

Emergency Management in Victoria

Part 1: Emergency Management Manual Victoria

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1.1 Introduction

Victoria has a long history of emergencies, some of them highly destructive, and has developed a capability for dealing with such events. Many organisations in the community, including the emergency services, play a part. The activities of these organisations, both voluntary and permanently staffed, need to be coordinated to avoid conflict, wastage and gaps.

The emergency management arrangements cater for dealing with emergencies of all sizes, from small to very large. In particular, they deal with emergencies where more than one organisation is involved.

Emergency management involves the plans, structures and arrangements which are established to bring together the normal endeavours of government, voluntary and private agencies in a comprehensive and coordinated way to deal with the whole spectrum of emergency needs, including prevention, response and recovery.

This part of the manual explains the background to Victoria's current emergency management arrangements, and enables the reader to gain an overview before reading the more specific and detailed sections.

1.2 Emergency Management in Victoria — A Brief History

The original Victoria State Disaster Plan (known as DISPLAN) was prepared in the 1960s, with a new edition issued in March 1982 and a revised edition in September 1987.

Apart from DISPLAN (which did not have the backing of legislation), the main standing emergency management arrangements involved the fire services and the then Forests Commission of Victoria. In addition to this, a number of government departments and statutory authorities had specific disaster-related responsibilities which they discharged more or less independently.

Following the Ash Wednesday fires of February 1983, there were a number of reviews of Victoria's disaster management arrangements. In November 1983, Cabinet agreed to a provisional set of disaster management arrangements which were embodied in the *State Disasters Act* 1983 (since repealed).

1985 Review of Disaster Management

In June 1985, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services established a working party to report on Victoria's disaster management arrangements. The working party reported to the Minister in October 1985. Its main conclusions included:

- (1) Many aspects of the existing arrangements, particularly in the area of response, had been demonstrated to be effective, and that, rather than replacement, they were in need of rationalisation, in order to maximise their strengths and minimise their weaknesses.
- (2) The allocation of responsibility at government level should be given to a single minister, who should be the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

- (3) A policy of comprehensive and integrated emergency management should be adopted, as well as the establishment of arrangements to embody the policy.

Three major functional areas were recognised as necessary components of a comprehensive approach: prevention, response and recovery. Within these areas, the key responsibilities of agencies include:

Planning: the analysis of requirements and the development of strategies for resource utilisation.

Preparedness: the establishment of structures, development of systems and testing and evaluation by organisations of their capacity to perform their allotted roles. (Unlike the view taken in some other States, the working party did not consider that preparedness is an element of emergency management in its own right.)

Coordination: the bringing together of organisations and resources to ensure effective emergency management.

The major recommendations of the working party included the following points:

- The Minister for Police and Emergency Services should continue to be responsible, as Co-ordinator in Chief, for Victoria's emergency management arrangements.
- DISPLAN should be redesignated as the Response Plan, given power under appropriate legislation, and have its scope widened to allow coordination (as a police responsibility) across the range of possible events from incidents to disasters.
- A three-tiered framework (State, regional and municipal) for implementing emergency management should be adopted.
- The Disaster Services Council and the Readiness Review Committee should be replaced by a State Disasters Council to provide policy and planning advice to the Minister on emergency management matters, and that committees be established to advise the Minister on prevention, response and recovery planning.

The working party's findings led to the development of Victoria's current emergency management arrangements, and the passage of the *Emergency Management Act 1986*.

Key Developments Since 1986

In 1987 the Recovery Plan formalised, for the first time, the arrangements for planning and management of recovery.

In 1994, the Act was amended, recognising the Recovery Plan and replacing the word 'disaster' with the word 'emergency' in most usages. More recently, the term 'emergency response' has replaced the term DISPLAN in official usage.

In 1998, the Central Government Response Committee (CGRC) was established in response to the Longford Gas Crisis and until recently it had been an ongoing feature of Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

In 1999, the definition of emergency was clarified, by the inclusion in the list of examples of emergencies, of 'disruption to an essential service'.

The position and role of the Emergency Services Commissioner was created by amendments to the Act in 2000.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 led to an emphasis on security matters. The Security and Emergencies Unit was established within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Victoria has been involved in national developments such as the National Counter-Terrorism Plan and the Review of Protection of Critical Infrastructure.

Following the bushfires of 2002-03, the Victorian Bushfire Inquiry recommended greater joint response coordination and the integration of municipal fire and emergency plans.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Natural Disasters Report, released in 2004, and the funding programs initiated by the Australian Government as a result have used the word 'mitigation' in preference to 'prevention'. This usage is adopted in the name of the State Emergency Mitigation Committee formed in 2004.

More recently, the February 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, and the subsequent Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, provided the impetus for further reform of Victoria's emergency management arrangements. This reform included legislation to establish the Fire Services Commissioner with responsibility for developing and implementing the Fire Services Reform Action Plan and controlling the response to 'major fires'. The role of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services was clarified as being not operational and the title 'Co-ordinator in Chief' and term 'DISPLAN' discontinued.

