Reference: ESS 11-3997

Ms Sophie Dunstone
A/G Principal Research Officer
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
S1.57/PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT   2600

Dear Ms Dunstone

In response to questions for the South Australian Government from Senator Fisher regarding the Senate Inquiry into emergency communications, I provide the following information to you.

Responses to Questions on Notice

1. **In terms of intergovernmental cooperation, apart from the adoption of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) Standard within Australia to enable the effective change of information, are there any plans to further enhance the level of cross-border cooperation?**

    *   SA POLICE share SAGRN voice radio capability with WA police in Eucla (WA / SA Border), NSW Police in Broken Hill, and all VICPOL stations along the SA / VIC border. Each Communications Centre is able to contact all other State/ Territory Comcens via dedicated email addresses.

    *   SAPOL keeps 30 GRN encrypted radios on standby for visiting Police/DoD jurisdictions if required to assist in an emergency or terrorist event. These radios have State wide coverage within the GRN footprint.

    *   The SA Country Fire Service (SACFS) has an Interstate Deployment Plan to both send and receive support to/from interstate agencies. These plans have been used on numerous occasions to both send and receive support to/from Victoria and NSW during significant bushfires - including in the wake of the Black Saturday fires in 2009 and the Kangaroo Island fires in 2007. These plans are supported by a Heads of Agencies Agreement between the respective Chief Officers. The SA Country Fire Service (South Australia) also participates in and benefits from involvement in the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC).

    *   SA is participating actively in the nationally endorsed National Emergency Alert (EA) Project and are currently utilising the national EA capability operationally. The EA system which is being coordinated by Victoria is a multi jurisdictional undertaking and SA has been working closely with interstate colleagues. The SASES has adopted the EA Training Package and is currently facilitating both initial refresher training to relevant personnel. SA is also actively involved in the development of the next stage of the EA system - the Locations Based Solution or (LBS). SA is represented on the LBS Project Governance at all levels and expect to be actively involved in all stages of the development, testing and implementation of that capability.

- Effective exchange of information between agencies and across borders occurs as a matter of course. This information flow could be improved by the adoption of a standard information management system and several agencies are in the process of evaluating such systems.

- There is also a national network for exchange of information, knowledge and policy development through committees such as Australian Fire Authority Council (AFAC), National Counter Terrorism Committee (NCTC) and Australian Council of SES (ACSES).

Are you able to access commonwealth department information e.g. BOM alerts, satellite images (DoD) and/or resources (AFP) on a timely basis when an emergency situation arises?

- DoD and BoM are part of the South Australia State Emergency Centre management group. There is an AFP position within the SA Police Operations Centre which is staffed on request that has access to AFP intelligence programmes.

- The SACFS has access to BoM information/data etc; however do not have access to satellite images and/or resources from DoD or AFP.

- During planning and response phases, SASES may access information from the following commonwealth agencies:

  o Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) (SA Office)
  o Direct 24-hour contact between agency personnel via telephone through existing protocols and arrangements
  o Via the public or registered users website on a 24-hour basis
  o GeoScience Australia (GA)
  o Acquisition of Satellite data – MODIS data at no cost, Landset 5 & 7 data at $500 per scene
  o 24 hour phone and email contact
  o Emergency Management Australia (EMA)
  o Direct 24 hour phone contact via the Australian Government Crisis Coordination Centre (CCC)
  o Department of Defence (DoD) – Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC)
  o DACC Category 1 Request – 24-hour contact direct to Joint Operations Staff Support (JOSS)
  o DACC Category 2 and 3 Request – 24 hour contact via EMA, CCC

- Access to information from the BOM is readily available at all incidents with the Bureau providing the emergency services with enhanced access to the BOM website A BOM representative attends the State Emergency Centre for larger incidents. Information from the DoD and AFP is not easily available.

2. **What education programmes do each of you have in place to ensure that relevant information is disseminated appropriately to the general population both before and during emergency events?**

- Emergency Warning and SA Alerts marketing campaign plus CFS Hot line advertising

- The SACFS has an extensive public education and public information/warnings programmes - primarily through the 'Prepare Act Survive' program - refer to extensive material available on the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au. SA Country Fire Service uses the National Framework for Scaled Advice and Warnings to the Community. Under the National Framework, the SA Country Fire Service (South Australia) issues 'Advice', 'Watch & Act' and 'Emergency Warning' messages during bushfires. These messages are disseminated via multiple means including via the CFS Website, ABC and commercial radio, RSS feeds and if necessary Emergency Warnings are issued via AlertSA (i.e.: the National telephone alerting system).

