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Select Committee - Australia's Disaster Resilience

Submission to the
Senate Select Committee

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About the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. It is a not-for-profit association established solely to serve councils and their needs. The LGAQ has been advising, supporting, and representing local councils since 1896, enabling them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities. The LGAQ does this by connecting councils to people and places; supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions; and providing them with the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence.

Partners-in-Government Agreement

In August 2019, the LGAQ on behalf of all 77 Queensland Local Governments signed a three-year partners-in-government-agreement¹ with the State of Queensland.

The Agreement details the key principles underlying the relationship between the state and local governments and establishes the foundation for effective negotiation and engagement between both levels of government.

The agreement acknowledges that local government is the closest level of government to the community, affecting the lives of everyday Queenslanders and acknowledging Local Government as a genuine partner in the Australian government system.

The intent of the agreement was to continue the tradition of working in genuine partnership to improve the quality of life for all Queenslanders to enjoy. By identifying the roles and responsibilities of each party, it provides a solid foundation for effective negotiation and engagement between both levels of government.

The LGAQ is committed to working with the Queensland Government and will continue to be a passionate advocate for councils, to serve our joint jurisdiction for the people of Queensland.

¹ https://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/45115/partners-in-government-agreement-2019.pdf

Select Committee – Australia's Disaster Resilience – Review 2023

Executive Summary

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience.

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), as the peak body representing the state's 77 councils, plays an important, daily role in ensuring that the shared interests, perspectives, and position of Queensland councils is accurately communicated back to policy makers.

Disaster management arrangements in Queensland have proven to be highly effective and are arguably nation-leading, yet the significant increase in the frequency and scale of disaster events does continue to regularly test the capacity of the disaster management system at a local, district, state, and national level.

The LGAQ is supportive of a review of Australia's disaster resilience and the role of the Australian Defence Force in preparedness, response, and recovery along with the opportunity to consider other models and best practice.

Queensland communities have welcomed the help of the ADF in times of need and are grateful to them for the work they do. It is critical, however, that their deployment continues to occur within the proven and effective Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements (QDMA) and Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMS's) structure.

Any ADF deployments should be complementary to, but not a replacement for, local response activities. Any ADF deployment should occur at the request of, and in coordination with, the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) so that the highest and best use of that resource can be achieved.

We also recognise potential legislative changes may be required to support changes to improve Australia's resilience and response to natural disasters, as outlined in the terms of reference resolved by the Senate on the 30 November 2022.

We emphasise the importance of Queensland councils remaining a lead agency in disaster management and the need to ensure that they are appropriately funded, resourced, and trained.

We look forward to ongoing engagement regarding the review, and would encourage the opportunity for further, deeper consultation with our members at each stage of the review and implementation process.

Introduction

Local governments play a critical role in disaster management in Queensland.

The Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements (QDMA) outline a proven method for managing disasters across the realm of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR).

Within this model Queensland councils actively support the establishment of Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG's) that work to advance a locally led, multi-agency response to any disaster and which operate across the full spectrum of PPRR.

As the level of government closest to their communities, Queensland councils frequently engage with many State and Federal government agencies, government-owned corporations, not-for-profit and volunteer organisations to advance local disaster management activities.

We acknowledge that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has previously been deployed in Queensland in response to natural disasters and that Queensland is home to several ADF bases some of which are in close proximity to communities that have been directly impacted in recent years by large scale disaster events.

Importantly, for the benefit of all, it is considered essential that local, district, state and federal disaster arrangements are complementary and work seamlessly. Local communities will likely expect nothing less.

Of similarly high importance are the relationships and communication that must exist between all levels of government – local, state, federal.

The Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements (QDMA) are outlined in Section 4A of the *Queensland Disaster Management Act 2003*.

These now well-established arrangements – through each phase of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery – fall to the primary responsibility of local governments, within their local government area.

Uniquely different from other Australian state and territory systems, the QDMA supports Section 4A (c) of the *Queensland Disaster Management Act 2003*, which provides that local government has primary responsibility for disaster events in their local government area.