In December 2012 the Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper was released. The White Paper builds on the recent reforms to further improve Victoria's emergency management arrangements, including a new committee structure. The State Crisis and Resilience Council (SCRC) has been established as Victoria's peak emergency management body. CGRC has been discontinued and legislative amendments are expected to establish SCRC in statute and discontinue the Victoria Emergency Management Council (VEMC).

Central Policy Office

The Fire Disaster Control Unit which was established in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in 1983 after the Ash Wednesday fires, and subsequently transferred to the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, was replaced by an Office of the Co-ordinator in Chief of Disaster Control. That office later became the Fire and Emergency Services Division of the Department of Justice.

Following the creation of the position of Emergency Services Commissioner, the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner assumed the role of central policy office for emergency management, to support the statutory duties of the Commissioner, the Minister as Co-ordinator in Chief of Emergency Management and the VEMC.

Following the Black Saturday bushfires, the Department of Justice formed the Police and Emergency Management Division. The new Division includes the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner and other business units responsible for managing/co-ordinating emergency management related policy, legislation, programs and projects.

1.3 Concepts and Objectives

Emergency

The term *emergency management* is used in preference to the more traditional term *disaster management* for a number of reasons. One of these is the fact that there is no widely accepted definition of the term *disaster*. For the purposes of emergency management in Victoria, the word *emergency* also includes the concept of *disaster*.

Emergencies are characterised by some or all of the following:

- They are disruptive to individuals and communities
- They are not part of day-to-day experience and are outside normal life expectations
- They are unpredictable in occurrence and effects
- They require a response for which normal local resources may be inadequate
- They have a wide range of effects and impacts on the human, built and natural environments
- There are complex needs in dealing with them
- They can be of sudden onset
- They are destructive of human, animal and/or plant life, health, property and/or the environment
- They overwhelm normal prudent protective measures.

As major emergencies are infrequent events, in their initial stages they may be difficult to differentiate from lesser-order events. Given the normal experience and expectations of those involved, there may be difficulty in realising that an emerging situation calls for a response of a greater order.

Therefore, the management arrangements to cope with major emergencies are the same as arrangements to cope with lesser-order events, and are not a separate set of arrangements reserved for a major emergency. In Victoria, there are no legal formalities or declarations required to initiate or escalate response or recovery activities.

The arrangements (particularly in response and recovery) are intended to permit the situation to be assessed, and to provide for the graduated marshalling and utilisation of the resources required to deal with it, under systems set up under the relevant overall plan and the participating agencies' own plans.

The *Emergency Management Act 1986* provides the following framework (s. 4):

“emergency” means an emergency due to the actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria or endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing -

- (a) an earthquake, flood, wind-storm or other natural event; and

- (b) a fire; and
- (c) an explosion; and
- (d) a road accident or any other accident; and
- (e) a plague or an epidemic or contamination; and
- (f) a warlike act or act of terrorism, whether directed at Victoria or a part of Victoria or at any other State or Territory of the Commonwealth; and
- (g) a hi-jack, siege or riot; and
- (h) a disruption to an essential service.

This framework includes the recognition that the state of the environment can be just as important to the sustainability of Victoria and Victorian communities as the protection of life and property.

Management

There is not and could not be a single organisation solely and totally responsible for dealing with all aspects of emergencies. Emergencies touch people's life experience in many different ways. Emergency management in Victoria embraces the whole of government and whole of the community.

The management task is to bring together in an integrated organisational network the resources of the many agencies and individuals who can take appropriate and timely action to prevent or mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Prevention, Response and Recovery

The objectives of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* (s. 4A) are to ensure that the following components of emergency management are organised to facilitate planning, preparedness, operational co-ordination and community participation:

Prevention: the elimination or reduction of the incidence or severity of emergencies and the **mitigation** of their effects.

Response: the combating of emergencies and the provision of rescue and immediate relief services.

Recovery: the assisting of people and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.

Objectives of the Arrangements

Victoria's emergency management arrangements are designed to:

Deal with all hazards

While most attention is given to the obvious emergencies such as fire, flood and transport accidents, a wide range of hazards are dealt with using the emergency management arrangements and resources. This includes emergencies for which there has been little or no experience in Victoria, such as emergency animal disease, terrorist incidents, earthquakes or environmental emergencies.

Be integrated, (involve all people and relevant agencies)

The management of emergencies is a shared responsibility involving many people and organisations in the community. It is not something done by one sector of the community to or for the rest of society, although some organisations have specialist roles.

In addition to the emergency services, all government departments may have some role to play. The emergency response role may be a minor part of their responsibilities. However, many departments have an essential prevention responsibility. Examples include land use planning, occupational health and safety, clean water, public health and building regulations. These are part of the prevention infrastructure.

Municipal councils have essential roles in emergency management.

Voluntary organisations such as Red Cross, St John Ambulance, WICEN and search and rescue organisations play well-defined roles in emergency management.

