

Forward Projection of Reviews

2020



IGEM
Inspector-General
for Emergency
Management

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1 Introduction

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) is an independent role established under the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (the Act).

The objectives of IGEM are to:

- provide assurance to the government and the community in respect of emergency management arrangements in Victoria
- foster continuous improvement of emergency management in Victoria.

Supporting the achievement of these objectives, IGEM undertakes system-wide reviews, including reviews of the emergency management functions of responder agencies and government departments as prescribed in section 66 of the Act.

These reviews are based on an Annual Forward Plan of Reviews (the forward plan), and Forward Projection of Reviews, (the forward projection) developed by IGEM in consultation with the emergency management sector¹ (the sector) and shared with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services (the minister). In addition, IGEM conducts reviews at the request of the minister under the provisions of section 64(1)(c) of the Act.

In January 2020, IGEM received a request from the minister to conduct an independent Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian Fire Season (the Inquiry). Due to the significant scope, timeframes and resource commitments associated with Inquiry, IGEM will not publish a forward plan, nor conduct any additional planned reviews in 2020.

However, IGEM retained the potential list of review topics previously identified for potential review in collaboration with sector and as described in this publication. These topics will be further considered for review from 2021.

All of IGEM's assurance activities are guided by the *Assurance Framework for Emergency Management* which provides the foundation for a coordinated and collaborative approach to sector-wide assurance.

Forward Projection of Reviews

The forward projection ensures previously identified areas for potential review are retained and that a progressive and system-wide approach to IGEM's annual review program is maintained.

The forward projection is developed based on:

- information sourced from government, community and the emergency management sector
- system-wide risk and monitoring activities
- environmental scanning.

¹ Defined in the *Emergency Management Act 2013* as '...comprising all agencies, bodies, departments and other persons who have a responsibility, function or other role in emergency management'.

IGEM will update the forward projection annually, in line with:

- the confirmation of each forward plan
- a consideration of emerging risks and strategic priorities
- the outputs of complementary assurance activities
- ongoing consultation with the sector.

1.1 Document purpose

This document outlines IGEM's forward projection of review topics. The intended audience is the emergency management sector in Victoria, and the document will be publicly available on the IGEM website (www.igem.vic.gov.au).

The forward projection provides the sector with a high-level, thematic overview of the potential areas IGEM may review from 2021 and includes broad information on topic and subject matter.

The proposed areas for review are not necessarily listed in order of completion, as priorities may change each year. In addition, as is the case for 2020, the number and timing of reviews conducted each year may fluctuate due to the prioritised conduct of other assurance activities.

2 Forward projection of reviews

2.1 Systems and platforms for interoperability

Information and communication systems and associated tools are critical to the emergency management sector. They provide enabling platforms across the spectrum of emergency management and include a range of communication networks, information and warning systems and interactive databases.

Effective preparedness and response to emergencies requires the networked components of the sector to work together to ensure a coordinated response. Data availability and information sharing across the sector enables organisations to connect with and provide timely and appropriate advice and services to affected communities.

Systems such as EM-COP, EM-Share and the Predictive Services Framework are now in place. There is an opportunity to review who is using them, if they are being used effectively and to what extent they are contributing to enhanced interoperability.

IGEM proposes to review the emergency management sector's networked capability, capacity and performance in developing and utilising common operating platforms that support interoperability and positive community outcomes.

2.2 Agency coordination for Class 2 emergencies

The sector needs to be prepared for a diverse range of emergencies that can occur in Victoria. The expertise required to manage different types of emergencies reside within the emergency management sector. Effective and efficient management of major emergencies requires organisations to work together to combine their knowledge, skills and resources.

Major emergencies are classified as Class 1 or 2 depending on the type of emergency. Emergencies classified as class 1 include hazards such as fires, floods, storms and earthquakes, while Class 2 emergencies include hazards such as human disease, agricultural pests and disease, disruptions to essential services, road accidents and environmental pollution.

The State Emergency Risk Assessment identifies that Victoria's greatest risks include a combination of Class 1 and 2 emergencies.

Multi-agency coordination is crucial for the management of major emergencies. It is particularly important when there are compounded or cascading emergencies – for example combinations of heatwave, bushfire and power outages.

The government departments responsible for Class 2 emergencies have many varied responsibilities beyond emergency management, and not all of them have a history of working closely with the traditional emergency management organisations. Further, Class 1 emergencies occur more frequently than Class 2, enabling Class 1 arrangements to be tested and reviewed more frequently. As such, there are potential barriers to effective agency coordination during Class 2 emergencies.

IGEM proposes to review the extent to which the emergency management sector's arrangements for agency coordination are appropriate and effective for Class 2 emergencies.

