



## **Government response to the Inspector-General for Emergency Management’s *Review of connecting with and preparing communities for major emergencies in Victoria***

The Victorian Government thanks the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) for his *Review of connecting with and preparing communities for major emergencies in Victoria (the Review)* and supports the three recommendations outlined in the Review in full.

The emergency management sector is currently engaged in an ambitious and necessary reform agenda that is focussed on community and based on government, agencies, business, industry and the community “working as one”. Sector leaders have already committed to promoting and building resilience within their organisations. Organisational initiatives are underway to translate commitment to action.

The focus of the Victorian emergency management sector is safer and more resilient communities.

Safer and more resilient communities are:

- Connected with networks and structures that facilitate collaboration, communication, sharing, learning and the provision of support to individuals and families.
- Healthy and knowledgeable, with the ability to assess, monitor and manage risks, while learning new skills and building on past experiences;
- Able to identify problems, establish priorities and act, with the support of good infrastructure and services; and
- Flexible and resourceful, together with the capacity to accept uncertainty and proactively respond to change.
- Access and use up to date information to support decision making processes together with the ability to take action before, during and after emergencies.

As the Review observes, a range of emergency management organisations are involved with connecting and preparing communities for emergencies. The Review focuses on the work of Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES), with respect to its community engagement program for flood and storm, and the Country Fire Authority (CFA), with respect to its community engagement programs and resources to promote bushfire risk awareness.

The Review acknowledges that this work was conducted at an early stage of Victoria’s contemporary emergency management reform, noting the evolving preparedness and resilience activities in the Victorian

emergency management sector. The case studies provided in the Review highlight some of the positive work being undertaken by the sector with the community.

Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and the sector have a number of policies in place that assist with improving community resilience. The *Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan* (the SAP) is one of the mechanisms used to guide reform of the Victorian emergency management sector. The SAP prioritises the building and empowerment of community leadership and development of awareness, shared responsibility and self-reliance to ultimately strengthen community resilience. The resilience aspects of the SAP are supported by the Community Resilience Framework, and also by the Community Based Emergency Management (CBEM) approach, now available on the EMV website for communities and organisations to use ([www.emv.vic.gov.au](http://www.emv.vic.gov.au)). The Community Resilience Framework being developed under the SAP will articulate the policy and guidance for reform and the Review recommends that the sector utilise this guidance.

With an objective of building on combined strengths, the CBEM approach supports community members, including local volunteers and staff from organisations to work together before, during and after emergencies. This approach aims to support communities to be inclusive and resourceful in developing a safer, more resilient and sustainable future, through collaboration between agencies, government, business, industry and non-government organisations. Key focus areas to guide collaboration include better connecting people and networks, using local knowledge, identifying stresses and shocks and developing goals and solutions, while continuing to learn, share and improve. The aim is to increase the combined capacity and capability of people to better support each other to make safer and more informed decisions, and take action when preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies.

The development of the CBEM approach was supported by an initial pilot project undertaken with the Harrietteville community and a range of other local communities in different settings. This has supported the development of tailored community based processes and local plans, with the approach now also supporting engagement, most recently with the Morwell community under the *Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry: Victorian Government Implementation Plan* and guidance notes to support the implementation of the *Safer Together* initiative throughout Victoria.

The Review highlighted the importance of continuous improvement. EMV, in collaboration with the emergency management sector, is continuing to lead a new approach to formal lessons management, which includes the development of a framework (*EM-LEARN*), process and IT system to support consistent capture, analysis and implementation of lessons into the future. This sector-wide approach to continuous improvement for emergency management aligns with the IGEM Monitoring and Assurance Framework, as well as with the national approach to lessons management.

As noted in the Review:

*The review goes some way towards providing confidence that agencies are delivering community education, awareness and engagement programs that produce the intended outcomes and are effective for some people.*

More detail concerning the IGEM's recommendations and the actions that are being, or will be, taken to implement them, is outlined below.

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## Recommendation 1:

IGEM recommends that:

- EMV lead the sector in continuous improvement of community engagement programs using monitoring, evaluation, reporting and review processes.
- The sector should utilise the policy and guidance developed to support the reform including:
  - the SAP Resilience Framework
  - the Monitoring and Assurance Framework for Emergency Management

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## Government response:

Support in full

The Government supports the recommendation and is committed to reforms that emphasise the importance, and optimise the role, of community engagement in emergency management. The Government notes that EMV and the emergency management sector have already been proactive and adaptive in developing, implementing and enhancing policies and programs that facilitate and strengthen community engagement.