Private sector organisations are often involved when their services and resources are needed for prevention, response or recovery activities, or where emergencies affect their buildings, equipment, personnel, suppliers or customers. In particular, essential service providers (for example, producers and distributors of electricity or gas) are expected to ensure that they can maintain continuity of supply.

Members of the community are also responsible for taking preventative, protective and restorative actions in their own and the community's best interests.

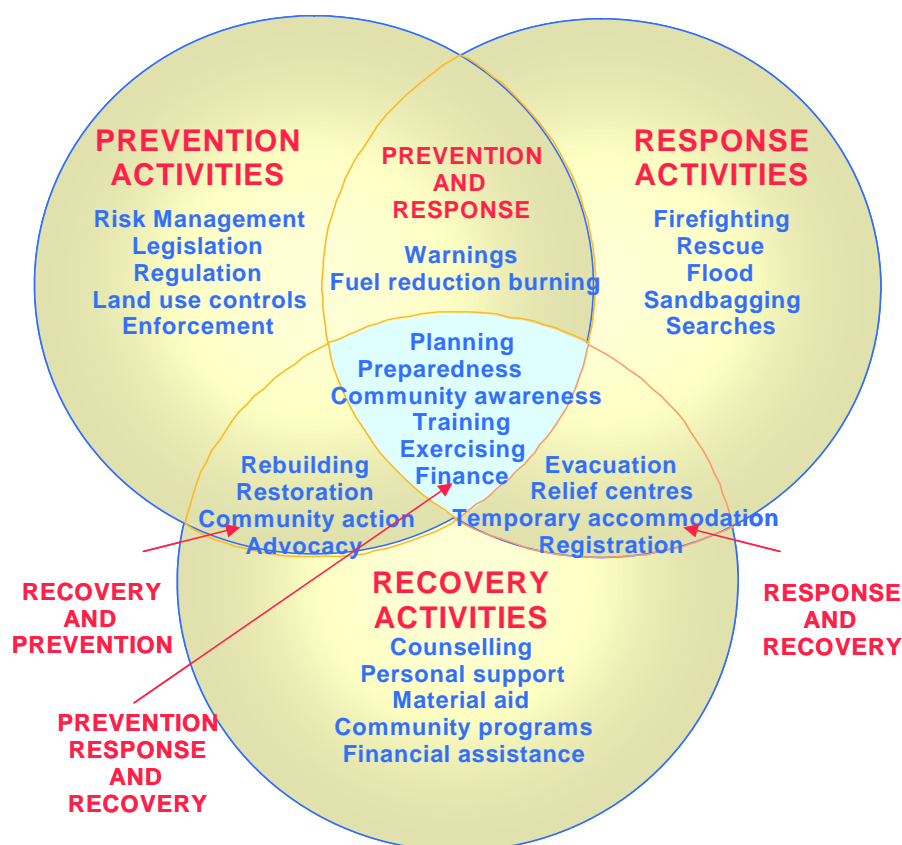


Figure 1-1: Examples of Emergency Management Activities Clustered into Groups

Be comprehensive, (cover prevention, response and recovery)

Prevention (or mitigation see Part 2), response and recovery are all important aspects of emergency management and each should be explicitly addressed in the arrangements.

The model of emergency management shown in Figure 1-2 makes clear that there is not a strict sequence, nor a hierarchy of relationships. All activities are important, and in a comprehensive model, have a place in the overall scheme.

Emergency management activities do not take place in any particular sequence or cycle. It is now recognised that prevention, response and recovery do not follow each other in order.

They can all operate at the same time, as demonstrated by **Figure 1-2** which demonstrates the same activity clusters in a time-sequence model.

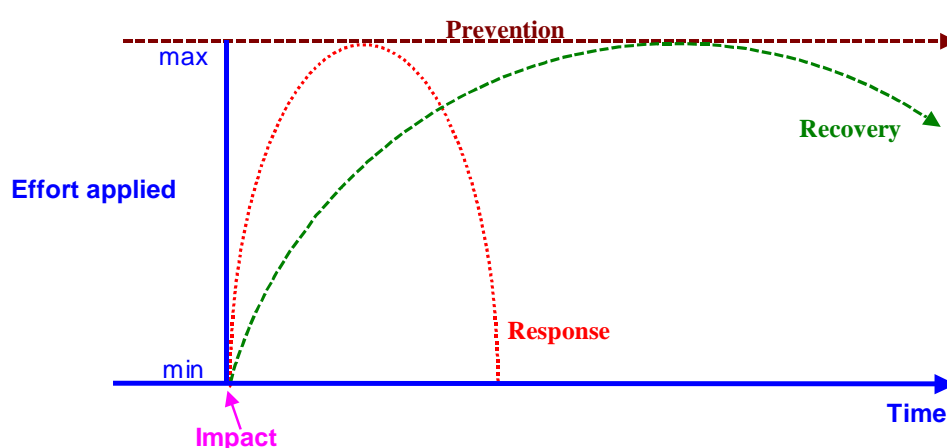


Figure 1-2: Emergency Management Activities in a Time Sequence Model

The time-sequence model in Figure 1.2 shows that prevention activities are carried out at full effort all the time, regardless of the occurrence of actual emergencies. As Figure 1.1 also shows, prevention strategies can be incorporated into recovery activities, (e.g. rebuilding wildfire-destroyed houses in a fire-safe manner).

