State Emergency Management Committee

Local Emergency Management Committee Handbook

March 2025

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1   Introduction

Australia's emergency management system reflects the states' and territories' constitutional responsibility for the protection of the lives and property of citizens, and the environment. State and territory governments exercise control over most functions that are essential for the effective prevention of, preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies through:

- legislative and regulatory arrangements
- provision of emergency services organisations and supporting Functional Areas.

New South Wales (NSW) has well established and proven emergency management arrangements underpinned by the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 (SERM Act) the State Emergency Management Plan 2023 (Premier's Department) (State EMPLAN), and state-level sub and supporting plans.

These arrangements (illustrated below) are designed so that emergency management activities are conducted at the lowest effective level.

The regional and state levels of the emergency management structure are available to provide support and additional resources as required, and to only assume operational control when a higher level of control would be more effective. Local emergency management committees have a major role in these arrangements due to the close links between the council and member agencies and the communities they serve.
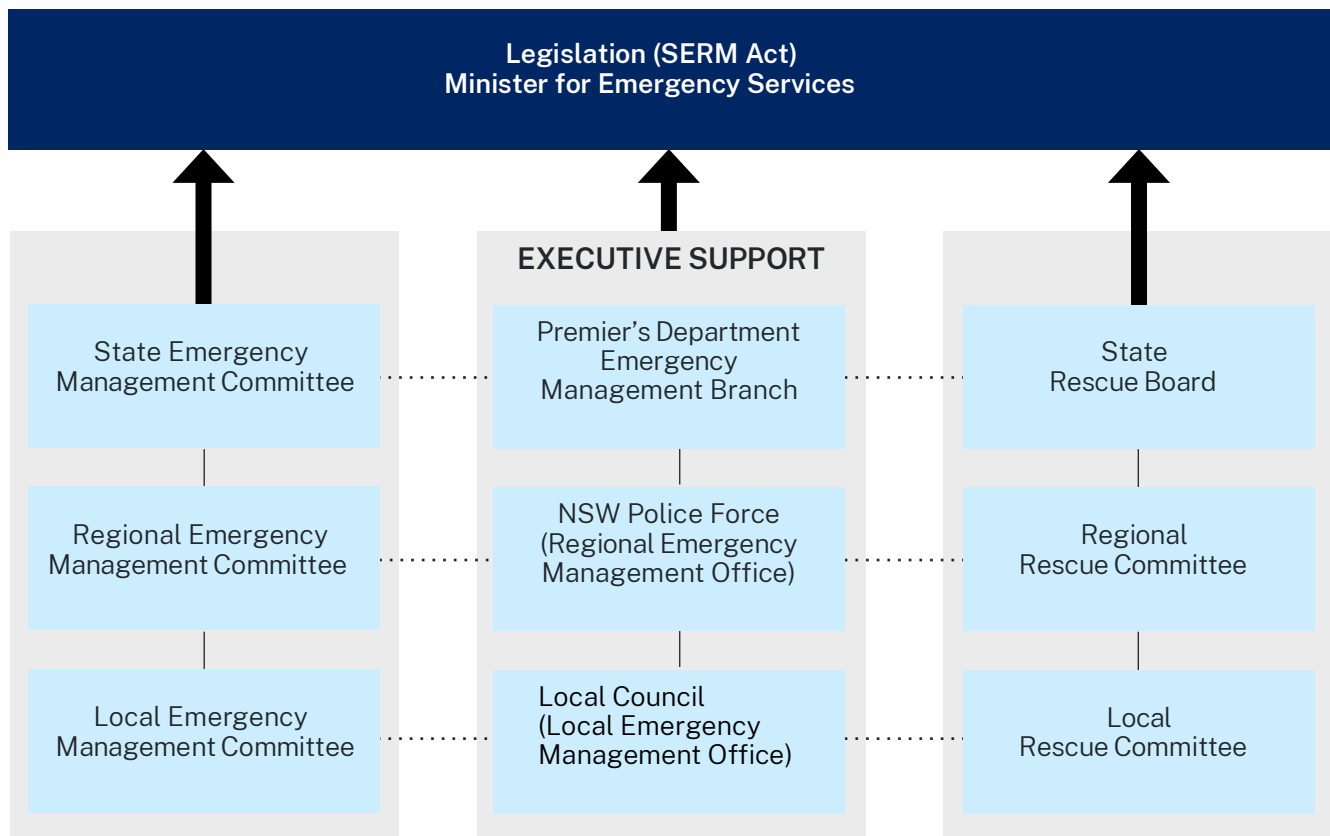

Figure 1: NSW emergency management arrangements

This guide is designed to:

- inform and enhance governance and planning arrangements by which Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) are constituted

- complement arrangements described within emergency management legislation, policy or plans

- assist LEMC representatives in understanding their roles and responsibilities, and the functions of the LEMC

- outline the relationship between LEMC functions and the operational environment without containing specific emergency operational response information.

1.1 Definition of 'emergency'

The SERM Act defines an emergency as:

'An actual or imminent occurrence (such as fire, flood, storm, earthquake, explosion, terrorist act, accident, epidemic or warlike action) which:

a. endangers, or threatens to endanger, the safety or health of persons or animals in the State, or

b. destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, property in the State, or

c. causes a failure of, or significant disruption to, an essential service or infrastructure being an emergency which requires a significant and coordinated response.'

The NSW arrangements and functions of the LEMC are undertaken within the context of emergency situations.

An agency with responsibility for managing hazard-related events (Combat Agency) may do so within its capabilities under its own legislative powers without requiring engagement of the NSW emergency management arrangements – for example, the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) responding to a small-scale bush fire. However, these arrangements acknowledge that no one agency can effectively manage response requirements across all the consequences of an emergency. When LEMCs and Combat Agencies are fulfilling their planning responsibilities, they should consider what constitutes an emergency within the local government area (LGA) and what can be managed within the capabilities of the responsible agency.

Each LEMC will have differing assessments of local resource capability, and this should inform planning, support and escalation requirements.

1.2 Emergency management in NSW

Emergency management is principally the management of resources, priorities and activities for dealing with all aspects of emergencies. It includes:

- implementing preventative, minimisation and/or protective strategies

- acting during emergencies to avoid loss of life and reduce actual or probable injury, loss of property and/or damage to the environment

- assisting people to recover from the emergency event and continue with effective community functions.

The State EMPLAN outlines the following principles that underpin emergency management in NSW:

- **A comprehensive approach**: The approach spans prevention, preparation, response and recovery (PPRR), where:

  - **prevention** includes identifying hazards, assessing threats to life and property, and taking proactive measures to reduce potential loss to life or property

  - **preparation** includes arrangements or plans to deal with an emergency. This includes enhancing the capacity of agencies and communities to cope with the consequences of emergencies

  - **response** includes the process of combating an emergency and of providing immediate relief for people affected. This ensures that immediate consequences of emergencies to communities are minimised

- – **recovery** includes the process of returning an affected community to its proper level of functioning after an emergency. This may involve measures that support individuals and communities affected by emergencies in the reconstruction and restoration of physical infrastructure and restoration of physical, social, environmental and economic wellbeing.

- **Continuous improvement**: All agencies with responsibilities under the State EMPLAN undertake continuous improvement, update plans and arrangements, and consider lessons learned from the testing and evaluation of plans, and from operational experience.

- **Coordination and information-sharing**: The NSW emergency management arrangements reflect a commitment to an all-hazards, all-agencies approach, which includes coordination and information-sharing across the full spectrum of PPRR, even though certain hazards may require specific plans and management. Lead agencies in each context will identify and involve partner agencies at the earliest opportunity to enhance planning and operational management. Agencies collect and share impact assessment data in a timely manner to inform recovery.

- **All-hazards**: The all-hazards approach is based on the principle that systems and methods of operation that work for one hazard are most likely to work for other hazards. It does not, however, prevent the development of specific plans and arrangements for hazards that require specialised approaches.

- **All-agencies approach**: The all-agencies approach recognises that no one agency can address all the impacts of a particular hazard, either in a proactive or reactive sense. It is a lead agency's responsibility to coordinate the activities of the other organisations and agencies involved. These can be drawn from across all levels of government, as well as the non-government and private sectors.

- **Aboriginal culture, land and people:** Aboriginal people, land, cultural knowledge and practices are valued as integral to all phases of emergency management. In developing emergency management plans at all levels, agencies and organisations should consider the specific needs of Aboriginal people and conduct ongoing consultation with Aboriginal groups.

- **Local capability**: Responsibility for preparation and risk management rests at the local level in the first instance. Emergency response and recovery are conducted at the lowest level of effective coordination. Resources and support are augmented by region and state-level coordination as required.

- **Community and stakeholder engagement**: Community and stakeholder engagement is a critical aspect of emergency management across the full spectrum of PPRR. Agencies will engage with the community and stakeholders to improve community understanding of these arrangements and promote disaster resilience.

- **Roles and responsibilities**: To implement the comprehensive PPRR approach, roles and responsibilities are allocated to State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) member agencies and, where applicable, to region and local equivalents. PPRR is complex and requires involvement from agencies and stakeholders in different ways. The allocation of key roles provides a clear structure for determining the lead agency and relevant Supporting Agencies for any given emergency. This enables joint planning across phases of an emergency lifecycle. The phases of PPRR are not distinct, often overlap and require involvement at different times.

- **Emergency risk management**: This is a process that involves dealing with risks to the community arising from hazards. It is a systematic method for identifying, analysing, evaluating and treating emergency risks. Risk treatments include a reduction in the frequency or consequence of risks through prevention and mitigation measures, and preparation, as well as provision for response and recovery should an emergency event occur.

- **Disaster resilience**: Disaster resilience is an outcome derived from sharing responsibility between all levels of government, business, the non-government sector and the community, who then act on this basis prior to, during and after a disaster. Disaster resilience is significantly increased by active planning and preparation. A shared understanding of disaster risks at a community level is a vital precursor.

- **Volunteers**: Volunteers, both formal and informal, play a critical role in emergency management across the full spectrum of PPRR. This includes spontaneous volunteers, who are individuals or informal groups of people who contribute their assistance before, during or after a disaster, and are unaffiliated with any official emergency management or recovery organisation

(State EMPLAN, 116–133).