Queensland is the most natural disaster-prone state in Australia, and the QDMA has demonstrated its success, flexibility, and capacity to be applied in a variety of circumstances, including during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The QDMA allows for locally- led prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, led by a multi-agency platform within Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG), under the stewardship of local councils and under QDMA.

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the structures and governance relevant to the QDMA and ADF including:

- the roles and responsibilities of parties to the arrangements



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- the impact of more frequent and intense natural disasters and the ongoing capacity and capability of local, district, state and ADF roles and effectiveness of disaster management preparedness, response and recovery
- the impact on the ADF in responding to domestic natural disasters
- the role of Australian civil and volunteer groups, not-for-profit organisations and state-based services in preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters, and the impact of more frequent and more intense natural disaster on their ongoing capacity and capability
- the consideration of alternative models and best practise and
- consideration of the practical, legislative and administrative arrangements that would be required to support improving Australia's resilience and response to natural disasters.

The LGAQ acknowledges the timeliness of the review, as recommended by the Senate, and looks forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure Australia's Disaster Resilience remains robust and agile to respond to increasing climate change impacts.

The LGAQ also alerts the Senate Select Committee to a review currently underway into Queensland's Disaster Management legislation, which is being conducted by Queensland's Inspector General Emergency Management (IGEM) and which may have application to the work of this Committee.

Response

The LGAQ provides the following in response to the information requested.

- a) Current preparedness, response and recovery workforce models, including:
 - i) The role of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in responding to domestic natural disaster,

Community Perspectives

- Queensland communities and their respective local governments that have previously been beneficiaries of the assistance of the ADF in responding to domestic natural disasters have generally expressed their appreciation to the ADF.
- Impacted communities are often reported to have found comfort when ADF deployments and activities are visible in impacted areas, this is particularly so when these deployments occur in a timely fashion. 'Boots on the ground', deployed effectively can be incredibly important for providing impacted communities with heightened levels of comfort and confidence that the response and recovery tasks are being taken seriously by government. This support often occurs in a situation that can seem overwhelming for impacted residents and thus lend material support to the recovery journey. Impacted communities will generally welcome legitimate offers of support.
- It is also important to highlight that community resilience should not inadvertently be affected or diminished by creating any unreasonable reliance or expectation on the ADF. Clear operational expectations, communicated effectively to local communities, as to when ADF may be deployed and at what stage they may be stood down would be beneficial in helping to set community expectations.
- When a disaster event overwhelms local and State resources and capabilities, the ADF has an opportunity to play a critical role. For example, during the monsoon event of February 2019, the ADF aided Winton Shire Council and the Winton LDMG through a combination of the supply of human resources, physical resources (machinery) and expertise (engineering, mapping etc) to assist in preparedness, response, and recovery. For this community, at this time, this capability was incredibly important and unlikely to have been able to have been easily sourced from anywhere else. The ADF's involvement at Winton for this event was valued by that community.

Strategic Intent

- Queensland councils recognise that responding to natural disasters is not a primary function of the ADF, however the ADF does possess a set of unique capabilities and resources that are highly valued and advantageous.

- It would be considered valuable if the ADF had a more broadly defined and ongoing role in responding to domestic natural disasters. The ADF has the potential to provide unique capabilities such as a significantly large and mobile workforce capable of supporting response and recovery operations across many different environments from highly urbanised to remote and very remote locations.
- Senior ADF personnel have also previously been appointed to the role of State Disaster Coordinator within Queensland to good effect and have exercised good engagement with councils. Councils have reported to the LGAQ their general satisfaction with military personnel appointed to such roles.
- Access to ADF resources in previous Queensland events is observed to have been at different scale and scope reflecting difference in approach over the years and the nature of disaster impacts. It would be broadly considered important that any ADF deployments be complementary to, but not a replacement for, local response activities. Any ADF deployment should occur at the request of, and in coordination with, the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) so that the highest and best use of that resource can be achieved.
- Given that each state and territory have different disaster management arrangements, it would also be important that the ADF obtain an operational awareness of the individual state disaster management arrangements and how to engage with those idiosyncratic arrangements most effectively. In Southeast Queensland, at a Brisbane District level, an ADF Liaison Officer operates as a standing member of the Brisbane District Disaster Management Group and is thus able to provide a direct connection with the ADF. This network/relationship is critical to activating ADF assistance in a timely manner. This model is however not currently replicated at every district.
- The Association would encourage the ADF to consider becoming more involved in disaster management exercises and training, particularly at the LDMG level, as this would assist in developing local networks and building a greater understanding of disaster management arrangements within the region.