Response activities commence as soon as possible after the time of impact, peak to full effort quickly, and often cease promptly when the emergency has been dealt with, and/or affected people have been rescued or evacuated.

Recovery activities commence at or soon after the time of impact, and peak to full effort more gradually and often later than response activities. Recovery activities may continue for a considerable period of time, gradually tapering off and merging into normal community activities weeks, months or even years after impact.

Prevention, response and recovery are *not phases or stages* of emergency management. The model sees them as *clusters of activities*. They take place as needed, and *do not necessarily follow one another in a sequential order*.

Disaster Resilience

COAG endorsed the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience in February 2011. While the concept of resilience is not new, the endorsement of the Strategy marked a significant shift in Australian emergency management policy. The Strategy focuses on enhancing emergency 'preparation and mitigation', emphasising the principle that emergency management is not solely the domain of emergency management agencies – it is a shared responsibility between governments, business, communities and individuals.

The Strategy describes why change is needed, what a disaster resilient community looks like and what action can be taken to improve disaster resilience. Where possible, emergency management planning/projects should promote and support disaster resilience and align with the Strategy.

1.4 Victoria's Emergency Management Framework

There is a multi agency framework for emergency management, which enables the exercise of roles and responsibilities, and the capacity to adapt to new or changed circumstances within a systematic framework. Some elements of the structure are legislated, others have been established by agreement.

Emergency Management Act 1986

Objectives of the Act

The *Emergency Management Act 1986* defines most of Victoria's emergency management structure, assigns significant roles and responsibilities, and provides for special needs concerned with the management of emergencies. The Act describes its objective as being: 'to ensure that [prevention, response and recovery] are organised within a structure which facilitates planning, preparedness, operational co-ordination and community participation'. (s. 4A).

The operational roles of most of the organisations which participate in emergency management are spelled out elsewhere in specific legislation or charter. For example, the operational roles of the fire services are set out in other Acts.

Role of the Minister

The Minister to whom the Act is allocated is the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The role of the Minister is to ensure that satisfactory emergency management arrangements are in place to facilitate the prevention of, response to and recovery from emergencies.

The Minister is not responsible for operational matters in relation to emergency management. (s. 5)

Responsibility of the State Emergency Response Co-ordinator

The State Emergency Response Co-ordinator is the Chief Commissioner of Police. The State Emergency Response Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that the Minister is provided with timely and up to date information in relation to:

- (a) the actual or imminent occurrence of events which may lead to emergencies;
- (b) the response to emergencies. (s. 6)

Victoria Emergency Management Council (VEMC)

The Victoria Emergency Management Council advises the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on matters including co-ordination of agencies (government and non-government) responsible for prevention, response and recovery. Council membership consists of nominees of both government ministers and non-government agencies. The Act does not specify which agencies should be represented, but meetings normally include Victoria Police, the emergency services and sections of government departments closely involved with emergency prevention, response and/or recovery. (s. 8)

VEMC Coordination Group

The VEMC Coordination Group actively supports the Minister in providing coordination for response and recovery activities and in providing an information flow during significant emergencies.

The Group is chaired by the Minister, and comprises the State Emergency Response Co-ordinator, the State Recovery Co-ordinator, the Emergency Services Commissioner (as Executive Officer) and CEO or chief operating officers of emergency services, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and the Department of Human Services¹.

Note: The functions of the VEMC and VEMC Co-ordination Group are currently being managed by the State Crisis and Resilience Council (refer to p. 1-11 below).

Emergency Services Commissioner

The Emergency Services Commissioner has the following functions, under s. 21C of the Act:

- (a) to establish and monitor standards for the prevention and management of emergencies to be adopted by all emergency services agencies (other than the fire services agencies)²
- (ab) to monitor and investigate the performance (in matters that are not financial matters) of the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority in relation to the provision of services by the Authority to emergency services and other related services organisations

¹ The Department of Human Services also represents the Department of Health

² The phrase 'emergency services agency' is defined in s. 4 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* as any of the Country Fire Authority, the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, the Victoria State Emergency Service or any other prescribed agency.

- (aba) to monitor the performance of emergency services agencies against standards prepared under s. 21D
- (abb) without limiting paragraph (aba), to monitor the performance of fire services agencies against performance standards developed by the Fire Services Commissioner under s. 19 of the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010*
- (ac) to make recommendations to the Minister about matters arising from any monitoring or investigation of the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
- (b) to advise, make recommendations and report to the Minister on any issue in relation to emergency management
- (c) to encourage and facilitate co-operation between all agencies to achieve the most effective utilisation of all services
- (d) to act as Executive Officer of the [Victoria Emergency Management] Council
- (e) any other function conferred on the Commissioner by or under this or any other Act.