### **EMV**

The SAP is a three year rolling plan that outlines state-wide strategic priorities, with corresponding actions, to support Victoria in achieving its vision of safer and more resilient communities.

Commencing in 2014 with the Interim SAP and the subsequent 2015 and 2016 updates, the SAP highlights the commitment to 'lead a sector-wide approach to strengthen communities and promote shared responsibility and self-reliance'.

A priority action identified in the SAP is to develop a resilience framework. Commencing in early 2016, the *Community Resilience Framework*, due for completion and release in mid-2017, will be a key component of meeting the IGEM's recommendation.

The *Victorian Emergency Management Performance Standards*, issued by the Emergency Management Commissioner in 2016, provide responder agencies with objectives and minimum requirements for the emergency management functions they undertake and clarify how these functions contribute to the shared vision of 'safer and more resilient communities'. The standards set a minimum requirement within the community connection function of adhering to the governance arrangements that support community connectivity which will be a key feature in the *Community Resilience Framework*. One of the criteria for meeting this requirement is organisations ensuring strategies, policies, plans, practices and procedures involve appropriate community engagement and reinforce the culture of shared responsibility. Agency reporting against the performance standards is to commence in July 2017.

The performance standards also explicitly incorporate the Monitoring and Assurance Framework developed by the IGEM.

The *EM-LEARN Lessons Management framework* was released in November 2015, with an ongoing program of implementation. EMV is continuing to lead this new approach to formal lessons management, which includes the development of a framework (*EM-LEARN*), process and IT system to support consistent capture, analysis and implementation of lessons into the future. This sector-wide approach to continuous

improvement for emergency management aligns with the IGEM *Monitoring and Assurance Framework for Emergency Management*, as well as with the national approach to lessons management.

*EM-LEARN* further supports the development of a culture of continuous improvement and outlines a model for lessons management and how it will be implemented into the sector. Lessons management is about giving people the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from others to ensure continuous improvement into the future. The long term vision is for learning and analysis to support continuous improvement processes and activities for all communities, all emergencies and all agencies, before, during and after emergencies. *EM-LEARN* will support behaviour change, future service delivery planning and improved organisational performance.

## **CFA**

CFA is an active partner in the development of the *Community Resilience Framework* and will ensure that there is an appropriate connection with its processes and the IGEM's *Monitoring and Assurance Framework for Emergency Management*.

CFA has a range of existing community connection and engagement programs and activities which are set out under Recommendation 3.

CFA is currently developing and planning various initiatives that place community engagement at the centre of its approach to emergency management.

### **CFA Community Engagement Framework**

The CFA Community Engagement Framework, due for completion in 2017, is designed to enable CFA to make well-informed decisions at an operational and strategic level to strengthen community resilience, increase knowledge and empower local groups. The framework will place effective community engagement at the centre of CFA's approach.

### **Development of new program review process**

In 2017, CFA will implement a new program review process for all CFA community fire safety awareness and engagement programs. This will provide a robust and rolling schedule to guide a review cycle that captures all program approaches and ensures evidence-driven enhancements and development.

## **VICSES**

VICSES had implemented a variety of organisational strategies at the time of the Review to support a robust governance framework and support VICSES deliver on its strategic priorities. The *VICSES Corporate Plan 2015-2018*, *VICSES Service Delivery Strategy 2021* and *Community Education Plan 2011-2016* were all in place at the time of the IGEM review. These are underpinned by the *Our People Strategy 2014-2017*. During the latter part of 2015, a consultation draft of the *Community Resilience Strategy 2016-2019* was also being socialised with the community, VICSES members and stakeholders.

### **Benalla FloodSmart Program 2006-2007**

In 2006-2007, VICSES in partnerships with the Rural City of Benalla conducted the pilot community education program *FloodSmart*. The pilot program established community groups to deliver flood risk, preparation and response information into their communities through a multi-faceted approach.

In 2008, VICSES conducted an evaluation of the *FloodSmart* with members of the Benalla community, local government and other stakeholders. The evaluation gauged the effectiveness of *FloodSmart* in developing and implementing the pilot community education program, and the program's effectiveness in improving the capacity of the community to prepare for and cope with flood and storm emergencies. The program was found to be effective in VICSES working in partnership with local government and the community.

Results of the evaluation were used to inform capacity and capability of VICSES in best practices to monitor and review community engagement, and to assess the viability of *FloodSmart* for development and roll out across the State.

### **NDRGS FloodSafe Program 2012-2016**

In 2013, VICSES commissioned a baseline community consultation survey to understand current behaviours and attitudes as well as develop recommendations to promote awareness of and preparedness for flooding.

In 2014, research was again conducted to establish the effectiveness of communications activities undertaken since 2013 among specific communities across five regions - North East (Hume), North West (Loddon-Mallee), Mid West (Grampians), East (Gippsland) and South West (Barwon) - where VICSES had identified high flood risk communities. The 2014 research aimed to measure and compare the level of resilience in the face of flooding; and awareness of and preparedness for key issues relating to flooding, since 2013.

The survey assessed the effectiveness of the expanded *FloodSafe* program and reach across high risk flood communities in Victoria from transition from the previous *FloodSmart* program. Key findings included that those who had multiple interactions with VICSES were more likely to be prepared for flooding, to have a Home Emergency Plan, and to have a positive view of the helpfulness of information provided by VICSES.

### **Melbourne Water/ VICSES Partnership**

In 2008, VICSES entered into a partnership with Melbourne Water, which provided funding over a five year period for VICSES to deliver a community flood awareness, preparation and education program across all 38 councils in Melbourne Water's catchment footprint. The program targeted 10,000 properties identified as at risk of flood. The first wave of the partnership in 2011 included Casey and Whitehorse and, in 2013, expanded to Frankston, Knox, Glen Eira, Darebin, Monash and Maribyrnong.

In 2013, Melbourne Water commissioned consultants to assess the effectiveness of the partnership. Although positive results were evidenced in the community's recollection of VICSES program resources and reading and understanding key flood risk messages, the research indicated that the community had a low threshold of individual or household buy-in that did not motivate preparedness action. Unlike regional communities that experience often slow moving flood events, metropolitan communities are more likely to experience flash flooding. This presents a challenge in motivating household and business preparedness action.

VICSES acknowledges that options for a changed approach in service delivery must be considered to better engage metropolitan Melbourne communities in recognising local risk and better understanding preparedness and actions before, during and after a flooding event. An independent evaluation of the partnership will commence in March 2017, exploring a range of preparedness measures, including the extent to which community education and engagement programs provide tailored information on risk, community roles, the efficacy of suggested preparedness measures and how to implement these, and the extent to which programs show progress in enhancing community preparedness.

Since IGEM conducted the review, VICSES has planned, developed and implemented a number of further initiatives that emphasise the importance of community engagement programs that use monitoring, evaluation, reporting and review processes.

### **VICSES Community Resilience Strategy 2016-2019**

The *VICSES Community Resilience Strategy 2016-2019* is a three-year road map for the future design and development, and delivery and evaluation of VICSES programs, resources and services. The VICSES Strategy 2016-2019 sets out VICSES's commitment in supporting safer and more resilient communities before,

during and after emergencies, building on the successes and lessons learnt from pilot and project community engagement and education programs delivered by VICSES over the past five years.

The Strategy includes key performance indicators (KPIs) that are underpinned by a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and review framework. A Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework is being rolled out during year one of the Strategy. The MERI framework will detail how and what to collect, collate, evaluate and report. The MERI framework is also intended to support capability for evidencing and positioning programs and activities that increase the level of interest, support behaviour change within communities, understanding of risk, and the relevance of taking action before, during and after emergencies.

Results against the KPIs will be published annually during the life of the Strategy.

VICSES has also developed a series of resilience models that are an integral part of the Strategy. Under VICSES's three pillars of Capacity, Collaboration and Connections, the models will enable testing of VICSES's underlying assumptions in better understanding community attitudes, associated barriers and drivers across a range of preparedness behaviours. This will also guide future design and development of VICSES programs and resources and inform VICSES in the delivery and evaluation of these services to the community; supporting a shift in current preparedness behaviour and practices to community supported actions.

#### **VICSES Community Education Strategy 2011-2016**

As the control agency for flood, storm, earthquake and tsunami (landslide was introduced as an additional control hazard in 2016), VICSES community education and engagement programs predominantly focus on flood, considered as the most effective approach for VICSES to undertake targeted engagement with at risk communities. Programs have been targeted to areas where VICSES identified high flood risk communities.

VICSES has built an evidence base from pilot to project inception of insights and lesson to better understand how to build programs that target people at all different stages of the preparedness spectrum and lead to more resilient communities. Clear targets were in place under the *Community Education Strategy 2011-2016* to deliver community education and engagement programs during a time where complacency in communities in relation to flood and other hazards was high due to long term drought conditions (pre 2010/11 floods) in Victoria, and in an environment further dominated by bush fire awareness and funded programs driven off major fires in Victoria 2003, 2006 and 2009. Future direction for explicit target setting in preparedness outcomes is incorporated into the VICSES Strategy 2016-2019.

## Recommendation 2:

IGEM recommends that:

- As EMV leads the sector transition to the development and implementation of the SAP Resilience Framework, consideration should be given to:
  - incorporating explicit target setting in preparedness outcomes
  - the development and implementation of measures that allow assessment of the effectiveness of preparedness activities during emergencies

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## Government response:

Support in full

The Government supports this recommendation and notes that EMV and the emergency management sector are developing and implementing various initiatives to enhance the capacity of the sector and communities to prepare for emergencies.

### EMV

In 2016, EMV, in collaboration with the emergency management sector, released the *Victorian Preparedness Goal*, which sets out the core capabilities required to deal with the challenges and risks we face as a community, and how we effectively build and deliver these capabilities. This *Victorian Preparedness Goal* is based on the US Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) *National Preparedness Goal*. The *Victorian Preparedness Goal* will allow the sector to develop capability targets against the State's highest emergency risks, assess its current capabilities against the requirements, articulate any gaps and look at optimising community, business and government capability and capacity before, during and after an emergency.

EMV is undertaking substantive work to make improvements to emergency planning, which will provide a new enabling framework to underpin integrated emergency management planning in Victoria at the local, regional and State levels, including recognition of the importance of community plans for emergencies. This work is intended to strengthen emergency management planning, placing greater focus on the planning process and working collaboratively to develop integrated emergency management plans that incorporate mitigation, response and recovery, including specifying roles and responsibilities.

EMV is finalising an *Emergency Management Sector Performance Framework* for the sector to assess its progress against Victoria's vision of *Safer and more resilient communities*. In recognition of the sector's complexity this framework articulates and synthesizes the links between the *Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan (SAP)* and the *Emergency Management Performance Standards*, with performance measures at both the strategic and functional levels. It also identifies the importance of active reporting, monitoring and review, which then feeds into a cycle of continuous improvement. The role of IGEM in undertaking monitoring and assurance for the sector is also identified within the framework.

Agencies are involved in a large and diverse range of targeted initiatives to enhance community preparedness, some of which are outlined below. A significant proportion of these initiatives readily enable appropriate measure and targets to be incorporated to enable assessment of their effectiveness and outcomes.

### CFA

CFA has been involved in a large and diverse range of targeted initiatives to enhance community preparedness. These initiatives have been designed to engage a range of audiences, including CFA personnel, communities in high risk bushfire and grassfire areas, schoolchildren, tourists and the general public. These initiatives use a range of tools to engage their audiences, including structured programs, workshops, home visits, mobile units, and confidential intervention services.

### **Fire Ready Victoria**

*Fire Ready Victoria* provides a basic overview of local bushfire or grassfire risk, information on warnings and Fire Danger Ratings and advice on developing individual emergency plans, to people living, working in or travelling to high-risk bushfire or grassfire areas across Victoria. The program commenced in 2003, evolving from the Bushfire Blitz program which began in 1997. *Fire Ready Victoria* is an annual program delivered in the months leading up to summer. Major changes were made to the program in 2009 and with further enhancements in 2015.

CFA delivers around 900 *Fire Ready Victoria* sessions to an average of 20,000 people each year.

### **Community Fireguard**

Commencing in 1997 the *Community Fireguard* is a behaviour-change program delivered throughout the year designed to build knowledge, networks and capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from fire. It is designed for small community groups and neighbours living in high risk bushfire or grassfire areas, who have an interest in working together to mitigate their risks.

There are approximately 533 active Community Fireguard groups operating across Victoria, delivering an average of 428 sessions per year.

A recent study published in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* estimated a predicted savings amount of \$732,747 per Community Fireguard group from reduced property loss.

### **Bushfire Planning Workshops**

Since 2008 CFA have held Bushfire Planning Workshops cover local risk, fire behaviour and preparation information. The workshops assist groups of individuals with developing their bushfire survival plan step by step, and are aimed at community members, special interest or family groups living in high bushfire or grassfire risk areas. The workshops are run in the lead up to the fire season.

Since 2011, CFA have delivered an average of 86 workshops per year.

### **Property Advice Visit Service**

The Property Advice Visit Service aims to improve individual residents' knowledge of their local bushfire hazard, relevant preparation and mitigation activities, and leave early planning. The service is delivered face to face by CFA members, at the homes of people living in Victoria's highest bushfire locations.

The service commenced in 2013 as an evolution of the Home Bushfire Advice Service program, which commenced in 2010. Over 600 volunteers and staff have been trained to deliver the service, making an average of 10,000 home visits per year.