- To support the usage of the Emergency Alert System, SA has developed a set of supporting information distribution mechanisms to aid the community. Upon receipt of an EA message members of the community can access the AlertSA website and also relevant SA Agency web sites to obtain further in formation in relation to the hazard/incident. In addition Interactive Voice Response systems are utilised by SAPOL, CFS, SES and MFS which provide recorded information over the telephone. Linkages are also provided between the IVR systems and the relevant agency information lines. The community has been made aware of the EA system via a range of media promotions incorporating radio, TV and newspapers and various other mail outs.

- SASES has adopted the nationally endorsed Emergency Alert Training Package and is currently facilitating both initial and refresher training to relevant personnel.

- SASES has implemented a Media Liaison Officer Training Package for identified salaried staff, which incorporates issuing public warnings and advice messages, media releases and incident alert messages to media outlets and practitioners from including broadcast, print, and on-line and CALD media. Social media is utilised through the SES Twitter account.

- SASES maintains a service level agreement with BoM (Adelaide Office) outlining protocols for notice of severe weather warnings and release of information and subsequent safety advice to the public.

- Delivery of the Community FloodSafe Program throughout SA, as of 1 July 2011 incorporating Community Storm Safe Program.

- Provision of Community Safety Information through the SASES website.

- The MFS train various ranks and position on different aspects of information management. A brief outline follows:

- Commcen Staff receive:

  - CRIIMSON based bushfire message training (how to issue Advice, Watch & Act, Emergency Warning Messages)

  - Bushfire Hotline Training (provided by the CFS to assist Commcen call takers in answering public enquiries on the bushfire hotline)

  - Information about other forms of messaging and warning available to the MFS during other emergencies (Media Releases, Smoke Advice etc)

- Day working Station Officers who work in the SCCF receive:

- General training on what bushfire messages are, how they're issued and the importance of information being fed through from the scene quickly

- General Bushfire information training (updates on the latest Prepare. Act. Survive. information)

- Information about other forms of messaging and warning available to the MFS during other emergencies (Media Releases, Smoke Advice etc)

- District Officers and Commanders (DCO Forum):

  - DCO Forum Training in: what bushfire (Advice, WAM & EWM) messages are, how they're issued and the importance of information being fed through from the scene quickly

  - Prepare. Act. Survive. familiarisation session

  - A session on what is SEICCC?

  - Information about other forms of messaging and warning available to the MFS during other emergencies (Media Releases, Smoke Advice etc)

- Commanders:

  - how to issue a bushfire (Advice, EWM, WAM) message via CRIIMSON

3. **To what extent are portable generators used in disaster circumstances where power has been lost and battery packs have gone flat? If both battery packs and generators are used, what is the maximum period that services can be maintained before failing? What other alternative power sources are available? What alternative information mechanisms could be used?**

- Portable generators have been used on a number of occasions when power has failed or been disrupted to SAGRN communications transmission sites. Some major sites have permanent generators - but all 155+ sites have back up battery with maximum life of sixteen hours (in practise usually 10- 12 hours and dependent on the amount of voice traffic being experienced) - getting diesel fuel to these generators in dangerous areas in a further demanding issue.

- The SA Country Fire Service has generators at each of our critical Command / Control & Coordination facilities. These generators can be operated indefinitely if required - subject to adequate fuel supplies being available. Generally speaking, the majority of generators will operate for 2 - 3 shift rotations with the fuel immediately on hand. Beyond this, additional fuel supplies will be sought.

- Both static and portable generators are used extensively throughout the state at SASES Emergency Operations Centres and Units to support business continuity. Utilising petrol and diesel engines, services can be maintained as long as fuel supplies are available, considered as unlimited in most circumstances.

- Portable generators are located extensively throughout SASES metropolitan and regional Units, and are used to support local operations and field bases. Utilising petrol and diesel engines, services can be maintained as long as fuel supplies are available, considered as unlimited in most circumstances.

- Specifically provided portable generators are strategically located within SASES Regions to provide emergency power support to the SA Government Radio Network infrastructure.   Utilising petrol and diesel engines, services can be maintained as long as fuel supplies are available, considered as unlimited in most circumstances.

- Generators are widely available through Commercial Hire outlets, although availability can be severely impacted during times of emergency.

- The MFS have large pod generators which can be deployed throughout the state to keep critical infrastructure operational, these generators would be used in situations of long term power outages and can maintain power for days if required. Should battery backup and generators fail communication services would require a move to a back up location to remain effective.