Deployment Considerations

- The potential to rapidly deploy – or even pre-deploy ADF personnel – as is done with other emergency service workers, is a further worthwhile consideration. Often it is in the immediate response to a disaster when access to additional expertise and capability can be of most advantage. In Queensland, disaster events such as floods and cyclones afford emergency service agencies the opportunity to effectively pre-deploy to expected impact areas.
- Should pre-deployment be considered as a plausible consideration, the LGAQ would strongly recommend that this only occur in consultation with LDMGs to ensure maximum situational awareness and to ensure that dependencies or additional resourcing needs are understood prior to deployment.

- Under the QDMA ADF assistance is presently activated via a Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) request. This approach is particularly encouraged as it allows for a locally led and coordinated response (the cornerstone of the QDMA) to determine when best ADF support is required or necessary. This existing model ensures that ADF resources are allocated to where they are required most and can provide the greatest benefit to the community recovery effort.
- When ADF resources are deployed without a DACC request having been made – as has previously occurred – difficulties can arise resulting in less-than-optimal outcomes for impacted communities and the associated response and recovery agencies. Maintaining the DACC model and operating within the principles of the QDMA is considered both necessary and advantageous.
- Any deployment of ADF into an impacted area should occur in accordance with a DACC and in close consultation with the LDMG particularly as it relates to the scope of work to be undertaken and any dependencies or resourcing needs that may be necessary to sustain that deployment. Ideally any deployment by the ADF should have minimal resourcing impact and should be as close as possible to self-sustaining so as minimise any unintended community or operational impacts. Critical resources such as fuel, shelter, food and water are often in short supply – any deployment should seek not to aggravate local shortages.

Operational Considerations

- The ADF has access to a level of equipment and expertise that is often significantly in advance of what might generally be available at the local community level. The level of organisational discipline and general capability, including the skills of ADF personnel, is also highly valued.
- ADF personnel also often possess a range of applicable skills and knowledge regarding how to operate safely in extreme environments, that is also considered highly advantageous.
- The potential for the ADF to participate more actively at both the district (DDMG) and local (LDMG) levels may be a further consideration. Currently the ADF acts in a Joint Operations Support Staff (JOSS) role at the state level. ADF participation as standing members of more Disaster Management Groups may advance the broader assurance and improvements methodologies contained within the principle of shared responsibilities (e.g. Planning, Capability Integration, Operations' Collaboration and Coordination) that compliments the continuous improvement objectives in Disaster Management as supported the Queensland Inspector General of Emergency Management (IGEM). The ADF, through their specific skill set and knowledge base, may well further enhance the disaster management capabilities at both district and local levels and may be particularly advantageous within smaller regional and remote local governments.

- ADF JOSS support to the twenty-three Queensland Disaster Districts could be a consideration and may prove beneficial in helping to advance DACC requests from LDMG's for response and recovery phases.
- ii) The impact of more frequent and more intense natural disasters, due to climate change, on the ongoing capacity and capability of the Australian Defence Force
- Climate change predictions indicate that future natural disasters will become more frequent with greater severity, therefore significantly impacting the capacity and capability of existing disaster and emergency management agencies. The existing disaster management workforce will most likely need bolstering to ensure future response and recovery actions can continue to be provided in as timely and meaningful fashion. It is in this circumstance where the ADF could increase their future presence in disaster response and recovery to help augment any emerging gaps in capacity.
 - Demand on the ADF will undoubtedly increase with the increasing frequency of natural disasters leading to an increased need for enhanced support to States regarding disaster response and recovery. The Federal Government may well consider the advantages of developing a capability within the ADF specifically focused on disaster response and recovery, particularly the coordination and control of ADF personnel and assets.
- iii) The impact on the Australian Defence Force in responding to domestic natural disasters, and
- The ADF are known to hold resources, knowledge and capabilities that can effectively respond to domestic natural disasters. While it is accepted that this may impact upon their business-as-usual activities, when local and State resources are depleted or exhausted during disaster events, the opportunity for the ADF to provide some support contribution will be critical to the response and recovery of local communities.
- iv) The role of Australian civil and volunteer groups, not-for-profit organisations and state-based services in preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters, and the impact of more frequent and more intense natural disasters on their ongoing capacity and capability;
- Compared with the mid-1980s, Australians have half as many close friends and know half as many of their neighbours. This has a material impact on community resilience and places additional burdens on both government and community organisations.
 - Civil and volunteer groups, not-for-profit organisations and State (and local) based services have a vital role to play in preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters. In Queensland many of these organisations are trusted by and work closely with the community and are therefore well placed to offer support.
 - Councils and communities rely heavily on volunteers for disaster management arrangements and many of these organisations are reflected in local disaster management plans which are regularly reviewed by LDMG's. These groups will often