1.3 Legislation

The NSW Government enacted the SERM Act in recognition of the need for appropriate and effective prevention, preparation, response and recovery measures for emergency situations, and the establishment of a structure and system for managing rescue at state, regional and local levels. The SERM Act establishes the emergency management system in NSW, describes how rescue is coordinated and specifies the requirement for the formation and conduct of the LEMC. The Minister for Emergency Services is responsible for the SERM Act.
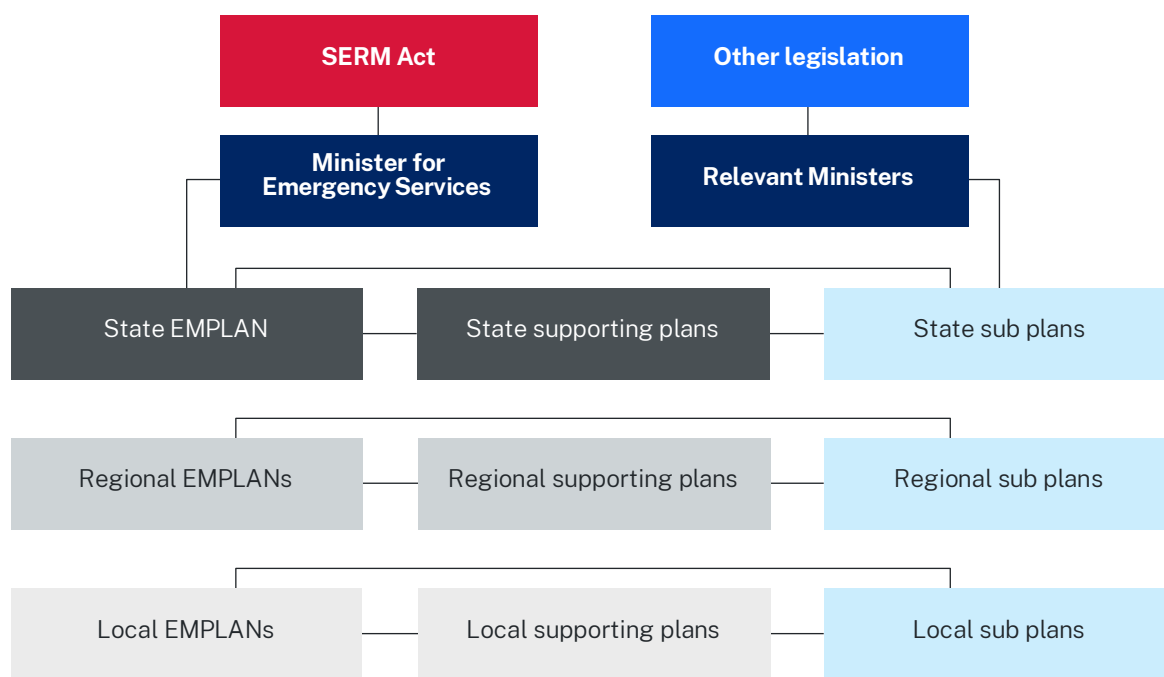

Figure 2: Emergency management legislative and planning framework

2 Emergency management committees

Emergency management committees are responsible for emergencies. In keeping with the all-agencies approach to emergency management, there are 3 levels of committees. The SERM Act governs the structure of these committees and their responsibilities.

2.1 State Emergency Management Committee

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) ensures that NSW has a system to cope with emergencies that is robust, effective and flexible enough to deal with the range of hazards experienced within the state. A hazard affecting the community may result in an emergency. The SEMC's functions are to:

- advise the Minister on all matters relating to the PPRR phases of emergencies (including the coordination of the activities of government and non-government agencies in connection with those matters)

- review, monitor and advise the Minister on the adequacy of the provisions of the SERM Act relating to emergency management

- provide strategic policy advice to the Minister in relation to emergency management

- review, monitor and develop emergency management policy and practice at a state level and to disseminate information in relation to any such policy and practice

- promote the continuous improvement of emergency management policy and practice at a state level, including by considering reviews and inquiries into emergency operations, exercises and training evaluations

- review the State EMPLAN and to recommend alterations (State EMPLAN, 208).

The SERM Act establishes regions, as well as Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC) roles, functions and relationships to the SEMC. The local level is based on LGAs or a combination of LGAs.

2.2 Regional Emergency Management Committee

The state is divided into 11 emergency management regions. In each of these regions, an emergency management committee has been constituted, reflecting the structure of the SEMC.

The Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC) is representative of the emergency management resources available within that region and/or LGA. The REMC is responsible for:

- reviewing and monitoring emergency management practice across the region, consistent with information on emergency management policy and practice disseminated by the SEMC

- reviewing and preparing plans for the region that are, or are proposed to be, sub plans or supporting plans established under the State EMPLAN

- developing, conducting and evaluating regional emergency management exercises for the purpose of testing sub plans or supporting plans established under the State EMPLAN in respect of the region

- making recommendations about and assisting in the coordination of training in relation to emergency management across the region

- facilitating regional-level management capability through inter-agency coordination, cooperation and information-sharing arrangements

- assisting the Regional Emergency Operations Controller (REOCON) for the region in their role of establishing a Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC)

- preparing plans in relation to the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies in the region (noting the responsibility for planning by Combat Agencies)

- carrying out other functions as assigned by the SEMC (State EMPLAN, 412).
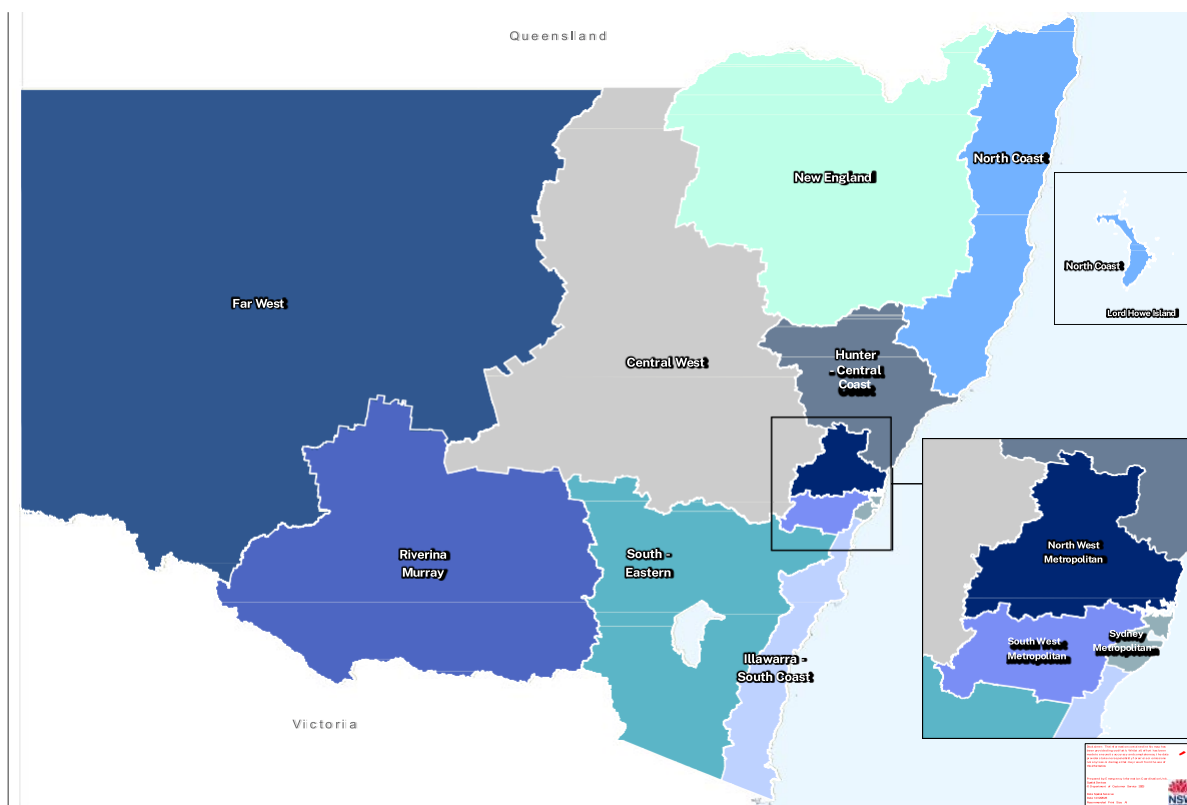
Figure 3: Emergency management regions

2.3   Local Emergency Management Committee

The Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) is convened and exercises its legislative functions under the provisions of the SERM Act, not the Local Government Act (1993) and, as such, is not a committee of council. The SERM Act states that the General Manager is the chair of the committee; further information about chairing the LEMC is provided in Section 4.1. The business of the LEMC does not require council endorsement. Notwithstanding, there is a role for the council in determining membership of the committee.

The purpose of the LEMC is to facilitate communication between emergency services, Functional Areas, local government and the community. It is responsible for preparing plans in relation to the prevention of, preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies within the LGA.

3 Functions of the Local Emergency Management Committee

Principally, the LEMC is a committee responsible for preparing plans focusing on all aspects of emergency management within its LGA, including PPRR. Its functions, as defined in the SERM Act and State EMPLAN, are to:

- execute emergency management policy and coordinate emergency management practice at a local level, consistent with information on emergency management policy and practice disseminated by the SEMC

- review and prepare plans in respect of the relevant LGA that are, or are proposed to be, sub plans or supporting plans established under the State EMPLAN

- develop, conduct and evaluate local emergency management exercises for the purpose of testing sub plans or supporting plans established under the State EMPLAN in respect of the LGA

- make recommendations about and assist in coordinating training for emergency management in the relevant LGA

- facilitate local-level emergency management capability through inter-agency coordination, cooperation and information-sharing arrangements

- assist the area's LEOCON in the role of establishing and controlling a Local Emergency Operations Centre (LEOC)

- prepare plans in relation to the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies in the LGA (noting the responsibility for planning by Combat Agencies)

- consider Aboriginal outcomes in emergency management planning

- plan for the effective and efficient coordination of volunteers (noting the responsibility of volunteer coordination by Combat Agencies and recovery agencies)

- carry out other functions as assigned by the SEMC

- collaborate with Aboriginal organisations, including Traditional Owners and Local Aboriginal Land Councils, to prepare and review plans that sit outside local government regulation and service provision.

The table below outlines activities that an LEMC may undertake and provides guidance on how these activities are applied within the emergency management arrangements.