2.3 Relocation and evacuation planning and management

Relocation and evacuation are important methods the emergency management sector can use to ensure community safety in response to a range of actual or potential emergency events. Major international and domestic events have demonstrated the complexities of implementing timely and coordinated movement of people from one location to another.

Victoria's emergency management sector has introduced many changes in the way it plans for, exercises and manages relocation and evacuation, including initiatives for the assisted evacuation of people who are vulnerable. These arrangements must be continuously reviewed to ensure alignment with leading practice and changing risk profiles.

IGEM proposes to review the sector's relocation and evacuation arrangements with consideration of preparedness for all emergencies and all communities.

2.4 Community-level emergency management

Victoria is committed to having a community-centred approach to emergency management that aims to achieve the best possible outcomes for the community and foster community participation. Involving the community helps to ensure that the sector's decision-making and service delivery are aligned with the community's needs. It is also fundamental to helping communities build resilience and developing the concept of shared responsibility.

Community engagement and participation in emergency management can be initiated by either the sector or by the community. It can be part of the preparedness, response or recovery phases. There have been numerous 'grassroots' community-led initiatives in Victoria that have emerged from emergency experiences.

At the same time, the sector has strived to increase community participation in emergency management. To-date, the sector has formalised two ways of increasing community participation: consulting with the community to incorporate local knowledge into incident response and promoting community-led planning through Emergency Management Victoria's (EMV) community-based emergency management approach.

The enablers and barriers to having a Victorian community that is aware of their emergency risks and engaged in emergency management are complex.

The sector can help facilitate community engagement in emergency management, but a one-size-fits-all approach is not possible. Communities and individual community members vary in their capacity, capability and readiness to participate in emergency management. Community characteristics are also highly variable.

Some communities are place-based, while others are based on characteristics in common such as shared interests or culture. Place-based communities are variable in their social capital, which influences their ability to collectively engage in emergency management. For these reasons, sharing responsibility for emergency management with the community requires tailored engagement activities and is by necessity, an incremental process.

IGEM proposes to review approaches to community-level emergency management and whether those initiatives are contributing to improved outcomes for communities.

2.5 Emergency management training and exercising

Victoria's emergency management sector is reliant on fit for purpose exercising and training arrangements to maximise the capacity and capability of the sector. As Victoria continues to transition to an all emergencies, all communities approach, additional focus is required to ensure that multidisciplinary training and exercising is in place to support interoperable arrangements aligned with risk. This includes exercising scenarios that are of high consequence but are less frequently encountered.

Both the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and the Review of the 2010–11 Food Warnings and Response identified the need for the sector to increase multi-agency training so that it is better prepared to respond to major emergencies in future. The 2012 *Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper* called for the sector to develop an annual emergency management exercise program for Victorian Government departments and agencies.

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office undertook a subsequent review – Managing Emergency Service Volunteers (February 2014) that highlighted concerns around the Victoria State Emergency Service and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) understanding of capacity requirements and their decentralised approach to recruitment.

There is support from the sector and from IGEM for a review of training and exercising arrangements. A review of the arrangements aligns with IGEM's legislated function under Section 64(1d) of the Act – evaluate statewide training and exercising arrangements to maintain and strengthen emergency management capability. This function under the Act has not been applied to date, and there have been no significant external reviews undertaken of these arrangements within the past five years.

IGEM proposes to review emergency management training and exercising to assess performance against leading practice.

2.6 Long-term recovery

Recovery after emergencies involves the social, built, economic and natural environments. After a major emergency event, recovery can last for a long time. The 2009 Victorian bushfires demonstrated that communities can take years to recover.

Long-term recovery requires planning, coordination and community engagement to achieve the outcomes that communities need. An effective long-term recovery process builds community resilience for future emergency events. The Victorian emergency management sector has produced a *Resilient Recovery Strategy* that will guide recovery efforts in future.

IGEM proposes to review arrangements for long-term recovery following major emergency events and whether they are leading to positive outcomes for the community.

2.7 Disaster risk mitigation

Reducing the likelihood or consequences of emergency events through risk mitigation activities is a way to minimise negative outcomes for the community and reduce demand on the emergency management sector. Investment in risk mitigation activities is an important part of emergency management despite the historical focus on emergency response.

The *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* was released in 2019 to guide efforts to reduce disaster risk associated with natural hazards. Victoria's State Crisis and Resilience Council's (SCRC) Risk and Resilience Sub-Committee is responsible for overseeing risk mitigation activities. Decision-making about risk mitigation can be informed by the state-level risk assessment, which considers natural hazards as well as other types of hazards.

IGEM proposes to review the Victorian emergency management sector's arrangements for disaster risk mitigation with consideration of all potential hazards.

2.8 Critical infrastructure

IGEM has a legislated responsibility to monitor, review and assess critical infrastructure resilience at a system level. On 1 July 2015, new emergency risk management arrangements for critical infrastructure resilience (the arrangements) came into effect. The arrangements adopt an all hazards approach to building resilience founded on strong partnership between government and industry. The vision for the arrangements is to limit disruption to the supply of essential services to the Victorian community.

Since the commencement of the 2015 arrangements, IGEM has monitored their implementation, assessed incremental improvements, and identified improvement opportunities through a continuous improvement lens. In its *Critical Infrastructure Resilience – Implementation Progress Report 2017*, IGEM found that overall, government organisations were working collaboratively with their respective critical infrastructure sectors in implementing activities in line with the intent of the arrangements.

As signalled in IGEM's *Critical Infrastructure Resilience – Implementation Progress Report 2016* and its 2017 report, IGEM will transition from monitoring the implementation of the arrangements, to an approach which monitors and assesses the effectiveness of the arrangements. To enable this transition, IGEM will first assess the efficiency of the critical infrastructure resilience arrangements.

IGEM proposes to review the effectiveness of the sector's critical infrastructure arrangements.

2.9 Use of surge staff for additional emergency management capacity

In January 2016 EMV and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning proposed a resource sharing agreement across the Victorian Public Service (VPS) as a means of increasing the sector's capacity during periods of high activity (surge capacity). The SCRC approved the terms of reference for a working group to establish a whole-of-Victorian Government multilateral agreement for government employers to contribute to surge capacity for emergency management.

Since the trial conducted in 2017 the initiative has encountered some significant roadblocks to implementation. The main challenges arise from industrial relations due to significant differences in pay and overtime for emergency management roles across government departments.

The One VPS model, approved by the Victorian Secretaries Board in September 2019 encourages a more mobile, flexible and collaborative approach to staffing to generate greater efficiencies. This approach has facilitated the second trial of supplementing the dedicated emergency management capacity with seasonal support from across government.

There are significant changes being worked through under the One VPS model that will be monitored prior to considering a review into the effectiveness of the surge staff capacity building initiative.

IGEM proposes to review the use of surge staff for additional emergency management capacity.

2.10 Regulation and emergency management

This review topic has evolved over time from a focus on hazardous materials and industrial fires, to a broader focus on regulation and emergency management.

Industrial fires have been prominent in Victoria over the past several years and IGEM is now undertaking implementation monitoring across multiple events involving smoke impacts on communities (for example Hazelwood, Coolaroo, Fiskville and the West Footscray Factory Fire).

Industrial fires have shifted focus to industrial fire risks in urbanised landscapes. The increase in these types of events has also led to increased interest in regulatory powers available to prevent future emergency incidents. For example, the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) took a proactive approach to mitigate the risks from Stawell's tyre stockpile through removing the stockpile to protect the community and environment.

Regulation and enforcement are one of the key opportunities available to mitigate the risk of industrial fires. EPA has had an increasing role in emergency management in the past few years and other regulators such as Worksafe Victoria have been collaborating with EPA. This has led to improved collaborative approaches to mitigate emergency risks through targeted compliance and enforcement activities and intelligence sharing.

Industrial waste fires are not the only area where regulation can reduce risks to the community and environment. Other areas include building standards and land use planning. A review would consider the adequacy and effectiveness of implementing the key regulatory functions available to the emergency management sector.

IGEM proposes to review the adequacy and effectiveness of regulatory arrangements employed across the sector in mitigating the likelihood and consequence of emergencies.

2.11 Culture, values and behaviours

The success of the sector is underpinned by, and dependent upon, the effective networked operation of a diverse group of organisations and individuals across public and private sectors. Organisational culture, values and behaviours are key enablers to effective organisational performance.

Anecdotal and reported evidence suggests ongoing challenges with organisational culture, values and behaviours within the sector. This is in part driven by an array of sector-specific characteristics spanning industrial, geographical, social and psychological considerations.

It is important to note that many of the issues that fall into this theme are organisational issues that are known to the sector and government. There are structures and processes in place that can support sector agencies to manage them.

There is a considerable body of work that has been produced addressing issues of culture, values and behaviour. These include:

- Inquiry into the effect of arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority on its volunteers (Jones 2011)
- Independent Review into sex discrimination and sexual harassment, including predatory behaviour, in Victoria Police (VHREOC, 2014)
- Fire Services Review (O'Byrne, 2015)
- Independent Equity and Diversity Review of CFA and MFB (VHREOC, 2016).

Emergency management organisations and/or government more broadly are undertaking improvements in line with the first three of these reports. The fourth report has been completed, without release.

IGEM proposes to review emergency management sector culture, values and behaviour towards the identification of leading practice. This would require ongoing consideration of progress with the implementation of recommendations from relevant previous reports.





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