have defined responsibilities and, in Queensland, are often well practiced in delivering their services. Queensland councils greatly value the relationships and partnerships they hold with community organisations involved in supporting disaster management activities. Many councils will hold MOU's or partnership agreements with selected community organisations for the provision of disaster aligned services.

- The increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters is placing greater strain on capacity and capability of community organisations to continually respond and recover from events. There is no longer a "disaster season" – disaster events occur year-round and long-term events such as global pandemics (such as COVID-19) has greatly fatigued the disaster and emergency management system.
- Queensland local governments recognise that civil and volunteer groups would benefit from additional Federal and State support. Local governments only have very limited capacity to do this, and this limited capacity is particularly amplified in smaller, rural and remote councils who possess either a limited or zero rate base. Additional resources and funding are often needed regardless of the frequency and severity of natural disasters.
- Of growing concern to Queensland councils is the availability and sustainability of the broader volunteer workforce. Often within disaster impacted communities it is the volunteers themselves that may often find themselves personally impacted which results in staffing shortfalls and other operational complications. In the smallest of Queensland community's residents may also often volunteer across several different organisations – for example it is not unusual for an SES volunteer to also be a rural fire fighter.
- In Western Queensland, the number of volunteers to assist in preparedness, response and recovery is known to be reducing. Local SES controllers are regularly recruiting for additional members, and this human resourcing gap is a known and ongoing issue.
- When disaster occurs at scale, even the most sophisticated and well-resourced of community groups can have their capacity exceeded. Recent experiences from the February 2022 flood event have shown that the capacity of volunteer and not-for-profit groups to respond during large-scale events that impact multiple local government areas and regions can become extremely stretched. Access issues can further amplify the acute nature of response and recovery. Swift response by these groups can be impacted by factors outside of their control.
- Queensland councils have a strong preference that community groups seeking to support disaster impacted communities do so in a coordinated way through the LDMG. Community groups that operate outside of these arrangements run the risk of duplicating or complicating local response and recovery efforts and potentially causing unintended consequences. Queensland councils are also wary of any community groups that seek to 'profit' from disasters or who wish to be paid for services delivered when no prior arrangements or agreements have been established.

At a policy level, Queensland councils have previously requested:

2021	
Motion 7	That the LGAQ calls on the Federal Government to provide \$200 million per year for four years for targeted disaster mitigation and to future-proof community infrastructure. (In Qld)
2020	
Motion 66	The LGAQ lobby the State and Federal Governments to streamline their disaster recovery funding arrangements to maximise recovery effectiveness.
2019	
Motion 54	That the LGAQ lobby the State and Federal Governments to increase the Disaster Resilience Fund to enable additional Betterment Program works to be carried out.

b) Consideration of alternative models, including:

i) Repurposing or adapting existing Australian civil and volunteer groups, not-for-profit organisations and state-based services, and

Responding to the Volunteering Challenge

- Most locations and most community-based organisations that rely on volunteers struggle to attract and retain volunteers. This situation has been accelerated and complicated by COVID-19.
- Community members often no longer have the time or need or capacity to be part of an organised volunteer organisation. Some additional deterrents have reportedly included the requirement for additional or onerous accreditation, increased requirements, or time commitments to attend regular training, or the complexity of application processes themselves.
- It is also understood that Australia's aging demographic is also negatively impacting volunteering.
- In some local government areas in Queensland volunteering rates have dropped so low that often it is councils' staff that need to be activated to fill vacancies. This is an issue known to occur in some locations regarding the State Emergency Service (SES). Many councils in this predicament do not have the financial capacity to meet these additional obligations but do so because they are truly the provider of last resort and communities expect these critical services to remain available.
- Often, the scale of a natural disaster results in spontaneous volunteering where community member unaligned to any recognised community group self-activate to help with response and recovery efforts. These unstructured arrangements can indeed be beneficial; however, they do come with risk in ensuring the safety of all participants and that response and recovery work is approached in the correct manner. Queensland councils would welcome

the development of better mechanisms to recognise, support, manage and protect spontaneous volunteering.

- The sharing of case studies such as the Douglas Shire Council partnership with Volunteering Queensland and the Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre to deliver a “Breaking Down Barriers to Volunteering in Douglas Shire” program may help to demonstrate what is possible. This pilot project aims to support community members interested in supporting community organisations to access online and face to face training, resources and services that aim to promote and enhance volunteering capacity within Douglas Shire.
- In some locations in Queensland, community groups have been able to successfully encourage international visa-holders to volunteer to bolster resourcing. Councils that have explored this option have reported beneficial outcomes.

Insurance

- The cost and availability of insurance cover for volunteers has also impacted many volunteer organisations and is also an area of concern for local governments who may seek to partner with a community organisation or activate its own volunteers.
- Insurance for volunteers has proven to be a complex area. Many community organisations struggle to understand the nuance of their insurance cover and how it applies during any disaster activation. Queensland councils similarly are bound by the insurance covers they can procure. Often guidance is required to be sought from the insurance agency to ensure clarity. A national standard or system for managing insurance for volunteers would be beneficial, as too would be a system that was truly cost effective.

Coordination of Community Groups

- Depending on location there can be multiple community groups activated, or active, within a disaster declared area.
- Of high concern to local government is the need to ensure that work being undertaken by these groups is visible to the LDMG and complementary to broader response and recovery activity. Whilst respecting that some community groups will often self-deploy engaging firstly with the LDMG or council will often ensure the best outcome for the impacted community.
- Well-meaning community groups, through their very presence in a disaster-impacted area, can place additional pressures on already impacted communities or bring forward additional resourcing demands that can prove difficult to meet. Often there can be periods of limited resource including consumables such as fuel, generators, food and water as well as more significant resources such as accommodation and vehicles. The most welcomed community groups are those who can be broadly self-sufficient and whose engagement is carefully considered in consultation with the LDMG so as to support councils to better coordinate the provision of community support.

ii) Overseas models and best practice

- The QDMA has demonstrated itself over many years to be particularly effective in generating locally led approaches to disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and are considered best practice. Adopting the QDMA as a national standard may be worth consideration.
- A coordinated national 'ready reserve' of volunteers, trained in disaster recovery and able to be easily mobilised, could also be established within each state and territory to aid impacted communities during the immediate clean-up post event impact. Whilst similar mechanisms exist in regard to emergency services (particularly firefighting), there are only limited examples across the broader functions of disaster recovery.
- In Queensland the LGAQ coordinates a Council to Council (C2C) program within the auspices of the QDMA. This program is designed to coordinate the deployment of local government specialist skills, equipment, and workers to impacted areas from non-impacted areas to help restore essential community assets and aid with local recovery efforts. Costs for this program are eligible for reimbursement under DRFA. Expanding this program to a national level may be particularly beneficial for disasters of significant scale of for communities situated along state or territory borders. This program has run successfully for many years and has been utilised following every major disaster event in Queensland.

c) Consideration of the practical, legislative, and administrative arrangements that would be required to support improving Australia's resilience and response to natural disasters; and