LEMC activities	Application
Give effect to and carry out emergency management policy and practice, consistent with information on that policy and practice disseminated by the SEMC.	When preparing for, responding to, or recovering from emergencies or major events, LEMC members are to ensure that they are applying the principles of state or region-level policy and plans.
Coordinate emergency management practice at a local level.	Coordination is the primary principle of emergency management in NSW. As all agencies are required to resolve an emergency as soon as possible, responsibility for coordinating support to the Combat Agency is vested in the LEOCON. The LEMC member agencies and others assist in achieving this principle.

LEMC activities	Application
Review and prepare plans in respect of the relevant LGA that are, or are proposed to be, sub plans or supporting plans established under the State EMPLAN.	The local emergency management process includes the development of Consequence Management Guides (CMGs). The local risk profile may require local sub plans or supporting plans to be developed. State sub and supporting plans may also advise if a local sub plan or supporting plan is required.
Develop, conduct and evaluate local emergency management exercises in respect of the LGA.	LEMC exercises are conducted to test the Local Emergency Management (EM) Plan, CMGs, sub plans or supporting plans. Exercises may be eligible for funding. Outcomes and identified learnings must be reported on to the REMC.
Make recommendations about and assist in the coordination of emergency management training in the relevant LGA.	This includes assisting with the development of a training gap analysis, providing feedback on emergency management training, and assisting in relation to resources, expertise and facilities, where appropriate.
Facilitate local-level emergency management capability through inter-agency coordination, cooperation and information-sharing arrangements.	This can be done through informal gatherings, emergency services expos, LEMC meetings, exercises, emergency management training, cross-agency training, using the Emergency Management Operating System (EMOS) and developing local arrangements for sharing information electronically or in person.
Assist the LEOCON for the relevant LGA in the Controller's role under section 31 of the SERM Act.	This may include supporting an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC); providing well equipped and trained liaison officers to EOCs; communicating with and providing intelligence to the LEOCON and EOC; providing support personnel to the EOC; and keeping the LEOCON informed of any situation that may require the engagement of the emergency management arrangements.
Prepare plans in relation to the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies in the LGA.	The LEMC produces: • a Local EM Plan in the approved template, and reviews it at prescribed intervals • CMGs in the approved template, for hazards/risks/occurrences that would require coordination under emergency management arrangements to resolve. These should be reviewed every 5 years at a minimum or following a significant emergency or a major exercise.
Carry out other functions as are assigned by the SEMC.	This may include related projects such as: • undertaking an emergency risk management study and report • participating in statewide working groups or projects • additional planning requirements.

3.1   Administration

The council is responsible for coordinating and undertaking the administrative responsibilities of the LEMC. This includes keeping and maintaining records of all meetings, working groups, contact lists, event reports, briefings, debriefs and after-action reviews. The retention of LEMC documents is undertaken by the council on behalf of the LEMC. Records retention and disposal guidance is outlined below.

Record	Requirements for retention and disposal
Compliance: EOC audits, exercise documents	Retain for 3 years minimum
Strategic management: research, draft versions of documents formally circulated for comment, meeting notes, issue analysis and outcomes, stakeholder consultation and associated correspondence	Retain for 3 years minimum
Debriefs/after-action reviews (AARs): incidents where no deaths or injuries have occurred	Retain for 7 years minimum
Strategic management: Local EM Plans, standard operating procedures (SOPs), risk management plans, strategic plans, business plans and any associated correspondence	Retain for 7 years minimum
Administrative reporting: Monthly reports/quarterly reports, annual projected activity report and any associated correspondence	Retain for 7 years minimum
LEMC, Local Rescue Committee (LRC) or local sub-committee related: charter, memorandum of understanding (MoU), terms of reference (TORs), agenda, minutes, briefing notes, advice, reports, recommendations, resolutions, correspondence arising, publications, reports, discussion papers	No disposal – required for archive
Membership: Nomination, appointment and resignation of members, EOCON appointments, notification of change to committee members	No disposal – required for archive
Operational files: Situation Reports (SITREPs), impact assessments, photos, operational incident action plans, operational logs, and any associated correspondence. All files when a Special Commission, Ministerial Inquiry or Coronial Inquiry is undertaken or has the potential to be undertaken	No disposal – required for archive
Debriefs/AARs: emergency operations, State of Emergency Declarations, Natural Disaster Declarations. All files when a Special Commission, Ministerial Inquiry or Coronial Inquiry is undertaken or has the potential to be undertaken	No disposal – required for archive
Legislation: submissions/comments related to review of the SERM Act or other legislation, recommendations for changes to legislation and any associated correspondence	No disposal – required for archive

Minutes of the LEMC should be forwarded to the Regional Emergency Management Officer (REMO) as soon as practicable after each LEMC meeting. Ideally, minutes should be received no later than 3 weeks prior to the REMC, to allow:

- the REMO to review the minutes and clarify any items that may be discussed at the REMC meeting

- REMC members to be aware of REMC meeting agenda items arising from LEMC meetings.

If the LEMC executive support function is shared across multiple LGAs, clearly defined processes should be developed and implemented to ensure continuity of office. The change of substantive council should not disrupt the administration.

3.2 Local Emergency Management Committee conduct

A LEMC Charter or Terms of Reference (ToR) is not a legislated requirement of the SERM Act; however, committees may choose to prepare such a document for the purposes of meeting its obligations under the SERM Act with respect to the conduct of committee business. This should detail:

- frequency and methods of meetings

- meeting papers and processes

- records management

- motion and voting processes

- members.

It is recommended that production of an LEMC Charter or ToR be considered when:

- establishing a new LEMC

- where an LEMC is composed of 2 or more LGAs

- when significant structural or membership changes occur within the LEMC, or boundary amendments occur.

4 Committee membership

Each LEMC consists of members identified in section 28 of the SERM Act. The SERM Act states that the LEMC is to consist of:

- the General Manager of the nominated principal council, who is to be the LEMC Chairperson
- a senior representative of each ESO operating in the area.
- a representative of any organisation that provides services in a functional area (or areas) and that council determines is to be represented
- the LEOCON
- a representative of each organisation that the Minister determines is to be represented (see section 4.9)

The SERM Act states that a representative of an organisation is to be nominated by the organisation.

Changes in LEMC membership are to be documented in the Local EM Plan and any Charter or ToR.

4.1 Local Emergency Management Committee Chair

The SERM Act requires the General Manager of the council of the relevant LGA to chair the LEMC. However, there are provisions under the SERM Act and the Local Government Act 1993 for the Chair to either delegate that responsibility (to someone from the council) or nominate a Deputy to act in their absence.

The Chair of the LEMC is responsible for:

- managing and coordinating the business of the committee
- providing leadership, being an effective strategist and building effective and functional relationships across a multi-agency environment
- ensuring the LEMC performs its functions, that each meeting is planned and conducted according to the SERM Act and LEMC Charter/ToR (if in place) and that matters are dealt with in an orderly and efficient manner. The Chair should aim to make the most of member participation, assisting to build the team and ensuring members are regularly represented and contribute
- managing emergency management planning and review, including ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place and reviewed against the responsibilities of public safety within the emergency environment
- representing the LEMC on the REMC. The LEMC Chair is a member of the REMC and is required to attend its meetings, participate in its activities and report on LEMC activities.

4.2 Deputy Chair

In accordance with the SERM Act, the Chair may nominate a Deputy Chair. Ideally, the person should be someone able to perform the duties of the Chair, with appropriate authority and skills.

4.3 Local Emergency Operations Controller

The Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON) is a NSW Police Force officer appointed by the NSW Police Force Regional Commander in their role as the Regional Emergency Operations Controller (REOCON). The officer appointed LEOCON should be from the emergency management region in which the LGA is located, unless this is not practicable.

This means that the LEOCON may not be located within the LGA or even the emergency management region to which the LEMC is constituted. Regardless, this does not change the functions and responsibilities of the position and the importance of effective relationships within the local area.

The LEOCON's responsibilities are legislated under the SERM Act. In accordance with the SERM Act, the LEOCON is a member of the LEMC.

4.4   Local Emergency Management Officer

The Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) or principal executive support officer is appointed by council to provide executive support to the LEMC and the LEOCON. The LEMO, a non-voting member of the LEMC, answers to the Chair of the LEMC and to the LEOCON during emergency operations and events controlled by the LEOCON.

The role and responsibilities of the LEMO will vary across LGAs. An overview of the tasks and duties a LEMO may undertake is provided in Annexure A.

4.5   Regional Emergency Management Officer

The Regional Emergency Management Officer (REMO) attends the LEMC as an observer to provide guidance and consultation. The role of the REMO is to act as the Executive Officer to the REOCON and REMC. The REMO ensures, on behalf of the REOCON and REMC, that compliance and effective emergency management is occurring within the region.

The REMO works across and supports both the REMC and LEMC functions, provides high-level support to emergency management positions and agencies, and provides advice to state-level committees and working groups. The position is appointed by the NSW Police Force and answers to the Region Commander in their capacity as REOCON.

LEMCs are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from their REMO regarding:

- legislative compliance
- review of local and facility plans and documents
- development of standard operating procedures and protocols
- undertaking of evacuation centre audits
- operational debriefs
- working groups and sub committees
- development of exercises
- response and recovery operations.

REMOs also assist with the development, conduct, assessment and review of multi-agency courses and workshops.

4.6   Emergency Services Organisations

Emergency Services Organisations (ESOs) are identified in the SERM Act. They include:

- NSW Ambulance
- Fire and Rescue NSW
- NSW Police Force
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- NSW State Emergency Service
- NSW Volunteer Rescue Association
- Surf Life Saving NSW
- Volunteer Marine Rescue NSW
- a fire brigade within the meaning of the *Fire and Rescue Act 1989*
- an agency that manages or controls an accredited rescue unit
- a non-government agency that is prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this definition.

4.7   Functional Areas

Functional Areas are a group of agencies that provide services around a specific area of expertise involved in emergency management. Annexure 5 of the State EMPLAN identifies the agency responsible for leading each Functional Area, as outlined in the table below.

Functional Area	Abbreviation	Responsible agency
Agricultural and Animal Services	AASFA	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Education Services	EduSFA	Department of Education
Energy and Utility Services	EUSFA	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Engineering Services	ESFA	Public Works, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Environmental Services	EnvSFA	NSW Environment Protection Authority
Health Services	HSFA	NSW Health
Public Information Services	PIFA	NSW Police Force
Telecommunication Services	TELCOFA	NSW Telco Authority, Department of Customer Service
Transport Services	TSFA	Transport for NSW
Welfare Services	WSFA	Homes NSW, Department of Communities and Justice

In accordance with the SERM Act, an organisation that provides services in a functional area (or areas) and council has determined is to be a member on the LEMC is to nominate a representative. The organisation may be the responsible agency for the Functional Area, a Participating Organisation, or a Supporting Agency (e.g. Local Land Services which is part of the Agricultural and Animal Functional Area).

Where Functional Area Coordinators (FAC) or representatives are unable to attend, it is good practice to ensure that they have access to agendas and minutes of meetings to keep them informed on matters the committee is dealing with. If FAC input is required, the LEMC may request/invite the FAC to attend an upcoming LEMC to contribute to a specific issue or discussion.

4.8   Other eligible members

The SERM Act specifies that an LEMC is to include a representative of an organisation that the Minister for Emergency Services from time to time determines is to be represented on the LEMC. In January 2025, the Minister determined that the NSW Reconstruction Authority and Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) are to be members of LEMCs. LEMC voting membership is to reflect this determination and include the NSW Reconstruction Authority and LALCs operating within the boundaries of the LEMC.

4.9   Observers

The SERM Act does not provide information on committee observers. The LEMC may determine that an organisation is invited to attend meetings, either on an as-required or ongoing basis, as an observer (non-member). These invitations may be issued to:

- organisations that have a stakeholder interest in the activities and functions of the committee
- organisations that can provide expert advice and guidance to the LEMC.

For example, not all Combat Agencies are represented as members of the LEMC. The LEMC should consider including representation from agencies with Combat Agency responsibilities as an observer where a relevant hazard exists within the LGA.

Observers may be heard at meetings but do not have voting rights.

5   LEMC administration

5.1   Meeting frequencies

The SERM Act does not specify the number of meetings to be conducted within each calendar or financial year. Meeting frequency should be determined by the committee and documented in its Charter or ToR as part of how the committee will conduct its business in accordance with the SERM Act. It is recommended that:

- LEMC meetings occur at least every 4 months

- LEMC meetings are held prior to the scheduled REMC meeting, to allow any issues raised or endorsement processes occurring at LEMCs to be forwarded to REMCs for addressing or noting

- Local Rescue Committees (LRCs) and LEMC meetings are held consecutively on the same day.

5.2   Voting rules

The rules of the committee are outlined in the SERM Act. In summary, voting rules are:

- The committee must have a quorum for a vote to be undertaken. A quorum exists where a majority of the LEMC voting membership are in attendance.

- Members, other than the Chair, are afforded one vote only.

- The Chair has the first deliberative vote, and a casting vote, if votes cast are equal in number. In the event of equal votes, the Chair may choose to:

- use their casting vote immediately.

- open further discussion on the matter prior to using their casting vote

- call for a re-vote to occur without using their casting vote. Further discussion takes place prior to the motion being re-tabled and a resolution occurring.

A vote can be 'in favour' or 'not in favour' of the motion only if a quorum exists. If there is no quorum, the motion may be discussed and deferred to another meeting for a vote. A member may choose to abstain from voting. The Chair has the right to enquire why they are abstaining in either open forum or discreetly; however, no rationale or justification is required to be provided by the abstaining member.

The LEMO is a non-voting member as outlined in Section 4.4. However, if the person in the LEMO role has been appointed as the delegate of the Chair or Deputy Chair (in accordance with sections 4.1 and 4.2) for the purposes of the meeting, then they will have a vote in accordance with the voting rules.

5.3   Agendas

Meeting agendas should be determined by the LEMC and documented as part of how the committee will conduct business in accordance with the SERM Act. There are 2 sample agenda templates available for LEMCs – one incorporates agency reporting while the other does not. Agenda items in templates can be rearranged to suit the LEMC. When producing an agenda, the functions of the LEMC should be the focus of all items.

It is recommended that the agenda and any business papers be sent to members at least 2 weeks before the LEMC meeting. This allows members to research or prepare information related to the agenda items, facilitating purposeful discussions and decision-making. The following topics should always be included as standing agenda items:

Action register

An action register should be maintained throughout the life of the LEMC. Each motion, resolution or decision of the LEMC that requires action should be recorded in the action register. Details of each action, including their status, responsible officer, agreed completion date, and supporting information (for example LEMC minutes, reports and progress notes) should be referenced.

The LEMO monitors the actions within the register and updates them accordingly between, and at, meetings. At each meeting, the status of actions from the previous meeting is discussed or noted and all other actions are archived.

Major activities

The committee should reflect on, discuss and note any major activities that have occurred since the last meeting that required a multi-agency response. This should focus on activities that tested the emergency management arrangements from a multi-agency perspective.

Changes in capability

This is an important topic of discussion regardless of whether there is a decrease or increase in capability.

The LEMC has a responsibility to undertake risk assessment in relation to changes in capability. Where there is reduced capability, the LEMC may need to discuss options to address any gap in service to the community that is not otherwise being addressed internally by the relevant agency. Where there is increased or new capability, the LEMC can raise awareness of this within the committee and discuss how that capability can be best utilised.

Planning

This is a primary responsibility of the LEMC. A Local EM Plan template and supporting guidelines are available for download at https://www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/rescue-and-emergency-management/emergency-management-policy. The LEMC is to review the Local EM Plan every 5 years at a minimum or following a significant emergency or a major exercise. This agenda item also allows for the review and/or development of CMGs to meet planning responsibilities.

Evacuation preparedness

This is a responsibility of the LEMC. The Local EM Plan template (and guidelines) has a dedicated section for evacuation planning. The LEMC is to substantively consider evacuation preparedness, with the inclusion of Functional Area representation, in at least one meeting a year.

The LEMC is to report to the REMC on the outputs of its evacuation preparedness discussions and the REMC will provide a report to the SEMC in December each year.

Requiring focused, structured discussions about evacuation preparedness also provides a mechanism to identify and, if required, escalate risks to the REMC for consideration.

Training activities and exercises

While multi-agency exercises should be the focus of discussion, LEMC members may also discuss or present on agency-level exercises and training that has been undertaken. This agenda item also allows outcomes and lessons from exercises to inform CMGs for relevant hazards/situations.

The LEMC is responsible for conducting multi-agency exercises, receiving reports from any exercise steering committees established, and facilitating discussions post-exercise. Reviewing or producing CMGs also provides the opportunity to undertake desktop discussions that meet the LEMC's exercising responsibilities.

Further guidance on training and exercising is provided in Section 7 of this handbook.

5.4   Combining local government areas for emergency management

The SERM Act allows for 2 or more areas to combine their arrangements for the purpose of gaining efficiencies across emergency management. This may occur when:

- the same personnel from agencies represent on both committees
- the LGAs are in such proximity to each that they respond and resource from within each other's boundaries
- participating agency local and zone boundaries are encompassed within the LGA
- the inherent risks to the LGA communities and associated dependencies are significantly related.

Any such combination must be approved by the Minister responsible for the SERM Act. The process to achieve a combined committee is as follows:

- LEMCs proposing to be joined discuss and undertake a strategic planning analysis of the proposed combination.

- If a motion to combine is passed by each LEMC, then the committees should make a recommendation to the individual councils seeking their agreement. If the councils agree, they should each write to the REOCON to request that a recommendation should be made to the Minister for approval to combine the local areas for emergency management purposes.

- The REMC considers the proposal and forwards its recommendation to the SEMC, via the SEMC Secretariat, for the consideration of the SEMC and the Minister. The REMC and the Chair of the respective LEMCs will receive correspondence on the decision of the Minister. Items that require discussion and appraisal when considering a combined committee include:

  – whether a single council is assigned as the 'principal' council, or the principal council role is rotated on a specified term basis (and whether this rotation occurs based on calendar or financial year)

  – LEMC business continuity practices between councils when rotating the principal role

  – the council requirement to provide executive support (e.g. in the form of a LEMO), and how the executive support is resourced and supported equitably. For example, the principal council may provide executive support (LEMO), while the other council(s) provide resources to support the functions

  – whether an EOC is provided for the combined area, or a primary EOC is provided within one LGA and secondary EOC(s) located in the other LGA/s

  – the process for consolidating the existing Local EM Plan and sub-plans into new plans

  – the process for the historic and archival retention of files associated with the former LEMCs

  – MoUs between councils to address Chair, LEMO and financial commitments.

- The date of the Minister's approval will be determined as the date the new LEMC is officially formed. Once the Minister's approval has been given, the new committee exists even if it has not yet formally met.

5.5   Membership

Each member should nominate a deputy to act in their absence. Such positions should be identified and recorded in advance. When neither the member nor deputy can be present, they may be represented by a nominated person. Such representation must be advised to the Chair or LEMO prior to the meeting taking place. This can be done either in writing or face to face. The role of principal and deputy membership representatives should be based on a position within the respective agency, rather than an individual.

Continuity is important when membership changes; therefore, it is strongly recommended that new or replacement representatives are adequately briefed during position handover on emergency management matters and participation on the LEMC. This will help ensure any replacement member is aware of the agenda, items of discussion, decisions and guidance previously provided by that agency to the LEMC.

The Chair of a newly created LEMC should request agencies, including ESOs, to nominate their representative to be a member of the newly created LEMC. Where an LGA covers more than one administrative area of an agency, that agency can only have one member on the LEMC and it is up to the agency to nominate its representative. This has previously been done by seeking the assistance of the agency's regional representative.

5.6   Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act) allows for any person to apply for access to information retained by any department of the NSW Government. The LEMC is formed under NSW legislation and is therefore subject to the regulatory requirements of the GIPA Act.

The council may be approached to provide information and records produced by the LEMC and retained by council. Information and records produced by the LEMC are the property of the LEMC and may contain information or intellectual property owned by LEMC member agencies.

The LEMC Chair may authorise the release of this information on behalf of the LEMC, but only after consulting with members.

If a GIPA request is received, further advice can be sought from the Emergency Management Branch, Premier's Department.

5.7   Role of councils

The council has 2 legislated responsibilities under the SERM Act:

- to provide and perform the function of Chair of the LEMC
- to provide executive support facilities for the LEMC and the LEOCON within its respective area in the way of a LEMO.