### **Fire Safe Kids**

Fire Safe Kids is a primary school program about bushfire and home fire safety that is delivered all year around across Victoria. The program has a strong focus on personal fire safety and raising awareness of CFA and is also delivered to pre-primary students. The program commenced in 1997 as the Brigades in Schools program, and was redeveloped in 2010. It is delivered to approximately 34,000 students every year.

### **Fire Safe Youth**

Commencing in 2011, *Fire Safe Youth* is a bushfire and home fire safety program, featuring gamification and interactive sessions that is targeted to secondary school students and CFA junior brigade members. Fire

Safe Youth is currently delivered in two CFA regions all year round. A review of the program is planned over the next 12 months following identification of potential improvements.

### **Mobile Engagement Units**

Mobile engagement units (buses) were commissioned in 2012 and primarily designed to deliver school programs, replacing CFA's truck based Mobile Education Unit. The mobile engagement units with support staff to deliver fire safety information, program information and expert advice to the community. Mobile units are used to provide information at operational incidents, or engagement with tourists, school groups, and the general public at events in high risk areas. Benefits from the mobile unit's flexibility, scalability and agility include their use as a controlled environment for CFA health teams and other ad-hoc operational and non-operational tasks. The units operate year round, with busier periods over spring and summer. A total of 78 events were attended by the mobile units over the past financial year.

### **Juvenile Fire Awareness & Intervention Program**

The Juvenile Fire Awareness & intervention Program is a free and confidential home-based service, designed to prevent loss of life, injury and property damage through early intervention with children who exhibit risky fire behaviours. The program is delivered by both CFA and MFB, and is targeted towards children, who meet strict program criteria, engaging in inappropriate fire behaviour. The program was developed in 1987 by MFB and the Royal Children's Hospital and is delivered all year round. During 2016, 99 children in CFA areas participated in the program.

### **Reduce the Risk**

Reduce the Risk is a home fire safety workshop, designed to deliver information on the main causes of home fires and how to prevent and respond to them, to the community and special interest groups. The program was developed in 2003 and is delivered year round. An average of 247 workshops are delivered each year.

### **Early Fire Safe**

The Early Fire Safe program aims to raise awareness of the causes of burns and scalds to children under the age of five, and to advise how to prevent these injuries and provide basic home fire safety information. The program is targeted towards parents of young children usually via maternal & child health centres. The program began in 2003 and is delivered year round. An average of 69 sessions are delivered each year.

### **School Curriculum Natural Hazards Resilience Package**

The School Curriculum Natural Hazards Resilience Package commenced in October 2015 and will run through to June 2017. It focusses on secondary schools in areas multiple hazard risks of fire, flood and storm. Designed for secondary school students in years 7 to 10, it provides teachers with the necessary skills and confidence to deliver disaster resilience education within the classroom. The program provides students with a better understanding of their local natural hazard risks and encourages them to examine ways that they can contribute to developing more resilient school communities. A total of 20 schools were identified to participate in the pilot.

### **Mobile Area Resource Centre (MARC)/Mobile Area Craft Centre (MACC) Vans**

CFA provides professional development for teachers, and fire safety education kits to the MARC/MACC van teachers to facilitate the delivery of bushfire and home fire safety lessons for primary school students in remote areas. This initiative commenced in 2015 and enables teachers to deliver fire safety education across a large number of regional schools that may otherwise not have access to the necessary resources.

### **VICSES**

#### **Children and youth resources**

During 2014, VICSES, with the assistance of their volunteers, developed a range of resources targeted to children. In particular, a kit was built incorporating activity plans in line with VICSES community education

programs for school groups from prep to year 6. The kit is designed to have everything needed to run an education session with school children.

### **Community education facilitators**

During the 2014 -15 financial year, VICSES provided seven Community Education Facilitators (CEF) courses, training more than 60 participants as community education facilitators provides volunteers with the skills to plan, conduct and evaluate community education activities at a local level. For the 2014–15 year, seven CEF courses were conducted, training more than 60 participants. Twenty-three Community Education awareness sessions were also held for nearly 300 participants. In 2015-16 VICSES conducted 15 CEF courses and trained more than 130 volunteers. Additionally, 37 Community Education awareness sessions were held for 360 participants.