- Restoring Financial Assistance Grants to a level equal to 1 per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue will ensure councils nationally have the capability to support local communities, including with disaster management activities.
- It is highlighted for the benefit of the Senate Select Committee that in Queensland it is often the smallest and most remote of councils that are regularly impacted by natural disasters, this includes many First Nations communities located on the Cape, in the Gulf and in the Torres Strait. It is these small, remote and first nation councils that are often the most financially constrained and highly reliant on State and Federal funding to meet their operational costs.
- Of highest and most significant priority is the need for continuing investment in disaster resilience. The Federal Government is best placed to ensure the delivery of disaster resilience funding. The continuing investment in resilience, particularly resilient infrastructure and betterment, will ensure future recovery will be faster and less expensive.
- Of similar importance is ensuring that councils are appropriately financially resourced to employ the necessary staff to undertake the disaster management duties assigned to them. The Committee is encouraged to review the 2020 [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements](#) which recognised that State and Territory governments should ensure local governments have the support and resources they need to carry out their responsibilities.

- Queensland councils also encourage the Federal Government to consider the re-establishment of a national disaster management centre of excellence. Queensland as the Australian state most prone to natural disasters would be a natural location for such a facility. Complementary facilities such as the proposed swift water rescue facility slated for Redland City Council local government area would further support training opportunities not only nationally, but potentially for Pacific nations as well.
- The guiding principles and priorities for action of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 must also be considered in determining Australia's Disaster Resilience. As part of this review the Senate should also consider the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Strategy for Disaster Resilience

d) Any related matters

- One of the most fundamental elements of the Queensland disaster management system are the benefits provided as a consequence of relationships being developed across the disaster management system. A genuine commitment from all stakeholders to the development of relationships has proven to be effective for disaster response. It is important that these opportunities are developed outside of a disaster activation. The importance of exercises and a commitment to the PPRR model which encourages work to be progressed outside of simply response and recovery have proven to be effective.

Conclusion

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to contribute a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience.

The important role Queensland councils play in disaster management as part of a locally led, multi -agency model as articulated in the QDMA is of particular importance and the Association is keen to reinforce this fact and further would endorse such a model being considered for adoption at a national level.

We would encourage the Senate Select Committee to consider the:

- Report from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (2020)
- Outcomes of IGEM's current review of the QDMA;
- the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 with a focus on the guiding principles and priorities for action;
- COAG's National Strategy for Disaster Resilience; and
- The feedback provided by the LGAQ on behalf of Queensland local governments individual submissions provided directly by Queensland local governments and
- Motions from Queensland Local Government submitted and carried at LGAQ annual conferences.

As detailed above, the LGAQ believes it is imperative that, with the increasing advent of natural disasters and the subsequent increasing impacts on local communities' it is essential that councils are properly funded, resourced and trained to deliver on their disaster management

responsibilities across the full spectrum of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPPR). We again call on the Federal government to restore Financial Assistance Grants to 1% of Federal taxation.

Councils support the increased involvement of the ADF in disaster management, but we emphasise that federal arrangements must also work seamlessly within existing state, district and local arrangements. The LGAQ would encourage the mirroring of the QDMA as an effective model.

We emphasise again that locally led responses are critical to the success of any disaster activations and must unequivocally involve LDMGs to ensure resources are deployed as effectively as possible.

The LGAQ and Queensland local governments would appreciate being kept informed on any recommendations the Select Committee may resolve in regard to positive improvements and benefits that will assist in building stronger and more highly resilient local communities.

Contact Details

Please do not hesitate to contact Alison Lamb, Disaster Management – Lead
should you wish to discuss any
aspect of this submission.

Appendix

2022 LGAQ Policy Statement

The 2022 LGAQ Policy Statement² is a definitive statement of the collective voice of local government in Queensland. The relevant policy positions of local government in the context of:

1.10.1.1 Negotiation and Consultation are as follows:

- 1.10.1.1 The LGAQ provides the principal avenue of communication between local government and the federal and state governments and other state bodies. The LGAQ evaluates, where appropriate, state government policies and programs, develops policies for submission to the federal and state governments, and negotiates where appropriate with those governments in relation to those policies and programs.
- 1.10.1.2 The LGAQ should be consulted by the state and federal governments and their departments, authorities and officers, with adequate time available for response, before taking legislative and administrative actions that affect local governments individually or collectively.