Fire Services Commissioner

The Fire Services Commissioner has the following functions under s. 10(1) of the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010*:

- (a) to work with the fire service agencies to enhance their individual and collective capacity to prepare for the response to days on which the forecast there is a high risk of major fires occurring
- (b) to develop and maintain standards for the performance of functions by the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
- (c) to develop and maintain standards for the performance of fire suppression functions by the Secretary to the Department of Sustainability and Environment
- (d) to develop and maintain incident management operating procedures
- (e) to have overall control of the response to major fires [per s. 16 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986*]
- (f) to promote and lead a program of reform to improve the operational capability of the fire services agencies
- (g) to encourage and oversee the management of joint initiatives of the fire services agencies as part of the program of reform referred to in paragraph (f)
- (h) to manage the State's primary control centre for the response to emergencies (including major fires) on behalf of, and in collaboration with, all agencies that may use the primary control centre in response to emergencies
- (i) to advise and make recommendations to the Minister on any issue in relation to fire management
- (j) any other function conferred on the Fire Services Commissioner by or under this or any other Act.

Fire Services Reform Action Plan

The Fire Services Commissioner must develop a fire services reform action plan for the purpose of:

- Enhancing the operational capacity and capability of the fire services agencies; and
- Improving the capacity of fire services agencies to operate together in planning and preparing for the response to, and in responding to, major fires. (s. 12)

Victoria's Top-level Structures

The two significant elements of the structure not mandated in legislation are the Security and Emergencies Cabinet Committee and the State Crisis and Resilience Council³.

Security and Emergencies Cabinet Committee (SECC)

The Government has established a Cabinet committee – the Security and Emergencies Committee of Cabinet (SECC) – to oversee whole of government decision making during a large-scale emergency.

The SECC comprises the Premier (Chair), Minister for Health, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Finance, Attorney General and Deputy Premier.

It is not the role of SECC to manage the deployment of police and emergency services.

State Crisis and Resilience Council (SCRC)

The State Crisis and Resilience Council (SCRC) has been established to accord with the new emergency management committee structure proposed under Victoria's Emergency Management Reform White Paper. The SCRC is responsible for the development of emergency management policy and strategy – it does not make operational or tactical decisions. The functions of SCRC include:

- Leading the reform agenda for emergency management, including measures to increase community resilience
- Developing a strategic action plan with a medium to long-term outlook for emergency management reform – it will identify priority areas for action and specific implementation plans to be undertaken within agreed timeframes (incorporating and building on the Fire Services Reform Action Plan)
- Advising the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, other relevant Ministers and SECC on whole of government emergency management strategy and emerging or complex emergency management issues, including the resilience of critical infrastructure
- Meeting regularly during normal business and more often in the event of a complex or large-scale emergency either occurring or imminent.

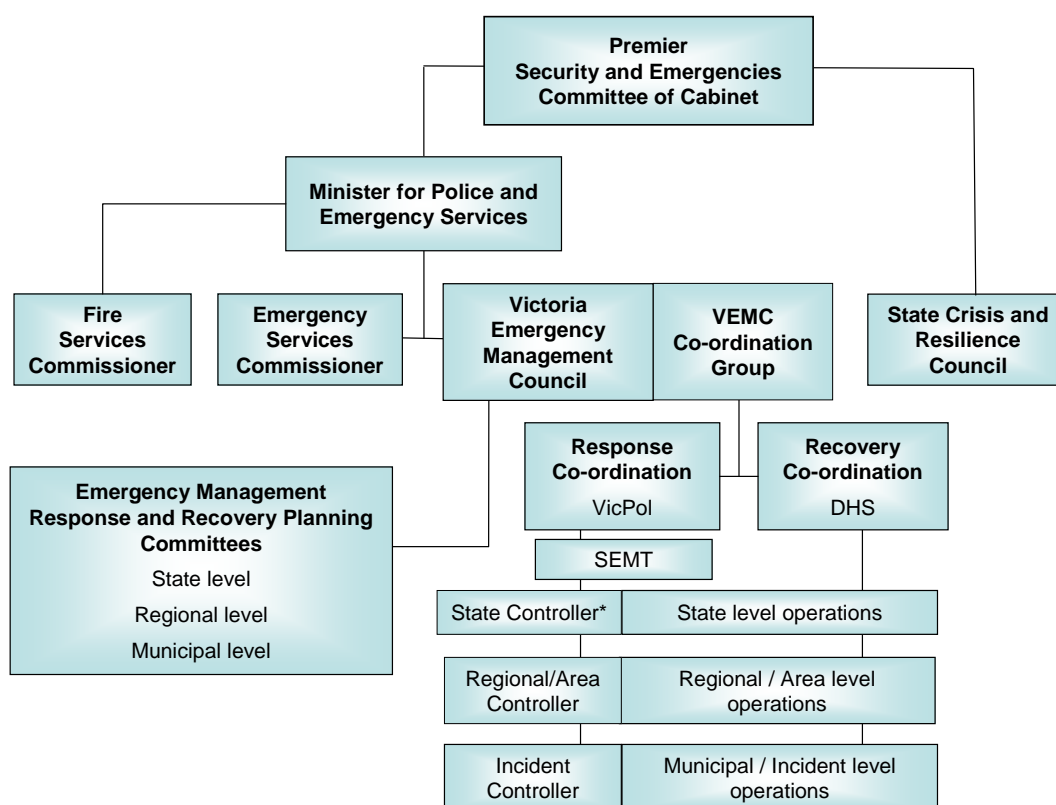
³ Proposed amendments to the *Emergency Management Act 1986* are expected to establish SCRC in statute and discontinue VEMC

