Photo courtesy of Bernard Plumpton

PART H – PREPARATION AND PLANNING

The Inquiry's term of reference for preparation and planning is potentially extremely broad. It is not possible to comprehensively examine the preparation and planning of 'all levels of government, agencies and the emergency services' in the time and with the resources available.

However, the terms of reference also specify that the 'focus of this Inquiry is on the strategic, systemic and organisational level'. In applying this requirement to preparation and planning, the Inquiry will provide a representative assessment of this aspect of the emergency management arrangements. Moreover, as good governance in the public sector requires an ongoing process of establishing, enhancing and maintaining emergency management preparedness, it is preferable to also concentrate on a process where this outcome can be achieved.

It should be noted that, notwithstanding its relevance to preparation, the effectiveness of strategies and plans to manage bushfire risk will be examined in PART I.

For reasons explained below, the Inquiry has adopted a 'readiness' approach to its assessment of how prepared the emergency management arrangements were.

In other parts of this Report there has been discussion and commentary on emergency management arrangements which reflects on their readiness, and it is proposed in this part to draw this together without reiterating the examination. It is likely a reader of this Report will have already started to form an opinion on the state of readiness of the emergency management arrangements. Additional areas, not previously the subject of an examination but relevant to the issue of readiness, will be dealt with in more detail.

It should also be kept in mind that readiness for the fire season will substantially represent the state of readiness for the 4 January 2013, although it is expected that responsible agencies will act to be ready for the immediate risk as well.

What Does Preparedness Mean?

The Tasmania Emergency Management Plan (TEMP) used in January 2013[1] does not provide a clear understanding of what is meant by the word 'preparedness' and the actions required to establish it. Mostly the TEMP uses generalised and descriptive phrases on some aspects of preparedness; it does not provide specific detail on what is expected, or focus on readiness. The most useful description is in the glossary of terms:

> *Preparedness: Planned and coordinated measures so safe and effective response and recovery can occur.[2]*

Another more appropriate description is provided in the Australian Emergency Management Glossary:

> *Preparedness: Arrangements to ensure that, should an emergency occur, all those resources and services which are needed to cope with the effects can be efficiently mobilised and deployed… Measures to ensure that, should an emergency occur, communities, resources and services are capable of coping with the effects…[3]*

Preparedness can be applied across the full spectrum of emergency management: prevention and mitigation, preparation, response and recovery. However, as the January fires are the primary focus of this Inquiry, this report concentrates on bushfire response and recovery operations.

In this part, the word 'preparation' has been taken as including 'planning' and is used accordingly.

However, preparation is not a clearly defined word as it has vague and unending connotations. Frequently 'preparedness' will be used in place of 'preparation' to signify an outcome, as in 'state of preparedness'. A much more useful description is to use the word 'ready' to assess a state of being for emergency management arrangements. In this way it can be asked, how ready were the emergency management arrangements? Taking this approach is preferable because it is the ultimate test of how prepared arrangements were, which is what really matters. The Inquiry has adopted the 'readiness' approach to its assessment.

There are, or should be, a number of dimensions to what a state of readiness means for response and recovery operations, including:

- a suitable concept of operations is established and accepted
- leadership arrangements are established in advance
- key issues are anticipated and policies and specific plans to deal with them are developed
- strategic positioning occurs, including contingencies, so that the best way to deal with situations has been considered and planned for
- a proactive culture is established
- plans are ready to be implemented
- facilities for use in operations are established, set up and ready

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1 Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan (TEMP) Issue 6 2009.

2 TEMP, at p. 7.

3 Australian Emergency Management Glossary, Emergency Management Australia, Manual 03, Australian Government.

- systems are established to make operations easier

- equipment that is needed has been acquired and is available

- personnel and other resources required are available to be deployed

- relationships and linkages between people and agencies are established so cooperation occurs readily

- skills, knowledge and personal capabilities are developed in all people required to be involved in emergency operations

- the discipline required to respond quickly and effectively in emergency situations is established

- the leadership capability required to manage emergencies is established

- an emergency management culture is established.