2.1.2 Legislation/Compliance

- 2.1.2.1 Legislation affecting local government in Queensland should be framed in recognition of the diversity of capacity, size, resources, skills and physical location of local governments, and should not be drafted under a “one size fits all” model.
- 2.1.2.2 Additional compliance placed on local government by the state government should take into consideration risk management and materiality and the value of transparency to the community and should not be based on simply aligning local government with the state government.

2.2 Intergovernmental Relations

2.2.1 Constitutional Recognition

- 2.2.1.1 There should be an acknowledgement and guarantee of the Commonwealth’s power to directly fund local government in the Constitution Act of the Commonwealth of Australia as a means of recognising the existence and importance of local government as a sphere of responsible government in Australia.

2.2.2 Partnerships, Empowerment and Autonomy

- 2.2.2.2 Local government acknowledges the value of long-term community planning to develop priorities and inform specific projects and programs. Any state government based long term planning, must recognise the diversity of Queensland local government and accept

²<https://www.lgaq.asn.au/downloads/file/475/lgaq-advocacy-action-plan-2022-2020-lgaq-policy-statement>

the right of individual councils to determine a fit for purpose arrangement that reflects their individual circumstances and capacity to respond.

- 2.2.2.4 Federal and state governments must continuously be informed of the restrictions placed on local governments to rate and charge for services by any additional taxes, compliance standards and other regulations imposed by the Commonwealth and the state.

3. Finance and Administration

3.1 Funding Assistance

3.1.1 Federal Funding

- 3.1.1.1 Untied federal funding for local governments should continue.

3.5 Funding Assistance

3.5.1 Liability Exposure

- 3.5.1.2 Local governments support the introduction of a legislative exemption from liability for advice given or acts done or omitted to be done in good faith in respect to the management of natural hazards, including flood, bushfire, landslide, storm tide inundation and coastal erosion.

3.6 Climate Risk Management

- 3.6.2.3 Local government urgently seeks appropriate levels of funding and resourcing assistance to develop Climate Risk Management Strategies, undertake detailed risk assessments for priority risks and prepare and implement local government area wide action plans for the immediate, medium and long-term protection and benefit of communities.

3.7 Disaster Management

3.7.1 Community Disaster Resilience and Disaster Mitigation

- 3.7.1.1 The federal and state governments should commit to continued funding of the Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP) as a fund to assist local governments to undertake community resilience building projects to reduce the impacts of identified natural disaster risks on communities. The current provision under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements 2018 for the application of under-spend variances to mitigation projects is considered to be inadequate in terms of likely quantum of funding and does not offer any funding certainty to support proper mitigation investment planning and project delivery. A dedicated mitigation funding program, as identified by the Productivity Commission, is a superior means to rebuilding more resilient infrastructure and should be funded on a 40:40:20 basis between federal, state and local government. The local government share should be flexible up to a limit depending on the capacity of the individual council involved and no more than 20 per cent.
- 3.7.1.2 Priority should be given to communities which are more likely to be affected by natural disasters based on historical records and predictive models.

3.7.2 Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)

- 3.7.2.2 Local governments understand that they will be able to use their day labour workforce, plant, machinery and equipment for reconstruction works on council-owned essential assets where this provides better value for money outcomes than by using contractor services.
- 3.7.2.4 Where a council experiences a disaster event under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), for all essential public assets – whether they be a road, bridge, water



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supply or wastewater treatment assets or other essential public assets – they be treated as eligible for assessment on the same terms under the DRFA Guidelines.

LGAQ Advocacy Action Plan/ Annual Conference Resolutions

The LGAQ is committed to member driven advocacy and working with members to build stronger local government and more resilient local communities.

The Local Government Association of Queensland's Advocacy Action Plan (AAP)³ is a roadmap designed to highlight the top policy positions and funding priorities councils believe are critical to ensuring Queensland flourishes and our communities thrive.