State Crisis Centre

The State Crisis Centre (SCC) may be activated by the Premier, on receipt of advice from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The SCC may be activated for an extreme emergency that requires co-ordination of whole-of-government activities.

Key roles of the SCC include:

- Provision of strategic support and policy advice to SECC and SCRC
- Co-ordination of communication within the Victorian Government and with other State/Territory crisis centres and the Australian Government, and
- Co-ordinate timely information to the community.



* The Fire Services Commissioner is the State Controller for fire

Figure 1-3: Victoria's Emergency Management Operational Structure

Response and Recovery Plans

The Act requires (s.10) that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services arrange for the preparation and review from time to time of a State emergency response plan for the coordinated response to emergencies by all agencies having roles or responsibilities in relation to the response to emergencies.

The function of arranging for the preparation and review of the response plan has been delegated to the Chief Commissioner of Police, who is also the State Emergency Response Co-ordinator.

The State Emergency Response Plan (see Part 3 of this Manual) is the document which fulfils this requirement.

The Act also requires (s. 17A) that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services arrange for the preparation and review from time to time of a State emergency recovery plan (see Part 4 of this Manual) for the co-ordinated planning and management of emergency recovery.

This function has been delegated to the State Recovery Co-ordinator, a senior officer of the Department of Human Services.

Municipal emergency management planning is carried out by municipal emergency management planning committees, as required by the Act. See Guidelines for Municipal Emergency Management Planning (Part 6).

Operational Management

The resources of relevant organisations are brought together at the municipal level for the response and recovery operations. If an emergency cannot be adequately responded to with locally available resources, the management will be supported by regional or State level personnel and resources.

At all levels, response operations are coordinated by Victoria Police personnel (in their role as emergency response co-ordinators, see 3-23), and recovery operations are co-ordinated by Department of Human Services personnel.

The State level is also responsible for obtaining and coordinating resource support from other States and/or the Commonwealth, when needed. Exceptions to this principle are local cross-border assistance and Commonwealth operational support in the vicinity of military bases, which can be arranged at the local level.

Overall coordination of Victorian government emergency activities is the responsibility of SCRC/SECC.

Delegations and Appointments

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has made the following delegations and appointments under the Act:

- The responsibility for preparing and reviewing the response plan has been delegated to the Chief Commissioner of Police.
- The Department of Human Services has been appointed as the co-ordinating agency for recovery. (s. 17B(1))
- The responsibility for preparing and reviewing the recovery plan has been delegated to the State Recovery Co-ordinator, a senior officer of the Department of Human Services.
- The Chief Commissioner of Police has been delegated powers under s. 24(2)(c), (d) and (e) exercisable in a state of disaster.

1.5 Components of Emergency Management

This section summarises the main arrangements for prevention, response, recovery and community involvement. Further details on prevention and mitigation are set out in Part 2, response and recovery are set out in the State Emergency Response Plan (Part 3) and State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (Part 4).

Prevention/Mitigation

Prevention is defined in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* as ‘the elimination or reduction of the incidence or severity of emergencies and the mitigation of their effects’. Clearly, not all emergencies can be prevented, so the concept has a much broader meaning, encompassing those strategies which can be adopted to minimise or mitigate the impact of emergencies. Mitigation is the term now widely used in line with Australian Government usage as embodied in the COAG Natural Disasters Report and funding programs. See Part 2 of this Manual.

In Victoria, risk management is the principal methodology utilised for mitigation. The *Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management-Principles and guidelines* has been customised for emergency management purposes in the publication *Emergency Risk Management—Applications Guide* (Emergency Management Australia, 2000, re-issued 2004).

Victoria State Emergency Service facilitates a Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) process at municipal level.

Emergency Risk Management

Emergency Risk Management is described in some detail in Part 6 of this manual. The emergency risk management approach assumes that even though major emergencies occur infrequently and unpredictably, the risk of loss or damage caused by an emergency is always present to some extent.

Safety can be promoted by eliminating or reducing the possibility of an incident occurring; and strengthening and preparing exposed assets and communities to reduce the consequences of an emergency.