The State EMPLAN also specifies that council will provide executive support to the LEOCON and LEMC. The support facilities to be provided by council are not defined in either the SERM Act or the State EMPLAN. Types of facilities provided by council may include:

- a LEOC
- office space and other resources to support the functions of the LEMO and/or LEOCON.

The support facilities required by the LEMC and LEOCON may vary between LGAs and should be addressed by councils in consultation with stakeholders.

6 Prevention

6.1 Emergency risk management

Emergency risk management (ERM) is a systematic process of identifying, analysing, assessing, treating and mitigating risk to people, property and the environment. The process begins with an understanding of the hazards and produces a range of treatment options to minimise the impact, or if possible, eliminate the resulting risk.

In NSW, ERM is the process approved by the SEMC for assessing all hazards and is also a key component of the State EMPLAN. This helps to determine the priority of planning and production of CMGs for the emergency environment.

ERM is based on Australian Standard AS/NZ ISO 31000:2018 – Risk Management – Principles & Guidelines. This standard provides the basis for the ERM process detailed in the **National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines Handbook 2020.**

The figure below outlines how emergency risk assessment operates at the local level and feeds into emergency management plans.
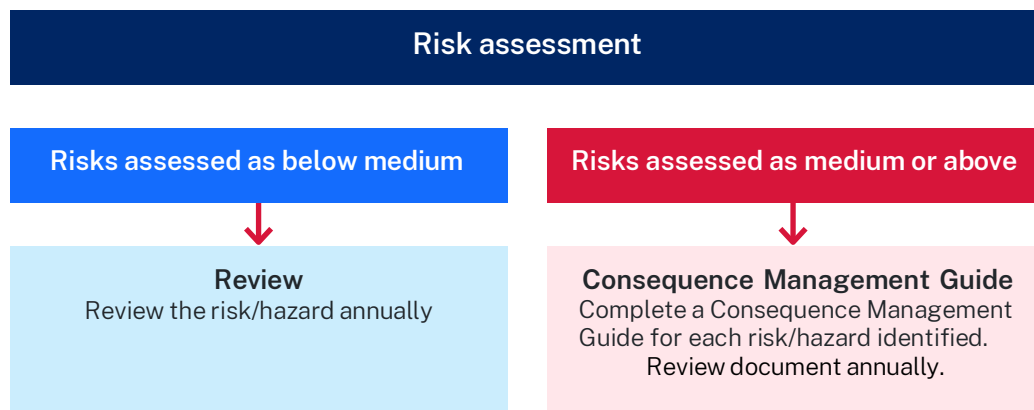
Figure 4: Local emergency risk assessment

Emergency risk assessment should be a continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, taking action to eliminate or reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing. It is important to consistently record assessment results and actions, and update the Local EM Plan as required.

The emergency risk assessment process can involve stakeholders beyond the LEMC, who can provide information on local risks, vulnerabilities and controls (e.g. local council community and environmental services).

Integrated Planning and Reporting framework

Councils are also encouraged to consult with the LEMCs as part of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework. LEMC member agencies are encouraged to participate in the IPR process when invited by council. This helps ensure LEMC ERM and emergency response planning informs the strategic planning decisions of council.

6.2 Local Risk Management Committees

Bush Fire Management Committee

Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMCs) are required to be formed under the auspices of the Rural Fires Act 1997. They are established and chaired by the NSW RFS, with membership consisting of a range of stakeholders such as land managers, fire authorities, infrastructure and asset owners, and community organisations. The BFMC reports directly to the state-level NSW Bush Fire Coordinating Committee.

The LEMC Chair, LEMO and/or LEOCON may be members of the BFMC or be co-opted as required. These committees help identify assets at risk of bush fire in an LGA. This includes communities, buildings and infrastructure, as well as culturally and environmentally significant locations. The BFMC then has responsibility to develop a Bush Fire Risk Management Plan, which sets out the types of work required to mitigate the risk and impact of bush fires in an area.

Flood Risk Management Committee

Flood Risk Management Committees (FRMCs) may be formed by the local council in accordance with the **Flood risk management manual: the policy and manual for the management of flood liable land (Department of Planning and Environment, 2023).** Where established, they are chaired by the council, with membership consisting of a range of stakeholders such council, landholders, industry bodies, environmental groups, community representatives, NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) and other relevant agencies.

The LEMC Chair, LEMO and/or LEOCON may be members of the FRMC, or be co-opted as required. The FRMC reports directly to the council or an appropriate standing committee. FRMCs are established by the council to help identify assets at risk of flooding within an LGA. This includes communities, buildings and infrastructure, as well as culturally and environmentally significant locations.

The FRMC has responsibility to develop a Flood Risk Management Plan, which sets out the types of work required to mitigate the risk and impact of flooding in an area. This is separate to a flood sub plan, which may be prepared under the emergency management arrangements and may be informed by flood studies. The Flood risk management manual provides guidance and reference.

To ensure consistency in the planning functions of the LEMC, the LEMC Chair should consult with the BFMC and FRMC chairs to ensure representation and communications between each of the committees occurs.

7   Preparation

7.1   Overview

A key to minimising the cost and effects of emergencies, after all reasonable risk reduction measures have been taken, is effective emergency planning. The emergency planning process is designed to produce a set of arrangements that will provide the basis for managing emergency impacts.

In addition to state sub plans, Combat Agencies may produce sub plans to the Local EM Plan where appropriate. If developed, these will be referenced in the Local EM Plan.

Each Functional Area maintains a state supporting plan, which describes their capabilities in emergency management and how the controlling or coordinating authority can access those capabilities.

All sub and supporting plans take a comprehensive approach to emergency management, by considering all PPRR stages.

7.2   Local Emergency Management Plan

LEMCs are required to produce Local EM Plans, and where appropriate, CMGs or local sub plans. The **Local Emergency Management Planning Guidelines (Premier's Department, 2024)** outlines the requirements for Local EM Plans and CMGs.

The local emergency risk assessment (study) should consider the hazards that are relevant to the local area (i.e. the local risk profile) and will inform the decision for a CMG or local sub plan.

LEMC members participate in developing these plans by providing:

- advice and guidance related to their area of expertise
- representation on any plan development working groups where required
- representation on any discussions or exercises that test the plan or CMG.

REMC members and Functional Area Coordinators are available to contribute, provide advice and guidance on, and review content to ensure consistency with organisational and EM policies.

Local EM Plans should:

- clearly define the agreed roles and responsibilities of responders and community partners
- demonstrate a level of preparedness by the LEMC related to hazards that might impact the community
- inform emergency management responses by agencies
- detail how support will be coordinated to a Combat Agency or LEOCON and to affected communities
- provide a flexible set of arrangements that can be referenced by the LEOCON and participating agencies
- ensure compliance with the SERM Act and State EMPLAN.

Local EM Plans will usually be developed or reviewed during regular LEMC meetings. Local stakeholders and Functional Area Coordinators, who are not normally represented on the LEMC, should be informed of the intention to hold a local emergency plan meeting and of the specific hazards that will be discussed. Planning for managing the consequences of the impact of hazards may occur over several LEMC meetings.

Where Functional Area Coordinators cannot provide a representative at the LEMC, the LEMC may seek the advice of the Functional Area Coordinator or REMC representative prior to the meeting to identify potential issues and agree on responsibilities and actions in relation to the local plan. Functional Area Coordinators or their regional representative can also comment on and endorse the local plan at the REMC. Contact details for Functional Area Coordinators are included in the REMC Contact Directory.

Other stakeholders who can contribute an understanding of local resources, vulnerabilities and networks – such as council representatives in community and environmental services – should also be considered in the local emergency management planning process.

The *Local Emergency Management Planning Guidelines* outlines the process to produce the Local EM Plan using the templates provided. These documents can also be found at www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/ rescue-and-emergency-management/emergency-management-policy. Although not a requirement, it is recommended that a draft Local EM Plan is made available (for example on the council's website or at easily accessible locations) for public consultation. After an acceptable period, the LEMO is responsible for collating the responses and feedback for consideration by the LEMC.

Local emergency management planning is a collaborative process undertaken with the LEMC. The development of individual CMGs, while led by the Combat Agency or LEOCON, requires input from LEMC members and other identified stakeholders. Discussion or desktop exercises are an excellent way to facilitate this planning process.

7.3   Consequence Management Guides

A Consequence Management Guide (CMG) is a hazard-specific document that outlines agreed emergency management arrangements in a 'checklist' format. This is particularly useful during the initial stages of an emergency and provides important information for easy reference.

CMGs may be developed for individual townships/sites and/or entire LGAs, and inform other arrangements and activities that require significant coordination (e.g. evacuation). CMGs are developed as Annexures to the Local EM Plan template and should be created for each hazard or significant coordinated event identified in the emergency risk management process. Generally, a CMG should be drafted for any risks categorised as medium or higher.

The Combat Agency is responsible for facilitating discussion that informs CMGs relevant to their hazard. A CMG is not required where there is an endorsed local sub plan for a specific hazard. However, a CMG may also be developed where the sub plan does not fully address all consequence management aspects. Where an agency is responsible for the planning for a particular hazard, it should ensure comprehensive consultation with members of the LEMC, and other stakeholders identified as requiring actions under the sub or supporting plan.

When undertaking and contributing to local planning and the development of CMGs, agencies should determine the following:

- What can be immediately provided locally to support emergency operations within existing agency and community resources and capability?
- What level of operational commitment would impact the agency's ability to fulfil its statutory responsibilities?
- What local response activities would require supplementation from regional or state levels as a part of normal operational protocols?
- What activities or responsibilities identified in the State EMPLAN cannot be immediately undertaken at the local level?
- Are any lead times required to undertake the agreed responsibilities in the State EMPLAN?

7.4　Approval process

Local EMPLANs are required to be approved by the LEMC and endorsed by the REMC. The Local EM Plan can be approved separate to any CMGs produced. During Local EM Plan and CMG development, REMC members should have had opportunity to review and comment. This process is outlined below.

Development
- Administrative and Community Risk sections completed by LEMO.
- Consequence Management Guides completed by Combat Agency with input from LEMC and other stakeholders.
- Completed Consequence Management Guides submitted to LEMO.

↓

Endorsement
- Completed plans considered and endorsed by LEMC.
- Signed by LEMC Chair and LEOCON
- Endorsed and signed plans submitted to REMO.

↓

Review
- Local EMPLAN circulated to REMC for review and comment.
- Supporting arrangements verified by Functional Areas.
- Comments/feedback collated by REMO and discussed with LEMO.