- Alternative information mechanisms that could be used include:

    o Mobile phone networks

    o E-mail/web based

    o Social Networking e.g. 'twitter' and 'face book'

    o SASES HF radio network

    o Coastal VHF and HF radio network operated by Volunteer Marine Rescue agencies throughout coastal areas (particularly relevant for tsunami/marine information).

4. **What is the extent of private business sponsorship and other involvement in the emergency services provided in your state or Territory?**

- Nil sponsorship but through OCIO (Office of Chief Information Officer) meetings have been held with all major Telco's and ISP providers to address maintenance of communication networks during demanding emergencies. Desk top scenario based training to deal with communication disruption has occurred with all commercial communication entities based on a major earthquake idea. Telco's maintain Emergency Services Liaison Officer.

- At present there is almost no private business sponsorship or private business involvement in the delivery of emergency service delivery within the SA Country Fire Service (South Australia).

- Nil for SES.

- Private business sponsorship to the MFS is restricted to external sections of the agency such as sporting events

5. **Have you entered into broadcast arrangements with broadcasters other than the ABC, to ensure that additional coverage can be accessed by residents?**

- SAPOL MOU's exist with some commercial broadcast entities (but still predominately ABC)

- In addition to an MOU with the ABC, the SA Country Fire Service (South Australia) has MOU's with a wide range of commercial radio broadcasters.

- The MFS do not have any formal arrangements with broadcasters but do so on an informal basis. This area needs a broad sector agreement to provide consistency and community confidence.

- Whilst no formal agreements have been entered into, in addition to the ABC, SASES provides media releases and incident alerts to all SA broadcast, print, online and CALD media outlets as a matter of standard procedure.

6. **Do you consider that the provision of a uniform web-based technology platform across State and Territory borders will assist in productive information- sharing and use of commonwealth and state resources (as required)? To what extent is information shared at present via a central database or web-based platform?**

- Although there is considerable intra-State communication between Public Safety organisations using web and voice radio in SA - interstate jurisdictional communication is of a limited nature although possible using email capabilities. ASNET vide conference and internet secure capabilities are used for counter terrorist purposes and consideration could be given for this facility to be used across State borders for non terrorist but emergency events.

- The adoption of a common critical communication platform such as WEB-EOC would be of considerable advancement if all States and Territories were using the same application - unfortunately a diverse range of programmes have since been used and there is no common application.

- The SA Country Fire Service believe that there would be a number of benefits obtained via the provision of uniform web-based technology platforms across State and Territory borders - particularly in the provision of public education programmes.

- Given that emergencies are not confined within state boundaries, the use of a uniform web-based platform has potential benefits towards information sharing and interoperability, providing that it complemented and was compatible with existing web-based tools currently in use by Emergency Services, so as to minimise duplication.

- There is currently no database or web-based platform in use between state or national agencies.

7. **Could each of the jurisdictions advise the committee of the steps which have been taken in each jurisdiction arising from the two royal commissions and the commission of inquiry in the ACT in relation to recommendations on communications and warnings, just so that we can get some overview as to what has happened in each of your jurisdications.**

- South Australia has developed a scaled advice and warning system that was used during the last bushfire season. That scaled advice and warning system is currently being developed to cover any type of emergency. South Australia is fully developed with the emergency alert system and each functional service has been trained in its operation. Public Information Officers are in place in South Australia with an extensive representation of liaison officers in each functional service, and regular training and liaison. South Australia Police has developed capacity in social media platforms such as Face book, Twitter and YouTube that will have significant application to be used during a period of emergency as a further supplementary method of communication to the community. The SAPOL Media Section also has an excellent relationship with

media outlets which further enhances opportunities to deliver community warnings and messages

- The Chief Officer of SA Country Fire Service chaired the SA Bushfire Taskforce to review and report on how the SA Government and relevant agencies are implementing the recommendations from both the Interim and Final Reports from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. The SA Bushfire Taskforce is sub-committee of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC). The SA Bushfire Taskforce has prepared a final report for the SEMC on how SA agencies are implementing the recommendations from both the Interim and Final Reports from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. SA Country Fire Service uses the National Framework for Scaled Advice and Warnings to the Community. Under the National Framework, the SA Country Fire Service issues 'Advice', 'Watch & Act' and 'Emergency Warning' messages during bushfires. These messages are disseminated via multiple means including via the CFS Website, ABC and commercial radio, RSS feeds and if necessary Emergency Warnings are issued via AlertSA (i.e.: the National telephone alerting system).

Yours sincerely

DAVID PLACE
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SAFECOM

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