Relevant Advocacy Action Plan items to this submission are:

- AAP-22** Acknowledge that regional inequality still exists and commit to a consistent policy approach through all agencies to address this inequality in line with the Senate Committee Report into Regional Inequality delivered in December 2020.
- AAP-33** Provide \$200 million for targeted disaster mitigation over four years and establish effective disaster recovery funding arrangements.
- AAP-38** Work with the LGAQ and Queensland councils to identify necessary policy and legislative amendments and funding required to support council decision-making in relation to natural hazards and climate change, including implementation of coastal hazard adaptation strategies.
- AAP-54** Adopt a transparent funding methodology for local government disaster mitigation projects to improve resilience in the context of natural disaster events.
- AAP-55** Modernise current disaster management legislation and regulations to reinforce the importance and authority of locally led disaster responses and to improve transitional arrangements across council terms.
- AAP-57** Provide additional resourcing to State agencies to maintain support services locally for longer periods, as required, and to employ a full range of delivery mechanisms to enable more disaster impacted people to access assistance.
- AAP-77** Provide recurring funding to councils for the preservation, maintenance and management of environmental precincts and corridors that are recognised as vital to mitigating climate change and preserving biodiversity.

³ <https://www.lgaq.asn.au/downloads/file/475/lgaq-advocacy-action-plan-2022-2020-lgaq-policy-statement>

2022	
Motion 108	The LGAQ calls on the State and Federal governments to make the required legislative changes to recognise the following assets as essential public assets, making them eligible for disaster recovery funding: 1. Council owned and operated (or leased) parks, gardens, playgrounds and community sports facilities. 2. Fire trails and fire breaks. 3. The Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board (DDMRB) fence.
Motion 109	The LGAQ calls on the State Government to release the Campbell Darby Review into the State Emergency Service (SES), commissioned in 2019, and respond to the recommendations made therein.
Motion 137	The LGAQ calls on the State Government to amend the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 to increase the administration fee paid to local governments for collection of the Emergency Management Levy (EML) to \$4.54 for the first 40,000 and \$3.82 per property thereafter and to provide for annual indexation of the fee at CPI.
Motion 138	That in relation to the State Emergency Service (SES), the LGAQ calls on the State Government to: 1. Release to the LGAQ, its members and the SES, the independent review of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services capability and funding model carried out in 2021 and 2. Respond to the recommendations in the independent review; 3. Assume ownership and responsibility for all operational and capital expenses of State Emergency Service assets on and from 1 July 2022; and 4. Provide certainty in relation to the governance arrangements for the SES.
2021	
Motion 7	That the LGAQ calls on the Federal Government to provide \$200 million per year for four years for targeted disaster mitigation and to future-proof community infrastructure.
Motion 64	That the LGAQ calls on the State Government to immediately improve proactive planning and operations, including the allocation of appropriate and necessary resources, in mitigating the threat of bushfire on State Government-controlled land that threatens local communities.
Motion 80	That the LGAQ calls on the QRA to ensure that in determining any new accountability measures required of councils, including the possibility of a separate bank account for all QRA-funded projects, that it fully considers all options and minimises the additional compliance burden and costs, particularly for rural and remote councils.
Motion 81	That the LGAQ calls on the State Government to: Amend the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 to recognise Notices to Reduce Fire Risks as remedial notices under the Local Government Act 2009 where unpaid costs for remedial work for non-compliance undertaken by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) become a rates debt over the property.
2020	
Motion 39	That the LGAQ lobby the State Government to immediately improve proactive planning and operations, including the allocation of appropriate and necessary resources, in mitigating the threat of bushfire on State Government- controlled land that threatens local communities.



Every Queensland
community deserves
to be a liveable one

Motion 66	That the LGAQ lobby the State and Federal Governments to streamline their disaster recovery funding arrangements to maximise recovery effectiveness.
Motion 85	That the LGAQ lobby the State Government to meet its commitments in relation to its response to the 2011 Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry Final Report to: (a) investigate whether the compensation provisions of the current planning legislation act as a deterrent to the inclusion of flood controls in a planning scheme and consider whether they ought to be amended; and (b) investigate, in consultation with councils, the viability of introducing legislation regarding statutory immunity similar to that in section 733 of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).
2019	
Motion 54	That the LGAQ lobby the State and Federal Governments to increase the Disaster Resilience Fund to enable additional Betterment Program works to be carried out.