↓

Approval
- Considered and endorsed by REMC.
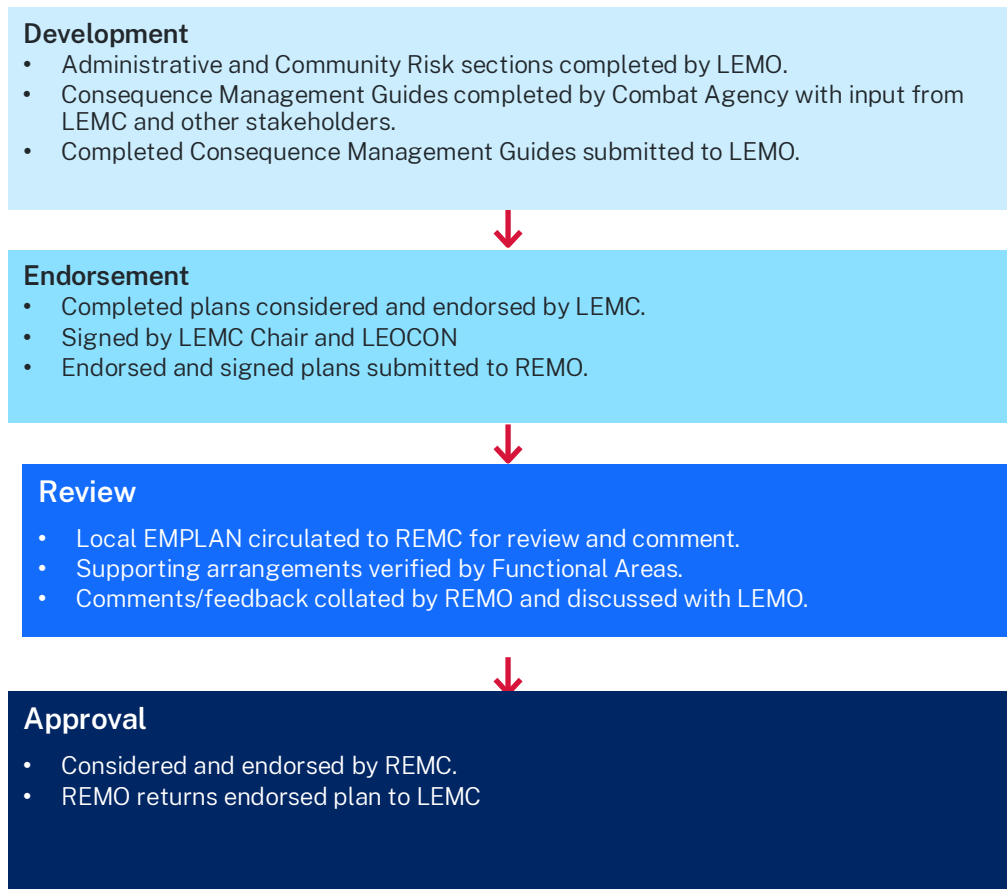- REMO returns endorsed plan to LEMC

Figure 5: Local EM Plan development and approval process

The REMO will maintain a register of local plans to be submitted to the SEMC annually in June to ensure they remain contemporary and compliant.

7.5 Combat Agency planning relationships

NSW emergency management arrangements are based on the premise of a Combat Agency having primary responsibility for the control of the response to an emergency for the hazard for which it is assigned responsibility. The following table lists the Combat Agency responsible for specific hazards as outlined in the State EMPLAN.

Emergency	Responsible agency
Acts of terrorism	NSW Police Force
Aviation emergency	EOCON
Biosecurity (animal and plant)	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear emergency – HAZMAT	Fire and Rescue NSW
Cyber security emergency	EOCON
Electricity supply emergency	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Fire (within a fire district)	Fire and Rescue NSW
Fire (within rural fire district)	NSW Rural Fire Service
Flood	NSW State Emergency Service
Food safety	NSW Food Authority
Hazardous material – on land and inland waterways	Fire and Rescue NSW
Hazardous material – coastal waters	Transport for NSW – Maritime or Port Authority of NSW
Heatwave	SEOCON to coordinate
Law enforcement during a declaration	NSW Police Force
Major structure collapse	Fire and Rescue NSW
Marine oil and chemical spills	Transport for NSW – Maritime or Port Authority of NSW
Mine emergency	EOCON
Native wildlife	NSW Environment Protection Authority
Natural gas supply disruption	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Pandemic	NSW Health
Search and rescue	NSW Police Force
Storm	NSW State Emergency Service
Terrorist act	NSW Police Force
Tsunamis	NSW State Emergency Service

EOCONs control the response to emergencies that are not assigned a Combat Agency.

Where an agency is responsible for the planning for a particular hazard, it should ensure comprehensive consultation with members of the LEMC, and other stakeholders identified as responsible for actions under the sub or supporting plan.

Sub plans should:

- include actions that are consistent with policy and guidelines (where appropriate)
- identify quality measures of the potential consequences and quantitative measures of the potential community disruption or displacement across impact scenarios
- pre-determine strategies and triggers related to the likely impact of a hazard (where practicable) on a community. These may include communities within high bush fire–risk areas, flood inundation areas, and storm surge and tsunami impact zones; and other areas affected by natural and technological hazards.

7.6   Community engagement

Community engagement, within the emergency management context, is the 'process of stakeholders working together to build resilience through collaborative action, shared capacity-building and the development of strong relationships built on mutual trust and respect'. This provides the community an opportunity to contribute to, be accepting of, and act towards the necessary planning outcomes.

Where there is a known threat to the community, the Combat Agency should undertake community engagement to ensure residents are informed and aware of such threats. This includes developing a community engagement plan in consultation with the LEMC, as its members may be able to contribute to its development and implementation.

Community engagement incorporates:

- sharing information that identifies the demographics and language groups of the community
- seeking and obtaining responses and understanding from the community
- providing opportunities to promote individual and community disaster preparedness
- where possible, ensuring the community is included in the planning and decision-making process
- using persuasive strategies to ensure the community understands the risks and justification for decisions
- collaborating and cooperating with all stakeholders in the planning process
- considering Aboriginal outcomes in emergency management planning
- collaborating with Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and other Aboriginal groups to prepare and review plans that sit outside government regulation and service provision
- considering cross-border anomalies in local emergency management planning.

Planning and implementing community engagement strategies should always be undertaken by personnel who are well trained and able to facilitate the process. It is also recommended that council websites contain a dedicated area that provides information related to the LEMC and forms part of an all-hazards, all-agencies community engagement approach. The website may contain:

- public release documents produced by the LEMC such as the Local EM Plan
- links to other agency websites with public education information
- a link to the NSW Reconstruction Authority website
- a link to the Get Ready website
- information related to any current emergency or recovery event occurring within the LGA.

Where a combined LEMC exists across more than one LGA, a collaborative approach to web design, content and information should be adopted so that the same LEMC information is available to each community.

LEMC member agencies should also link to Local EM Plans from their websites, where relevant.

7.7 Evacuation

The LEMC is required to identify facilities suitable to be used as evacuation centres within the Local EM Plan in accordance with the *Evacuation Management Guidelines (2023)*.

Activation of evacuation centres

To activate evacuation centres, the appropriate agencies with legislated authority – including Combat Agencies (with appropriate legislation) and the NSW Police Force – must follow a specific process. This ensures any costs, legal issues, resourcing and management meets the requirements set out within NSW.

Once evacuation centres are activated by the Combat Agency or EOCON, the establishment and management of evacuation centres is the responsibility of the Welfare Services Functional Area (WSFA).

Animal Safe Places (ASPs) may also be established, following the same activation criteria, to shelter animals that cannot be accommodated with owners at commercial facilities or at an evacuation centre (where animals are not permitted, or capacity is exceeded). An ASP will not provide human welfare services. Identification of ASPs must be done in conjunction with the Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area (AASFA).

7.8 Planning for recovery

The LEMC should be involved in the development of any pre-event recovery plans that are prepared for the LGA as part of the recovery planning process.

This may include identifying suitable locations for recovery centres and recovery assistance points in advance. Recovery centres and recovery assistance points are designed to centralise local, state and federal government and non-government services and enable people affected by disasters to access one-on-one support and recovery services. They are coordinated and managed by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Facilities owned and/or managed by the council are preferred over privately owned facilities. To provide the best outcome for the community, facilities should be in a visible and easily accessible location (e.g. in or near the CBD or shopping district).

It is likely that any facility used as a recovery centre would be needed for a period of some weeks, so it is important to consider the impact on the regular use of the facility and any displacement of regular users.

Further information on recovery can be found in the *NSW Recovery Plan* (2023, NSW Reconstruction Authority).

7.9 Vulnerable groups and community facilities

The LEMC is responsible for identifying any vulnerable groups and community facilities as part of the ERM process, and documenting these in the Local EM Plan and CMG (if not already identified in a sub plan).

Ideally, a central register is maintained to identify vulnerable groups and facilities (e.g. written or shown spatially). The register should be a collaborative tool, with contribution from all the agencies represented on the LEMC. The register should not contain details of vulnerable individuals, but rather list the name and contact details of organisations and facilities.

Relevant data and tools for the identification of assets, and the described register, are available via the Spatial Information Management System (SIMS) platform that is provided by Department of Customer Service's Spatial Services to ESOs, including LEMOs.

Most of the required information for the register is in the Emergency Services Spatial Information Library (ESSIL) and is updated through existing data-sharing agreements with local governments. Updates to Spatial Services information allows for the most reliable and informed datasets to be used across the whole of government. LEMCs have access to this data and its platforms for emergency management purposes.

The Emergency Information Coordination Unit (EICU) is a supporting function under the State EMPLAN for spatial data mapping and coordination and can be consulted for LEMC mapping enquiries and assistance.

A person's vulnerability can increase with exposure to hazards, social isolation, loss of personal support and/or because of their own decision-making and behaviour in response to a risk. Factors that may be considered when assessing vulnerability include:

- mobility

- health or disability status

- socio-economic status (median weekly household income, employment status, etc)

- availability of support networks

- mobility

- health or disability status

- socio-economic status

- age

- gender

- home ownership

- cultural, language and racial background

- previous impact by a disaster.

At a minimum, the register should be reviewed annually by the LEMC and preferably prior to the storm/ bush fire season.