### **Melbourne Water**

The VICSES partnership with Melbourne Water entered its eighth year in 2015-16. During the 2015 – 16 financial year key activities undertaken through the partnership included;

- All the Melbourne Municipal Emergency Flood Plans have now been updated
- Delivery of 36 local flood guides for high to very high risk communities
- Ongoing involvement with the 52 high to very high flood risk communities in Melbourne
- A campaign of 2,380 doorknocks, 8,900 mail outs and three Community Information Sessions in the very high risk communities
- Ongoing involvement with the Koori and Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities to further strengthen community disaster awareness

### **CFA/SES State Community Engagement and Hazard Awareness Forum**

2015-16 saw the first ever joint CFA/SES Community Engagement Forum. More than 500 volunteers from both agencies attended the forum in Creswick. The two-day conference provided a much-needed opportunity for both organisations to learn about what other volunteers are doing and what is happening in the community engagement space. The forum was extremely well received by participants and will be repeated in 2016-17.

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**Recommendation 3:**

IGEM recommends that:

- As the State transitions to a community resilience building agenda and increasingly fosters public participation in emergency management, the sector should consider the elements of better practice outlined in the Victorian Auditor-General's Office Better Practice Guide: Public Participation in Government Decision-making.

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**Government response:**

Support in full

The Government supports this recommendation. EMV, in collaboration with the sector, is committed to implementing best practice models in a range of activities that are designed to foster community participation, awareness and capacity in emergency management.

**National Disaster Resilience Strategy – Community Engagement Framework.**

The Community Engagement Framework is a key component in the implementation of the Council of Australian Governments' National Strategy for Disaster Resilience released in 2011 and has been used to guide agency programs. The Framework provided guidance on some of the practical actions related to engaging with the community, including, connecting and working in partnership with the community; building on existing networks, resources and strengths; identifying and supporting the development of community leaders and empowering the community to exercise choice and take responsibility.

Designed to assist emergency management agencies in their work with communities, the framework incorporates a model that details principles and approaches of community engagement in the emergency management context. The model draws on the internationally recognised International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum.

The IAP2 public participation spectrum is highlighted as a key foundation of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) Better Practice Guide: Public Participation in Government Decision Making. The guide highlights the six key elements of public participation:

1. Clearly define the decision required, and the scope of the public participation exercise;
2. Understand who is affected and how they should be included;
3. Identify the resources, skills and time required for effective public participation;
4. Document the public participation and management approach;
5. Implement the public participation plan and monitor its progress; and
6. Evaluate the public participation exercise and apply continuous improvement.

**EMV**

The key elements described in the VAGO better practice guide are incorporated in the development and implementation of the 'community at the centre' approach adopted by EMV since its inception and continues through the development and implementation of further programs and initiatives. These include, by way of example:

- Joint Standard Operating Procedure (J2.04) – Local Knowledge, first issued in 2011 under the Fire Services Commissioner, requiring Incident Controllers to utilise local knowledge and community connections to enhance their decision making during the response to bushfire.
- Principles outlined in the CBEM approach released in May 2016, following piloting with communities during 2013 and 2014, guides people to build on combined strengths, by working together to identify local priorities and develop mutual goals and solutions, including building relationships and using locally tailored processes for communities to participate in decision making that affects them.
- The development of the Community Resilience Framework, due for completion by EMV in mid-2017, which involved, amongst other things, broad community engagement to test and discuss the key relationships between the emergency management sector, potential community resilience outcomes and challenges and the definition of resilience.

Each of the above examples incorporate the identified elements in the VAGO guide.

### **Summer Fire and Hazards Communication Strategy**

Following the events of Black Saturday, the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) emphasised the critical role communication plays in ensuring Victorians, particularly those living in high-risk fire areas, understand their risk and are well-informed about how to respond to the threat of fire.

The whole-of-government Summer Fire and Hazards Communication Strategy prompts all Victorians to be better prepared against the threat of fire to minimise injury and loss of life. Within this strategy, the Summer Fire campaign has the following specific objectives:

- Raise awareness of the risk of fire (both personal and community) within high risk bush and grassfire communities
- Encourage people to undertake planning and preparation activities that make leaving early easier
- Raise awareness of what to do in the event of a bush or grassfire depending on where they live (including understanding where to access and how to respond to Fire Danger Ratings and warnings).

Fire is just one of the hazards faced by Victorians over the summer months. In recognition of this, the strategy is one element of a whole-of-government approach to promoting safety messages to the community. In practice, this involves coordination with other emergency management partners and promotion of messages relating to:

- Vulnerable people (DHHS)
- Heat and smoke health (DHHS)
- Arson and reckless fires (Victoria Police in conjunction with Crimestoppers Victoria)
- Prevention of smoke related health issues (DHHS)
- Planned burning before and after the summer season (DELWP).
- Water safety – Play it safe by the water (DJR in conjunction with Life Saving Victoria)
- Flood safety and response (VICSES)
- Powerline Safety (DEDJTR).