Since 2012, the Western Australia Government has started to produce annual Emergency Preparedness Reports. In this report 16 capabilities are deemed to be fundamental and they are detailed as including:

> *Sixteen capabilities deemed to be fundamental to the State's prevention, preparation, response and recovery processes are captured. Based on the Capability Assessment for Readiness (CAR) protocol developed in the United States, they include:*

1.	*Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment*	*9.*	*Exercises, Evaluation, Corrective Actions and Post Incident Analysis*
2.	*Hazard Mitigation*	*10.*	*Public Information and Community Warnings*
3.	*Laws and Authorities*	*11.*	*Operations and Procedures*
4.	*Policy*	*12.*	*Logistics and Facilities*
5.	*Finance and Administration*	*13.*	*Command, Control and Coordination*
6.	*Resource Management*	*14.*	*Volunteering and Community Engagement*
7.	*Public Education*	*15.*	*Recovery*
8.	*Training*	*16.*	*Support[4]*

Both of these lists can be used for making assessments on the state of readiness of emergency management arrangements, but for the purpose of this Report the Inquiry is not intending to itemise findings against them. These lists may also be of value if it is intended in the future to undertake assessments and report on the state of readiness of the emergency management arrangements. This will be discussed later in this part.

It is appropriate to comment on two observations made to the Inquiry.

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4 State Emergency Management Committee Western Australia, Emergency Preparedness Report 2012, Government of Western Australia, at p. 5.

First, there are few large emergencies in Tasmania and it is implied this excuses not having arrangements fully ready, as there are not the opportunities to test or practice arrangements. The Inquiry is satisfied the community would not be tolerant or understanding of this excuse if arrangements are not adequate in an emergency. This observation means that there is a risk of complacency and that those responsible for emergency management need to be more diligent in making arrangements which overcome this perceived disadvantage.

Second, where arrangements were not ready to deal with a situation in the January fires, it is not sufficient to argue arrangements were ready in another location. Emergencies don't occur at the convenience of administrators, and judgements should be made on arrangements where and when they are needed. Emergencies come whether people are ready or not.

Image courtesy of Mark Heather

State of Readiness

How ready were the emergency management arrangements for bushfires?

Organisations with a significant role in emergency management, such as the emergency services, need to have a broad, even an organisational-wide capability. An in-depth assessment of some elements of their overall capability is not possible at this time; for example, whether they have a suitable culture, well-developed emergency leadership skills or sufficient resources to operate effectively.

The Tasmanian Auditor-General produced a Special Report in June 2011 to assess the State's preparedness for bushfires.[5] The difficulty in determining suitable audit criteria was acknowledged and the approach taken was to assess whether responsible entities were keeping up to date with contemporary knowledge and practice. The recommendations of the Council of Australian Government's 2004 report on bushfire mitigation and management was used.

The Auditor-General concluded that, while the results were not outstanding, much had been achieved and the assessment is presented in Table H.1. Comments included:

> *As a general rule, we observed that the degree of implementation was higher for fire fighting recommendations than for preparation and mitigation. Stronger findings included:*
>
> - *Incident control was well covered with solid progress towards achievement of a common system that included effective flow of information and made good use of local knowledge.*
>
> - *Tasmania's 'Prepare, stay and defend or leave early' policy was consistent with the recommendation as revised by the 2009 Victoria Bushfires Royal Commission with further work progressing in the areas of education and training.*
>
> - *Media involvement arrangements with the ABC existed and had been recently tested. Further arrangements with commercial broadcasting organisations were being negotiated.*
>
> - *Key fire management entities were largely satisfied with the standard of training provided under the national framework although there were continuing concerns about its funding.*
>
> *…Overall, we found reasonable evidence to conclude that state entities with responsibility for bush fire management were committed to keeping pace with contemporary knowledge and practice.[6]*

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5 Report of the Auditor-General, Special Report No. 99, Bushfire Management, June 2011.

6 Report of the Auditor-General, at pp. 3 and 4.

Table H.1

Grouped recommendations	Degree of implementation
Bushfire education	50%
Risk management and performance indicators	40%
Research and information	50%
Building in bushfire-prone areas	50%
Bushfire operations	85%

Although a little dated, this report is informative and relevant to this part of the Inquiry's terms of reference.

The final report of the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission was handed down in July 2010, and the Inquiry was informed that this Report is now considered the benchmark for contemporary bushfire management. The Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission report is comprehensive and covers the full spectrum of bushfire management. Each of the recommendations made by the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission has been examined by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) and the Government for their application to Tasmania. Of the 67 recommendations made, 48 were accepted, 17 were supported in principle (requiring some modification to suit Tasmanian circumstances) and two recommendations were not supported.

A summary of the recommendations and their current status can be located as an attachment to the submission by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC).[7] Given the discussions in this Report, the nominated status of some of the recommendations should be examined closely, for example recommendation 5 on evacuations.