7.10   Local critical infrastructure

The LEMC is responsible for identifying infrastructure or essential assets that are critical at a local level and reflecting this in the Local EM Plan and CMGs.

The *NSW Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy* (Resilience NSW, 2018) and associated user resources provide further guidance.

7.11   State and regional plans

State-level plans, policies and guidance material, as well as Regional EMPLANs, may be accessed online at https://www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/rescue-and-emergency-management.

7.12   Training

Premier's Department offers a range of emergency management foundational level courses at no cost to employees and volunteers from ESOs, Combat Agencies, Functional Areas, government and non-government organisations at the state, region and local levels.

Courses can be accessed at the Emergency Management Capability Hub, along with resources to support the practical application of training and continual learning.

LEMC members are encouraged to take part in cross-agency training where available.

7.13   Exercises

Exercises are an essential component of preparedness and should be used to enhance capability and contribute to continuous improvement. Exercises should:

- test current plans and arrangements to identify capability gaps

- validate and confirm capability levels

- validate training and inform training requirements

- develop and maintain interoperability

- inform the review and development of legislation, policy, plans, arrangements and processes
- maintain consistency in the application of the state's rescue and emergency management arrangements in accordance with the SERM Act.

LEMCs should develop and conduct a minimum of one multi-agency exercise per financial year. The type of exercise can be discussion, functional or field-based.

The development of CMGs provides an opportunity to undertake discussion or desktop exercises to inform them.

Ideally, personnel involved in developing or managing exercises are appropriately experienced. Training in designing and managing exercises can be attained through agency training programs or from private industry providers. Resources to support exercising are available at the Emergency Management Capability Hub.

Exercises should have a relevant aim based on need and driven by defined objectives. Each exercise must be designed around clearly defined, achievable and measurable objectives and must include a component of evaluation.

The REMO will maintain a register of exercises conducted, which is submitted to the SEMC annually in June.

Exercise funding

Exercise funding may be made available through the SEMC or member agencies from time to time. Information and application processes for any funding will be provided through the REMO.

Exercise evaluation

All exercises should include a written evaluation report. This can include observations, findings, treatment options or recommendations based on the information gathered during the exercise. The *Managing Exercises Handbook* (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2023) provides guidance on this.

8 LEMC support to emergency response

8.1 Overview

The LEMC is a planning committee and not a response management committee. However, the LEMC does have responsibilities for recovery, which commences almost concurrently with the response.

Response operations are controlled by an assigned Combat Agency, which is supported by other agencies coordinated by the LEOCON. There may be more than one Combat Agency responding under their responsibilities during an emergency. While the member agencies of the LEMC may be involved in response activities, the LEMC has no operational function during response activities.

The LEMC has responsibilities under the State EMPLAN and NSW Recovery Plan for recovery, and may be required to undertake those responsibilities during the response operation (e.g. data collection for rapid damage assessments and LGA impact assessments). This includes working with the NSW Reconstruction Authority with recovery planning during the response phase.

To assist the LEMC to appropriately align their planning responsibilities, the following section provides a concise overview of the principles of operational response.

8.2 Control of operations

The State EMPLAN stipulates that emergency response and recovery are conducted at the lowest level of effective coordination and are augmented by regional and/or state support. The State EMPLAN identifies a Combat Agency in relation to each different type of emergency, which is primarily responsible for controlling the response to that particular hazard. A Combat Agency may request an EOC to accept responsibility for part of an emergency operation, e.g. evacuation management. Responsibility for the control of emergencies for which no Combat Agency has been nominated is vested in the respective EOC. Combat Agency responsibilities are itemised in Section 7.5.

8.3 Combat Agencies (single and multiple)

In addition to the State EMPLAN, most Combat Agencies have specific provisions to carry out their respective functions within their governing legislation, e.g. the Rural Fires Act (1997). In this case, the State EMPLAN serves as a mechanism to facilitate coordinated support to such agencies.

For some Combat Agencies, the default most effective level is that which is represented and conducted within a single LGA – e.g. the NSW SES local unit. For other Combat Agencies, the considered effective level may be at a management tier that oversees multiple LGAs, such as RFS districts, or at the state level, such as in a biosecurity emergency where the impact threat level or nationally agreed plan may dictate this approach. The level of control is determined by the Combat Agency and informed by the extent and complexity of the emergency. The operational support to the Combat Agency may be required at a local and regional level.

During complex emergencies there are likely to be several Combat Agencies performing responsibilities under the State EMPLAN as well as their own legislation. When a single mechanism of hazard results in consequences managed by multiple Combat Agencies, the importance of a coordinated approach becomes evident. The LEOCON is the position that provides this coordination.

8.4 Emergency Operations Controller – controlled events and emergencies

The LEOCON will determine the most appropriate control structure to assist them in controlling or supporting the response. The LEOCON, being a member of the NSW Police Force, will most likely utilise the control structure and management processes that they are trained to undertake and are familiar with. This will reflect the incident management concepts outlined in the State EMPLAN.

Regardless of the structure, the Local EOC is the coordination/control centre/facility that the LEOCON will utilise. It is anticipated that LEMC member agencies will provide support to the LEOCON in the lead up to and during emergency operations by:

- assisting with the conduct of operations in which the LEOCON has taken control

- ensuring the LEOCON is kept aware of a potential, imminent or actual emergency that is allocated to your agency

- sharing operational information related to their agency. This can be done by contributing directly or providing an appropriate liaison

- providing a Liaison Officer (LO) for their organisation

- providing expert advice, guidance and recommendations to the LEOCON and/or Combat Agency

- preparing documentation for the transition from response to recovery.

- conducting assessments and providing information on the impact of an emergency upon the elements of the community that fall within the agency's sphere of responsibility

- participating in recovery operations and/or a Local Recovery Committee.

8.5 Emergency Operations Centre – coordination and support

LEOCONs assist the Combat Agency at a local level by coordinating support to them when requested to do so, even though Combat Agencies may coordinate their own support for incidents that are within their ability to manage.

Coordination is the key, and most common, aspect of the LEOCON's responsibilities within the operational environment. When a Combat Agency requires the coordination of support, they engage this through the LEOCON. The Combat Agency should advise what coordinated support is required and the LEOCON will determine if the activation of the EOC is required to provide such support.

The Combat Agency and LEOCON use the member agencies of the LEMC to facilitate access to the appropriate personnel and resources to undertake operational responsibilities. LEOCONs are responsible for establishing and controlling the EOCs. Other agencies have control, coordination or operations centres but do not have what is known under the SERM Act as an EOC.

If possible, local EOCs should be co-located with the Combat Agency Incident Management Team (IMT) or be located as close as possible to encourage and reduce difficulties with communication and collaboration. The EOCON, with the assistance of the Emergency Management Committee, is to identify, in their area of responsibility, a range of facilities that may be utilised as EOCs. Ideally, there is to be a primary EOC, with a facility to perform as an alternative facility should the primary not be available.

The LEOCON is the only person who has the authority to activate the EOC at a local level. When this occurs, the LEOCON will use the LEMO to contact all relevant emergency management agencies and organisations and request LOs to attend the EOC. Not all agencies will be required to be present in the EOC as the personnel required will be dependent upon the emergency.

The LEMO uses the LEMC members to initiate their agencies' response to the EOC. Members are encouraged to ensure they have appropriately trained people to perform any or all the operational functions that may be required of their agency across any emergency. The LEMO or LEOCON can contact the REMO to facilitate regional-level support to local EOCs.

The LEOCON or Combat Agency can activate Functional Area LOs by contacting the relevant Functional Area Coordinator. This should be done in consultation with the REOCON/REMO. The REMO will appraise, ensure there is a coordinated approach to Functional Area support and make recommendations on the most effective level of EOC to provide such support.

For further details regarding standardised operational procedures for EOCs, please refer to the *NSW EOC Policy* (NSW Police Force).

8.6 Notifications

In accordance with the State EMPLAN, the Combat Agency Incident Controller is required to notify and keep the LEOCON informed when a hazard or event, under the Combat Agency's responsibility, occurs or is likely to occur and does or has the potential to:

- require support from resources outside the Combat Agency
- have adverse consequences on the social, built, environmental or economic functions of the community
- escalate to an emergency operation.

At the regional level, the Combat Agency is to notify the REOCON.

The purpose of notification is to:

- increase situational awareness
- allow the EOCON to commence monitoring responsibilities
- help determine the coordination requirements of the situation across multiple agencies
- ensure agencies or resources can be activated, resourced or called on when needed
- commence intelligence and information-sharing across the multi-agency environment
- commence emergency management reporting processes across all 3 levels of emergency management
- commence secondary responsibilities such as rapid damage assessment and recovery considerations.

8.7 Accessing resources

Agencies are responsible for accessing and supplementing their own agency resources. Resources may come from beyond the local area and are activated according to each agency's responsibilities and operational requirements.

Some agencies have pre-arranged Mutual Aid Agreements that outline how shared resources will be used without requiring engagement of the emergency management arrangements through the LEOCON.

8.8 Information management

Detailed and accurate information is difficult to obtain during the early stages of an emergency and a period of uncertainty is to be expected before the facts are determined. It is not uncommon to receive conflicting information from several sources during this period.

Importance needs to be placed on validating information, as best as possible and where timeframes allow, before disseminating it.

The regional and state levels of emergency management rely heavily on the information gathered, analysed and disseminated from the local level.

This information is used to provide emergency briefs to the Minister and inform all stakeholders with vested interest. For this purpose, information received via the media or other public sources may not be acted on until confirmed as credible by the local authorities upward through established reporting channels. The timeliness of information is important to obtain a comprehensive assessment of the situation and support requirements. General emergency information disseminated from a local level across all tiers of emergency management includes:

- operational briefs (verbal or written)
- situation reports (SITREPs) (verbal or written)
- impact assessments.

Individual agencies at the regional or state level may also prepare briefs on matters specific to their portfolios. This information will be fed into the LEOC for incorporation into SITREPs and talking points. Systems and protocols should be tested to ensure the timely exchange and transfer of information when required. The preferred platform for the storage and exchange of LEMC and operational information in NSW is the Emergency Management Operating System (EMOS).

8.9 Emergency Management Operating System

The EMOS was developed to assist EOCs to collect, collate, analyse, react to, and disseminate operational information during times of emergency. It has secure permission-based access that is provided to all LEMC and REMC members and other stakeholders as deemed appropriate. LEMOs and LEOCONs (including deputies and alternatives) are provided administrator access. LEMOs are responsible for maintaining EMOS as an executive support function to the LEMC.

