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Dear Mr Lea

Improving Tasmania's Disaster Preparedness Arrangements

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Discussion Paper - Improving Tasmania's Disaster Preparedness Arrangements. Due to the tight timeline provided to give feedback on this paper, LGAT requested that councils provide feedback directly to SES, rather than through LGAT and I understand that some councils have done this.

The discussion paper outlines three options to address a number of recommendations from the Hyde Inquiry (recommendations 49, 50 and 51) and the Justice Review into Tasmania's Emergency Management Arrangements (recommendations 27, 29 and 52).

It is noted that the three options all include support to Local Government, through the provision of three regional officers to assist with municipal emergency management planning and the delivery of training to build capability at the municipal level. This level of support has been an area that LGAT and its members have long advocated for and it is pleasing to see its inclusion in the three options. The reporting and location of these positions within the SES Emergency Management Unit is supported. We believe these appointments would provide the long needed support to build capability at the municipal level.

It is understood that feedback from officers within councils has consistently supported either **option one – Expanded Emergency Management Unit** or **option two- Exercise Development Unit**. Concern was raised that the cost of option one is significant and may not be able to be justified to the community.

Given this feedback from councils there may be an opportunity to support a business case that fits somewhere between option one and option two.

In particular, we suggest giving consideration to paring back the amount of funding available for exercises as well as to whether a grant program is the best approach to ensuring the best outcome. Grants can take considerable time to administer and can be time consuming for poorly resourced organisations. This may result in grants being skewed towards the better resourced organisations, who at the same time may not have the same level of need.

That being said, there is a definite need for more comprehensive exercises in emergency management in Tasmania and a capacity to better learn and share lessons from the exercises.

The inclusion in option one, of funding to support community development officers, is welcomed.

The expansion of the community development approach taken by the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods Program to encompass all hazards in educating and building community resilience is essential, particularly with the expected increase in frequency of events.

In building the business case to support these positions it is important that a thorough examination is undertaken as to whether the employment of an additional three regional community development officers (on top of the three regional officers employed for the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhood Program) is required, or whether two officers would suffice.

In order to garner State Government funding to support this improved capability it is essential that the request is supported by a strong business case. The business case should include potential dollars saved through investing in better preparation and planning. Data from the evaluation of the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhood Program and the original business case developed in Victoria to support their investment in exercises should provide some good evidence to use in a Tasmanian business case.

Evaluation of the new arrangements should also be included within the business case to ensure that the suggested outcomes are met. LGAT would be pleased to provide its support to a business case for the additional recurrent funding when the time comes.

LGAT considers it vital that recurrent funding is secured so as to build long term capability into Tasmania's Disaster Preparedness Arrangements and to ensure that the State Government does not attempt to pass on the cost to other stakeholders, such as Local Government, in the long term.

The State Government has committed to implementing the recommendations to come out of the various reviews and with that they must commit stable, ongoing, funding.

If you have any further questions in relation to the submission please do not hesitate to contact Georgia Palmer, Senior Policy Officer at Georgia.palmer@lgat.tas.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Katrena Stephenson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER