

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

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Question No. 101

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 27 May 2008:

Australian Strategic Policy Institute's Report:

- a) Identify the specific issues raised for EMA and provide a relevant response for each issue.
- b) Which recommendations will EMA be responding to and what are the plans for each of the responses?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute Report "Taking a punch: Building a more resilient Australia" authored by David Templeman and Anthony Bergin, recommends a number of measures for emergency management and community resilience.

The specific issues raised for Emergency Management Australia (EMA) were:

Issues raised for EMA	Response
<p><i>EMA might take lead and bring employers of emergency service volunteers together through a network of Emergency Service Support Councils to inform employers for emergency service matters of relevance to them. Employers could be invited to take part in EM exercises to familiarise them with the sort of training emergency service volunteers undertake (pg 16)</i></p>	<p>The Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum (AEMVF) was formed in 2001 and is funded and organised by EMA. The Forum focuses on the issues of training, legal/protection, funding and recognition of volunteers in emergency management.</p> <p>EMA plans to discuss this concept with the AEMVF to see whether existing structures can support this recommendation or whether other options can be explored.</p>
<p><i>We need greater clarity on the precise management and coordination arrangements in the case, for example, of a devastating tsunami impacting on southeast Australia or a large earthquake which impacts on one of our major capital cities. The Commonwealth agency seen to be responsible for this, Emergency Management Australia (EMA), has no mandate, legislation or Cabinet endorsement with which to take command. The delivery of EMA functions for the most part is the result of goodwill on behalf of other agencies.</i></p> <p>(Pg 7)</p>	<p>The Homeland and Border Security Review led by Mr Richard Smith AO PSM and supported by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is considering the roles, responsibilities and functions of the Departments and Agencies involved in homeland and border security. The Review is considering responsibilities for both intentional and accidental threats. The Review will also consider onshore and offshore roles in homeland security and border protection.</p> <p>Currently, the emergency management arrangements occur through cooperation and coordination between states and territories and the Australian Government when an emergency event occurs.</p> <p>For larger or significant events emergency management coordination arrangements occur through well tested cooperation between the Australian Government and states and territories.</p>

Issues raised for EMA	Response
<p><i>Emergency services need to engage the large operators (Coles group, Woolworths, Bunnings, Linfox, Westfield and the like)...and Engineers Australia and Master Builders Australia...those that are needed in a catastrophic disaster. (pg 14)</i></p> <p><i>“EMA and state EM services should consider establishing Business Liaison Units to advance this agenda and business should be brought much more into emergency Crisis centres”. (pg 14).</i></p>	<p>The Government takes an all-hazards approach to the protection of Australia’s critical infrastructure and is working with critical infrastructure sectors to help them identify their inter- and intra-sectoral dependencies. This is seen in the national pandemic preparedness planning; tasks and studies undertaken by members of the Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN) for critical infrastructure protection to identify interdependencies; and exercises, such as the international exercise Cyber Storm II, conducted in Australia by the Attorney-General’s Department.</p> <p>The Emergency Services Infrastructure Assurance Advisory Group (ESIAAG) is chaired by EMA. ESIAAG members work to identify their dependencies on each other (eg fire, police ambulance etc) and on other sector groups (eg the communications sector) with the aim of improving their readiness.</p> <p>EMA is assisting ASPI through provision of advice and contacts to facilitate on the development of a Private Sector Task Force to discuss options as to how business can be brought into this arena.</p>

b) Which recommendations will EMA be responding too and what are the plans for each of the responses?

The issues raised are already being considered by the Australian Emergency Management Committee (AEMC) for general advice to the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management – Emergency Management (MCPPEM-EM). EMA, along with state and territory emergency management organisations are a part of these considerations and any identified action.