The Strategic Communication Branch, DJR, implements the campaign on behalf of the Victorian Government, working closely with EMV, CFA, MFB, VICSES, and Victoria Police, as well as government departments and Tourism Victoria. The strategy seeks to integrate broader summer safety messages

alongside Summer Fire campaign advertising to provide overarching communications concerning community safety over summer.

To ensure the Summer Fire and Hazards strategy is effective in achieving its objectives, the campaign is comprehensively evaluated each year. This involves individual evaluations by suppliers including benchmarking and tracking research, post advertising analysis and ongoing social media monitoring throughout summer, culminating in a separate independent evaluation that thoroughly assesses the effectiveness of the campaign, and provides recommendations and areas for improvement to inform and implement in subsequent strategies/campaigns.

## **CFA**

CFA has adopted the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Community Engagement Framework* as its best practice model for working with communities. Better practice also considered in CFA's community engagement design and delivery includes the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's *Better Practice Guide: Public Participation in Government Decision-making*, as well as approaches for whole-of-sector community resilience.

### **Community Led Planning (Community Based Emergency Management)**

These initiatives involve the CFA working with communities to help them develop their own planning and strategies to build resilience and mitigate the effects of disasters. Projects include *Community-Led Planning* (2012-2014) and Community Emergency Management Planning (a shared EMV/CFA project, 2014-2015). The initiative is ongoing, however support is provided to communities that have already participated. Other agencies have similar and shared plans in place to work with communities using this approach on an ongoing basis depending on service delivery plans for at risk communities. Several successful pilots have been conducted across high risk communities with either/both bushfire and flood and other hazard risk profiles. Trained facilitators specialising in enabling community-driven planning provide support and guidance to communities.

### **Firescape**

*Firescape* involves local residents in planned burning programs, providing training, fire awareness and building community resilience. The aim is to promote understanding and participation in cross-tenure vegetation management. The program is targeted at residents living in areas where vegetation management is scheduled to occur, such as through planned burning or removal of vegetation. *Firescape* was piloted in 2013 and is delivered during the spring and autumn planned burning period. The program aims to make local residents more informed and involved in local vegetation management initiatives and planning, creating a greater sense of ownership of local vegetation and fire risk issues, and their treatments. The program will be refreshed in 2017.

## **VICSES**

### **Community Education Strategy 2011-2016**

VICSES's commitment to best practice models is reflected in its *Community Education Strategy 2011-2016*. This strategy, implemented in November 2011, set out how VICSES aimed to educate communities over the five year period and grow its capabilities in partnership with key stakeholders. It used a model of collaboration, where VICSES leads, facilitates and participates in conversations about the management of emergency risks with communities. VICSES programs actively seek to collaborate with local networks and leaders, such as Local Government, Service Clubs, Schools, Chambers of Commerce, Media and Community Groups and other Emergency Service Organisations.

### **VICSES FloodSafe Program 2012-2016**

*FloodSafe* commenced in 2012-2013 and was a targeted community education and engagement project for high risk flood communities across Victoria. VICSES's community engagement focused on aspects of

planning and preparedness that could be undertaken by the community to help themselves and their neighbours.

*FloodSafe* was delivered by all VICSES Regions, with relevant phases of the program based on community need and local capacity. As a community education program, *FloodSafe* sought to build acceptance of natural hazard risks within the community and to collaborate and partner with the community to prepare for emergencies. Local knowledge informed the program's key messages and reflected the needs of the community.

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## **Further Actions**

Further actions the sector is undertaking to address the issues raised in the review include:

As part of the Government's reform of the Public Sector, outlined in the 2016 policy statement Public Sector Reform: Delivering exceptional outcomes for Victorians, the Government is committed to the development of an outcomes approach to public policy and service delivery. An outcomes approach will provide the Government with a clear picture of what success looks like, and a rigorous and robust mechanism to measure impact.

As the outcomes frameworks are developed and embedded, measures will be developed and tested. Overtime, ambitious targets that challenge Government and agencies to improve performance will be set.

A number of recent initiatives and programs have been introduced since the completion of the Review and are summarised below. These, along with the range of other developments outlined in this response will be considered in light of the Review's findings to better monitor, evaluate and improve the outcomes necessary to prepare communities for major emergencies.

### **CFA**

#### **Summer Fire Safety Campaign: Local initiatives program**

The Summer Fire Safety Campaign: Local initiatives program provide CFA Brigades and community groups with funding and opportunities to trial new local engagement approaches to enhance summer fire safety awareness and preparedness. The program is undertaken at a local level and is targeted at communities in high fire risk areas. The program is usually conducted in partnership between Brigades and community groups, neighbourhood houses, and individuals with an interest in fire safety. The program commenced in the lead up to the 2016-17 summer season.

