

Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management

COMMUNIQUÉ

Canberra, 25 September 2009

Emergency Management Extraordinary Meeting

The Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management (MCPEM-EM) today held an extraordinary meeting to consider preparedness for the coming bushfire season. The Council is chaired by the Australian Attorney-General Robert McClelland. It also comprises Ministers from State and Territory Governments, New Zealand and a representative from the Australian Local Government Association.

MCPEM-EM also discussed other natural hazards such as cyclones and floods.



DGEMA, Secretary and Attorney-General at the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management Meeting

Pre-season operational briefing

The Council discussed the outcomes of the pre-season operational briefing held today, prior to the Council's meeting. They noted the seasonal outlook for fire and cyclone, Commonwealth support arrangements to jurisdictions, and response plans and arrangements for timely deployment of Commonwealth resources.

Funding of \$2 million for national priorities

The Council noted the Commonwealth's commitment of \$2 million for implementation of national priority emergency management projects in 2009-10; prioritised by the Council's standing committee, the Australian Emergency Management Committee. The projects include:

- Immediate enhancements to the National Registration and Inquiry System (NRIS) in partnership with the Red Cross, including capability for online and telephone registrations and inquiries during a disaster.
- Development of media and education kits and a visual identity for the Standard Early Warning System (SEWS), thereby creating a greater understanding and awareness of SEWS.
- Development of a national framework for managing donated goods, including communication and resourcing strategies.
- Emergency management training programs for Remote Indigenous Communities.
- Coordination of a national workshop to develop emergency management resilience activities for youth development organisations across Australia.
- Conducting the second National Forum to Reduce Deliberate Bushfires in Australia in April 2010, to identify any further issues to be addressed following the inaugural Forum in March 2009.
- Development of a national community awareness campaign on the role and value of emergency management volunteers.
- Development of a national volunteer employer recognition scheme that will formally recognise and encourage the continued support of employers (including self-employed volunteers) to the emergency management sector.
- Conducting two leadership-training programs for emergency management volunteers in a multi-agency environment, between January and June 2010.
- Scoping options for a community awareness campaign regarding the amended fire index.
- Scoping the viability of running a course to further educate emergency management agencies on bushfire investigation, including arson investigative techniques.

National telephony-based emergency warning system (NEWS)



Attorney-General, The Hon. Robert McClelland MP at The Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management meeting

The Council noted progress on the development of the National Emergency Warning System capability. The Location-Based Number Store (LBNS), administered by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department, will be available for the warning systems to run tests by early October. It will comprise a secure, central database to hold geo-coded Integrated Public Number Database (IPND) data.

The National Emergency Warning System (NEWS), procured through a tender process administered by the Victorian Government, will be available by the end of October for comprehensive testing throughout November. After this testing, the system will be fully operational.

National framework for scaled advice and warnings

The Council endorsed the new national framework for scaled advice and warnings to the community including Australia's revised arrangements for bushfire advice and alerts, with a new fire danger rating of Catastrophic (Code Red).

Handling of emergency triple zero calls

The Council agreed to a number of measures relating to the use of Emergency Triple Zero numbers during emergencies. These measures consist of:

- Tasking officers to report back to the November 2009 MCPEM-EM on the status and feasibility of procedures for State and Territory Emergency Service Organisations to deal with surges in demand, including whether any further measures need to be taken
- Developing a national protocol for the use of 'extreme event' recorded voice announcements to redirect non-emergency callers to alternative information sources in a crisis, to be considered by the November 2009 MCPEM-EM; and
- Ensuring that public awareness activities are undertaken before and during a crisis so the public is aware of alternate information sources, to reduce the demand on Triple Zero.

The Council also noted the Commonwealth assistance in development of a number of public information projects which will reduce the non-emergency call loads on Triple Zero and a Commonwealth initiative to block mobile phone handsets of repeated non-genuine callers to Triple Zero.

Bushfire arson

The Council noted the outcomes of the National Workshop to Reduce Deliberate Bushfires in Australia on 25 March 2009 and was presented with a Draft National Bushfire Arson Action Plan, which will be further considered by Council at its November 2009 meeting.

Immunity for foreign emergency services personnel

The Council noted the passing of the *Foreign States Amendment Act 2009 (Cth)*. The Act ensures that foreign government personnel assisting Australia in a domestic emergency or disaster are immune from tort proceedings in Australia arising out of that assistance.

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