This is known as risk reduction or risk treatment. Where risk cannot be eliminated altogether, there remains a residual risk, and a need to plan and prepare for response and recovery.

Response

Response involves the combating of emergencies and the provision of rescue and immediate relief services to those affected.

Planning

There are State and Regional response planning committees. Their roles and membership are set out in Part 5 of this Manual.

Response Plans

In addition to the State Emergency Response Plan (Part 3 of this Manual), response plans also exist at regional level. The State Emergency Response Plan establishes the response co-ordination arrangements, and Part 7 of the Manual sets out the roles and responsibilities of the key agencies involved in emergency response.

The response plan does not contain plans for action, as these are the responsibility of the respective agencies.

A large number of public and private organisations, or sections of organisations, have roles in the response plan. In addition, many other

organisations (including municipal councils) can be called upon to assist the control agencies in the response to specific events.

Regional response plans set out the roles and responsibilities of response organisations within the region, documents co-ordination arrangements, and list contact details for all agencies and the resources they can provide. It also provides for the co-ordination of support from within and outside the region in support of municipal response operations.

Operational Co-ordination

Emergency response is based on a set of arrangements which are in effect at all times. Accordingly, there is no need for *activation* of response. *Agencies* or *strategies* may be activated when a need is evident. Emergency response arrangements operate in respect of any emergency, no matter how small, in which more than one organisation is involved in emergency response. Under response arrangements, responsibility rests firstly at the municipal (incident) level. Support is provided if necessary from regional or State level.

Under response arrangements, incident control is vested in control agencies which are primarily responsible for responding to specific emergencies. Support agencies provide services, personnel or material to support or assist control agencies or affected persons. Response agencies can perform the role of either control or support agencies depending upon the particular emergency. See Part 7 for lists of control and support agencies.

The bringing together of agencies and resources to ensure effective response to emergencies, i.e. the co-ordination function, is vested by the *Emergency Management Act 1986* in the Victoria Police. The State Emergency Response Co-ordinator must appoint a member of the police force to be emergency response co-ordinator for each region and municipal district. (s. 13(1)) The co-ordination function may include directing relevant agencies concerning the allocation of resources in responding to an emergency. (s. 13(2))

Response co-ordinators are also responsible for ensuring that effective control has been established by the control agency in responding to an emergency. In the event of uncertainty, the response co-ordinator determines which agency is to perform its statutory response role within a region or other specified area, where more than one agency is empowered to perform that role.

Recovery

Recovery is defined in the Act as ‘the assisting of persons and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning’. Recovery operations involve co-operation between all levels of government, non-government organisations, community agencies, the private sector, the affected community and emergent organisations in consideration of the:

- **people, social, community and health environment** - the emotional, social, spiritual, financial and physical wellbeing of individuals and communities
- **economic environment** - the revitalisation of the economy of the community

- **built environment** - the restoration of essential and community infrastructure, and
- **natural environment** - the rehabilitation of the environment

Recovery from emergencies is a developmental process of assisting individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities to manage the re-establishment of those elements of society necessary for their wellbeing.

There are State and Regional Recovery Planning Committees. Their roles and membership are set out in Part 5 of this Manual.

Emergency Relief

Emergency Relief is defined as ‘the provision of essential needs to individuals, families and communities in the immediate aftermath of an emergency’. Relief operations are traditionally managed as part of response, however in Victoria, relief planning is now included as part of recovery planning. The responsibility for co-ordinating relief functions has transferred from the Victoria State Emergency Service to the Department of Human Services.

Relief and Recovery Plans

In addition to the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (Part 4 of this Manual) recovery plans also exist at regional level.

The State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan provides information for the co-ordination of agencies involved in relief and recovery, describes the management principles for relief and recovery planning, outlines the services which may be required in relief and recovery situations, and provides information on the considerations involved in operational recovery. It also establishes a framework within which recovery agencies, regions and municipal councils can prepare their own relief and recovery plans.

Regional relief and recovery plans set out agency responsibilities and co-ordination arrangements applicable to each region, with specific resource listings and contact details. In addition, they describe arrangements for establishment and support of community recovery committees.

The specific roles of relief and recovery agencies are set out in Part 7 of this Manual.

Operational Co-ordination

Relief and recovery is managed at the level closest to that of the affected community, which may or may not be located within one municipal district. Relief and recovery activities are commenced as soon as possible after the impact of an event, and operate concurrently with response activities.

Relief and recovery is normally managed at municipal level by the council, possibly with involvement of one or more community recovery committees, which integrate the work of the government and non-government agencies taking account of the needs of the community during the recovery process. These committees are usually chaired by council personnel.

The Minister has nominated the Department of Human Services as the coordinating agent for recovery under s. 17B(1) of the Act. DHS

supports councils in local management of recovery, and co-ordinates recovery operations at regional and state levels.