Twenty four separate projects were approved in 2016-17, with a number still underway. Evaluation of the program is scheduled for mid-2017

#### **MyCFA**

MyCFA delivers timely, tailored and relevant fire preparedness information, including about fire safety, community meetings and neighbourhood safer places, by email to members of the public. MyCFA has been running in its current format since 2014 and has over 31,000 subscribers who are communicated with on average between 12-20 times per year.

#### **Equitana 2016**

Equitana 2016 occurred from 17-20 November 2016 and was the largest horse show in the southern hemisphere. This event was identified by CFA as an opportunity to provide bushfire preparedness information, specifically relevant to horse riders, owners and agisters, who were identified as an "at risk group". CFA distributed approximately 24,000 publications to attendees. As a result of this engagement, 795 people signed up to MyCFA to receive ongoing fire preparedness information.

CFA is also in the process of developing a number of other initiatives to improve community preparedness.

#### **CFA Local**

CFA Local is a pilot project that seeks to provide an online platform with personalised, locally specific information for residents on their fire risk, upcoming brigade activities and personal preparedness

information. The pilot was developed during 2016, and was made available on the CFA website in a limited way. A fully developed platform will depend on the future development of a new CFA digital platform.

### **Partnerships with allied health providers**

This initiative will seek to provide messages, collateral and training to health services workers, such as health and community care workers, to enable delivery of risk planning for vulnerable residents who utilise in home care, and other forms of local government health services, and who may need help with their bushfire and home fire safety planning and preparedness. During 2017, CFA will participate with MFB in development of a process to facilitate promotion and access to the AFAC Basic Home Fire Safety Materials for care provider organisations throughout Victoria.

### **VICSES**

VICSES has engaged operational partners, external stakeholders and academia to explore how to best define and develop key indicators/markers that measure achievement against its strategic objectives, report on its KPIs and to help identify and embed best practice.

A key and measurable outcome of the *VICSES Community Resilience Strategy 2016-2019* (VICSES Strategy 2016-2019) is to increase the level of interest, and support behaviour change within the communities that VICSES works with, so they are more aware, informed and prepared for emergencies: supporting them to understand their risk, and the relevance of taking action before, during and after emergencies (the VICSES Strategy 2016-2019 is referred to in more detail in the response to Recommendation 1).

VICSES has engaged with the University of Melbourne's Centre for Evidence and Implementation in the design of an evaluation framework and selection of all input, output and outcome measures. KPIs have been developed against each of the strategic outcomes;

- Capacity - 8% increase in the number of people who are aware of their risk
- Collaboration - 12% increase in programs that partner with others to engage the community
- Connections - 15% increase in activities that directly engage with the community

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The challenge of preparing communities for emergencies was a focus of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission's (VBRC) final report. The VBRC highlighted the cycle of complacency that occurs within individuals and communities in the periods following major emergencies. The following VBRC observation remains in light of the observations and findings within the IGEMs review:

“Individuals who live in fire-prone areas need to take the initiative in learning about, preparing for and responding to bushfires. This means they need to devote a considerable amount of time and effort to learning about bushfires and about how fire in their local area might affect them. They must also update and refresh their bushfire knowledge regularly, to make sure they are as well prepared as possible during each fire season.”

This statement can be extrapolated to all forms of emergencies. As noted in the Bushfire Royal Commission Implementation Monitor (BRCIM) in his annual report four years after the 2009 Black Saturday fires:

“...the BRCIM remains concerned that community complacency about bushfires is still prevalent in Victoria. This situation presents one of the major challenges for the State and its agencies in reducing the risks associated with bushfire and other natural disasters.”

The IGEM notes in his review the “complex and difficult task the sector has in supporting households and communities to be prepared for major emergencies”.

Increasing community resilience is a major component of the ongoing progress and direction of Victoria's emergency management reform program, which commenced in December 2012 with the publication of the emergency management reform white paper.

Building resilience requires communities, government, agencies, community service organisations, business and industry to work in partnership and to share responsibility.

It requires an integrated approach that puts people at the centre of decision making and supports the emergency management sector to better connect with communities to understand their values, priorities and strengths.

The resilience approach must be flexible to help the emergency management sector understand how to support communities to identify their strengths and to work together to become safer and more resilient in the future.

Alignment with the Community Resilience Framework will support all emergency management organisations to readjust policies, programs and activities to help build and strengthen community resilience characteristics and support continual improvement processes