyone involved in emergency management is better able to collaborate with each other, improving efficiency, decision-making and operational activities. Features of EM-COP include data layers for incidents, boundaries, weather, tracking, and a very wide variety of other dynamic and static information layers drawn from across the sector, including impact assessment, access to briefings, reports and other information during an event, reference library, document sharing, in addition to a range of other features.

The pathways and future opportunities provided through the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018 and the EM-Impact program will continue to deliver improvements to the impact assessment system as resources and funding allow. On-going commitment from agencies and organisations will be required to enable connection with operational intelligence, local knowledge and existing and new policy and procedures. These

provide the foundations for the more efficient and effective means to share data across all aspects of emergency management operational activities through response and recovery

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria continues to lead discussions with the sector to resolve their respective roles, responsibilities and scope for consequence management and associated triggers and escalation points. These discussions should result in the production, publication and sharing of consequence management framework which considers the following:

- Purpose and use of consequence management;
- Guidance for the sector on the consequence management approach and application across the sector;
- Opportunities to further strengthen the coordination of consequence management across and between tiers;
- Improvement of consequence management products to ensure relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness;
- Additional mechanisms to build the capacity of the sector to undertake consequence management;
- Appropriate local and regional representation in consequence management

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE – SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE

The evolving contribution of consequence management to achieve a safer and more resilient Victoria is expressly acknowledged in the review. The recent application of a strategic consequence management approach being applied to the bushfires in the Thomson and Upper Yarra water supply catchments noted similar observations and findings as the review.

Proposed refinements to the planning processes employed at the State Control Centre (SCC) enables the application of a tailored consequence management approach in an operational incident setting. The implementation of the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act (EMLA) 2018 lays the platform for strengthening the application of a consequence management approach into non-specific incident mitigation, response, and recovery planning.

Addressing the review's findings through these two pathways will strengthen the understanding and capability in consequence management. Victoria faces accelerated technological, social and environmental changes, compounded by a changing climate. Maturity of a longer term, risk driven consequence management approach will support Victorian communities in meeting future challenges.

EMV will lead the use of the EMLA implementation and SCC operational planning processes to clarify and/or progress the elements noted in the review's recommendation.