1.6 Terrorism: Issue-Based Violence

The *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003* describes a ‘terrorist act’ as an act done or threat made ‘with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause’ by ‘coercing or influencing by intimidation’ an Australian or foreign government or the public. The definition is aligned to that in Part 5.3 of the *Criminal Code* (Commonwealth).

The National Counter-Terrorism Plan (2005) outlines responsibilities, authorities and the mechanisms to prevent, or if they occur manage, acts of terrorism and their consequences within Australia. In Victoria, linkages between national security agencies and the State are managed through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

State responsibilities and initiatives in respect of counter-terrorism include:

- the maintenance of crisis and consequence management capabilities to respond to terrorist incidents. These capabilities, consistent with the all hazards approach, are capabilities relevant to responding to any emergency
- the identification of critical infrastructure and the development of plans to manage the risk to it, and
- the maintenance of policies, legislation and plans relevant to counter-terrorism.

There is need to ensure that *crisis management* and *consequence management* are effectively coordinated with each other. In a threat environment which includes issue-motivated violence, emergency services and other non-military teams such as health workers will usually be at a scene before specialist military and security personnel, and both groups must work together effectively. For this reason, the role of the SECC/SCRC covers all types of major incidents or crises.

1.7 Special Provisions of the Emergency Management Act

The Act provides specific emergency powers which can be applied when the circumstances require. Special declarations are not required for standard emergency operations to occur. The Act also has some special provisions to increase the effectiveness of emergency response activities.

Emergency Area

In some emergency situations police may need to restrain people from participating in typical day-to-day activities or to exclude them from an area or restrict entry to it if their presence is dangerous or not desirable. A chemical spill or gas leak, for example, may involve a hazard not evident to the untrained person. For further information, see Part 3-28 to 3-30, or sections 36A, 36B and 36C of the Act.

State of Disaster

Part 5 of the Act provides for extreme measures to be exercised by the Government in situations which present a ‘significant and widespread

danger to life or property' in part or all of Victoria. The declaration of a State of Disaster creates a legal condition applying to a specified area only in extreme circumstances, as it is a fundamental principle underlying the Act, and Victorian arrangements, that normal emergency actions take place when the need is evident, and do not require special administrative decision or declaration.

The provisions for a State of Disaster have never been used and are only likely to be invoked in extreme circumstances in which there is a breakdown of the normal systems of government and emergency management, and it is necessary to override normal civil rights to deal with an emergency.

Upon the Premier's declaration of a State of Disaster, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has powers to:

- direct government agencies
- suspend Acts or regulations
- commandeer any property
- control movement into and within, and departure from the disaster area
- compel evacuations from the disaster area (except where a person claims pecuniary interest in the land, buildings, goods or valuables therein).

The latter three powers are delegated to the Chief Commissioner of Police.

The Act provides for compensation to be paid to any person whose property is taken or used in a State of Disaster.

Offence of Obstruction, and Legal Immunity for Volunteers

The Act creates the offence of obstructing an emergency worker (s.36), and also gives volunteer emergency workers (the same group entitled to the compensation provisions) legal immunity in cases of loss or injury sustained by others, except in cases of their wilful default or negligence (s.37). For further information on legal protection for volunteers, see Part 8, Appendix 7 of this Manual.

Control of Response to Fire

The Fire Services Commissioner has overall control of response to a 'major fire' in any area of the State. The Fire Services Commissioner may appoint a chief officer or another officer of one of the fire services agencies to have overall control of response to a major fire. (ss. 16, 16A & 16B)

The chief officers of the fire services agencies may, by agreement, appoint the chief officer or another officer of one of the agencies to have overall control of response to a fire (other than a major fire). In the absence of such agreement, the State Emergency Response Co-ordinator, or delegate, may direct a chief officer to appoint a chief officer or another officer of one of their agencies to have overall control of the response to a fire (other than a major fire). (s.16BA)

This ensures that suppression of any fire in Victoria is under the control of a single agency.

Control of Emergency Responses other than Fire

The officers in charge of agencies having roles or responsibilities for the response to an emergency (other than a fire) may determine the priority of the responsibilities of those agencies, either during or in anticipation of an emergency. In the absence of agreement, the State Emergency Response Co-ordinator, or delegate, may determine the priority of the response roles of the agencies. (s. 16C)

1.8 Volunteer Compensation Arrangements

Part 6 of the Act makes provision for compensation for volunteer emergency workers who suffer personal injury, death and/or loss or damage to property while engaged in an emergency activity. Emergency activity includes, training for, standing by to perform, or travelling to or from, duties performed for agencies under the response plan or the recovery plan.

Volunteers covered are those who are members of voluntary organisations that do not have statutory compensation schemes, and cover also applies to those people who, on a casual basis, assist an agency under the response plan or the recovery plan to deal with an emergency. See also Appendix 7 (Part 8).

Detailed guidelines on compensation for volunteer emergency workers is available from:

Emergency Management Policy and Legislation
Department of Justice
GPO Box 123
Melbourne Vic 3001