An EMOS User Guide is available to assist users and administrators. This can be found on EMOS in the documents section.

Requests for assistance regarding any EMOS issues should be directed in the first instance to the LEMO or REMO.

8.10 Liaison Officers

The Liaison Officer (LO) deployed to support operations from an agency may not be the person that is the member of the LEMC. The LEMC member is required to ensure that people within their agency are available and able to perform the function of a LO if required. When an agency is requested to provide an LO to an EOC, the parent agency is to ensure the LO is provided adequate equipment and resources to conduct business at the EOC location, including:

- IT equipment
- back-up connectivity in the event the EOC capability is diminished
- basic stationery resources
- any other item required as part of work health and safety (WHS) and internal protocols.

The LO is a conduit of information, not a decision-maker, but is expected to maintain a direct line of communication to the decision-makers within their organisation and the person capable of committing resources of the organisation (e.g. the Functional Area Coordinator). The LO is also expected to be able to provide an initial brief about their organisation's resources and capability, and any intelligence already obtained by their organisation's networks.

8.11 State of Emergency declaration

The SERM Act provides for the declaration of a State of Emergency (SoE), which may be declared by the Premier of NSW for up to 30 days over parts of or the whole state. It should be noted that:

- other NSW statutes also provide for the declaration of a SoE
- other agencies, under different legislation, have the provision to make Emergency Declarations. Such declarations should not be confused with an SoE declared under the SERM Act.

From a response perspective, this does not significantly alter the local operational environment. The emergency management arrangements will also continue to be enacted primarily across the practised and understood principles. However, the SoE does allow additional powers to be enacted for emergency services officers and police.

The declaration of an SoE signifies that the emergency is significant, requiring a significant level of control. It also implies critical actions are required to protect life, enable evacuations and/or commence recovery processes. Due to this, it becomes even more important to establish and maintain applied practices for EOC operations, liaison arrangements and reporting procedures.

LEMCs should regularly conduct exercises for potential operations where local arrangements are supportive of state-level arrangements and levels of control are escalated. This will assist with understanding and reporting transitions if a SoE is declared. For more information, please refer to the SERM Act and the State EMPLAN.

8.12   Debrief and after-action reviews

A debrief or after-activity/action review (AAR) is an important part of concluding response and recovery operations. The LEMC plays a key role in participating, analysing the outcomes of the debrief process, developing actions to improve business practices, and improving the pre-incident plans and response processes under its responsibilities.

The purpose of an AAR is to:

- create a record of the actions of agencies involved
- review and/or validate arrangements contained in the local CMGs
- develop recommendations related to the review of legislation, plans, policies and procedures
- recognise actions
- diffuse misinformation/misunderstanding
- formally record who did what, when, how and why, and use this information to identify what was done well and anything that could have been done differently
- record observations or insights as 'lessons learned' from the event.

It is expected that, in addition to the attendees present at the briefing, a copy of the AAR report be sent to:

- the LEMC
- the LEMO
- the REOCON
- the REMO.
- The REMO may further disseminate the AAR report to:
- REMC members and Functional Area Coordinators
- the SEOCON
- the SEMC.

9 LEMC Support to recovery operations

9.1 Overview

The *NSW Recovery Plan* outlines the arrangements and responsibilities of agencies and the community during recovery. The Recovery Plan is a supporting plan of the State EMPLAN. It outlines the strategic intent, responsibilities, authorities and mechanisms for disaster recovery in NSW. The Recovery Plan allows for the development and implementation of a planned recovery following a natural disaster or other emergency.

The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience promotes 6 national principles for disaster recovery, which are incorporated into NSW recovery planning:

- **Understand the context** – successful recovery is based on understanding community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics.
- **Recognise the complexity** – successful recovery is responsive to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and the community.
- **Use community-centred approaches** – successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward.
- **Coordinate all approaches** – successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.
- **Communicate effectively** – successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.
- **Recognise and build capacity** – successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience.

The *NSW Disaster Assistance Guidelines* (2021) outlines the assistance available to individuals, businesses, community groups and others affected by disasters, and is administered by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

9.2 Responsibility of the Combat Agency

Recovery planning commences at the same time as the operational response. In an emergency, the Combat Agency provides information about any continuing response activities, guidance on mitigation strategies, and general advice and assistance to the State Emergency Recovery Controller (SERCON), and local, regional or state recovery committee. The Combat Agency provides appropriate representation on local, regional or state recovery committees.

Assessment of impacts from emergencies

Impact assessment involves collecting, interpretating and analysing social, built, economic and natural impacts to a community or communities. It is scalable to the emergency and is a continuous and dynamic process of ongoing information collection and assessment.

Detailed timeframes and procedures for impact assessment are to be documented in Impact Assessment Guidelines maintained by the SEMC.

Rapid damage assessments

A rapid damage assessment is an essential first step in providing accurate and timely information on the extent of damage, to inform ongoing response and recovery. The Combat Agency, or EOCON when in control, will lead rapid damage assessments in collaboration with Functional Areas and, if required, local government. Further information about this process is outlined in the State EMPLAN, hazard-specific sub plans and the NSW Recovery Plan.

Impact assessment

A more comprehensive assessment of impact and the consequent recovery needs may be required to provide further information on the effects on the community.

The Combat Agency, or EOCON when there is no designated Combat Agency, will coordinate LGA impact assessment in collaboration with the council, Functional Areas, and other agencies with responsibilities for impact assessment as outlined in the State EMPLAN and Impact Assessment Guidelines. This may involve collaborating with business and industry where appropriate.

The impact assessment can be used to inform the recovery needs and recovery action plans developed by the local recovery committee and may inform the design and delivery of recovery funding packages.

The State EMPLAN, *NSW Recovery Plan* and Impact Assessment Guidelines outline the requirements for the assessment of impacts from emergencies.

Transition from response to recovery

In accordance with the State EMPLAN and Recovery Plan, the transition from response to recovery occurs at the lowest level possible depending on the extent of the impacts (i.e. local, region or state). It will be flexible, in line with the nature of the emergency, and may be staged, with response and recovery operations occurring simultaneously.

The SERCON (or delegate), in agreement with the Combat Agency, or EOCON when there is no designated Combat Agency, will agree on the most effective arrangements for commencing recovery processes.

9.3   Recovery committees

Recovery committees will generally include a wider representation of agencies and sectors of the community than the LEMC. If established, members of the recovery committees should be engaged by the LEMO or REMO to contribute impact information to the LGA Impact Assessment as one of the first items of business for the committees.

9.4   Local Emergency Management Committee - determination of recovery requirements

Following an emergency, and after impact to the community has been initially assessed, the LEMC Chair consults with the EOCON, Combat Agency and NSW Reconstruction Authority to determine the need for a meeting of the LEMC to discuss recovery implications.

If required, the meeting should consider the impacts of the emergency, the recovery needs and the appropriate level of coordination arrangements to be implemented, including the need for a recovery committee.

The meeting should include the NSW Reconstruction Authority and agencies involved in the operational response, as well as additional representatives who can contribute information in determining impacts and recovery needs across the 4 recovery environments of social, built, economic and natural. This may include staff from council's Community Engagement, Service or Business Development teams.

9.5   Natural Disaster Declarations

In NSW, the Minister for Emergency Services is responsible for Natural Disaster Declarations. A declaration is recommended to the Minister by the NSW Reconstruction Authority if an event is determined to be eligible as outlined in the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018 (disasterassist.gov.au).

The NSW Reconstruction Authority will independently approach affected councils for information on the impact to community assets. A declaration form is sent to the general managers of affected councils with explanatory correspondence and contact details for that event.

The report provided by council will assist in determining whether a Natural Disaster Declaration is assigned to a single LGA or to multiple. This is done independently to the LGA Impact Assessment, or any reports generated during the response phase. Council general managers, or their delegated contact, will be kept informed of any declarations via correspondence from the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

10 Funding

10.1 LEMC funding

NSW emergency management arrangements do not assign financial support for the conduct of emergency management committees. Any expenses incurred because of participation in the LEMC fall primarily on the representing agencies. Councils have generally borne the cost of conducting LEMCs, including catering or facility hire. Most LEMC meetings are conducted in council or emergency services facilities and rarely carry venue hire costs.

Financial expenditure related to refreshments, stationery, printing or any other production or resource required by the LEMC is to be determined within the LEMC as required. Grants may be available from time to time through the NSW Government for major projects or initiatives undertaken by LEMCs.

Application and approval processes will apply.

Annexure

11 Annexure A: Local Emergency Management Officer

11.1 Position Overview

- Perform duties as an Executive Officer to the LEMC, Chair of the LEMC and LEOCON during emergency operations and events controlled by the LEOCON, including providing advice and guidance on emergency management matters.

- Assist in establishing and maintaining connections with appropriate stakeholders including local government, Combat Agencies, ESOs, Functional Areas, government agencies, industry, risk creators and community groups to provide guidance on their involvement in emergency management at a local level.

- Help develop and maintain local emergency plans, sub plans and supporting plans.

- Assist the LEOCON to establish and maintain an EOC within the local emergency management area. This includes conducting operational readiness audits of evacuation centres.

- Assist the LEMC to design, conduct and evaluate emergency management all-agency exercises at the local level.

- Provide executive support and assistance to:
  - the LEMC Chair to undertake recovery functions
  - the LEOCON to undertake operational response functions.

11.2 Administration duties during emergency operations

- Take and disseminate meeting minutes.

- File and document management.

- Arrange meetings on behalf of the Chair, the LEMC and/or LEOCON.

- Maintain contact directories, and vulnerable facility and critical infrastructure registers.

- Maintain information-sharing between emergency management stakeholders.

11.3 Operational duties

- Activate and establish the EOC as directed by the LEOCON.

- At the request of the LEOCON, request LOs for the EOC.

- Undertake functions as the EOC manager and ensure the administration processes within the EOC are undertaken effectively and efficiently.

- Arrange administrative support within the EOC as required.

- Contribute to the development and undertaking of operational briefings.

- Ensure document and information management processes are followed within the EOC.

- Ensure timely and effective communications are established and maintained between emergency management stakeholders.

- Organise and administer the debrief/after-action review process as requested by the LEOCON.

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