Both of these reports are very relevant to the preparedness issue, although the 2004 Council of Australian Government Report is now somewhat dated and has been overtaken by the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission Report. They provide a framework which can be used to prepare for bushfires and emergencies generally.

The primary concern the Inquiry has is the delay experienced in progressing recommendations through to implementation.

This Report has examined various aspects of emergency management, particularly response and recovery operations, including alerting and warning the community. How ready these aspects were acts as an indicator of the overall state of readiness of these organisations for the fires. Relevant discussions from these parts will be drawn together in this section, along with other appropriate matters and a review of the action taken for the fire risk on 4 January.

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7 Submission No. 84.

The following matters of substance previously discussed in this Report, reflect on the overall state of readiness for emergency events, such as the fires active on and from 4 January:

1. The *Emergency Management Act 2006* is the starting point for establishing an appropriate state of readiness. In PART J it is recommended that there is an independent review to establish a suitable model for emergency management arrangements in Tasmania. If change is made to the model it should be underpinned in the legislation. Currently the legislation:

    •   doesn't specify roles and responsibilities clearly; for example, for the State Controller

    •   doesn't establish a suitable framework for properly focussed response and recovery operations (there are further comments on the model below)

    •   should provide a better framework for declarations of emergency

    •   should provide a more flexible approach to emergency powers.

    Similarly, there should be an appropriate reference to Tasmania Police (TASPOL) responsibilities in emergency management in the *Police Service Act 2003.*

2. The emergency management structure is not the most suitable and therefore was not as ready as it could have been; namely:

    •   membership of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) is too narrow and should include a broader range of agencies and stakeholders to prepare and be ready for emergencies

    •   arrangements are not properly developed and established for overall State level operations

    •   TASPOL is primarily structured for emergencies on a regional basis, and there are no suitable structures above and very few structural arrangements below it

    •   expectations for a broader operational role for municipal councils across the state are unrealistic and there should be a better alignment with the areas where they can make an effective contribution

    •   there are no practical and effective structures and arrangements for the coordination of response operations at a municipal level

    •   there is too much focus on committees, which can have a detrimental effect on those with operational response responsibilities

    •   there are no state level arrangements to operationalise recovery.

3. Plans were and are generally not ready for the purpose expected of them:

    •   the TEMP does not provide a suitable framework from which other plans and arrangements can be developed

    •   key policies, such as road closures and evacuations, were not well considered or properly planned for in advance

    •   arrangements for engaging with important support stakeholders, such as volunteers, were not established

    •   there was no plan to manage the transition from immediate to long-term recovery

- there was no state level public information plan for implementation in the immediate recovery phase

- emergency plans for the Tasman Peninsula were not ready to be implemented.

4. Coordination is referred to in the TEMP, but there is no detail on how multi-agency coordination might operate, nor are there formalised arrangements for this to occur for response operations. It was not seen as a specific functional requirement and there were instances where a more structured approach to response coordination would have been beneficial; for example, with evacuations, road closures and the Rapid Impact Assessment process.

5. It is not unreasonable to expect the State Controller would personally take charge of an emergency of this scale and that it would be managed at a state level. However, looking at the model and the lack of appropriate structure in place, it would be difficult to achieve the active and applied leadership required.

6. There was a purported attempt to appoint the Southern Regional Controller to be 'in charge' of the emergency, but this was not clearly achieved and the Southern Regional Controller concentrated on recovery operations. The concept of operations and understanding among those responsible for emergency operations for this to occur was not established, there was disagreement, and procedures for an effective appointment were not in place.

7. There were no facilities available or ready for a person appointed to be in charge of the emergency to operate from.

8. Apart from the State Controller, other senior police (Deputy and Assistant Commissioners) did not have key leadership roles (this comment is position based).

9. The use of the declaration provisions in the *Police Offences Act 1935* was probably invalid and the emergency powers in the *Emergency Management Act 2006* could have been used. Arrangements were not established for the use of these special powers in emergencies.

10. Arrangements to enable shared monitoring of radio transmissions and other forms of interoperability between Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) and TASPOL were not established.

11. The new fire arrangements were not well implemented by TFS; policies were not finalised, there was a high reliance on personal knowledge rather than formal process; and there were other implementation issues. The arrangements were not fully understood or practiced before the fires.

12. Line-of-control arrangements for TFS operations need to be clarified.

13. The TFS process for developing operational plans through Incident Management Teams (IMTs) is too slow to be effective in fast-moving fire events.

14. The IMT did not take over the Forcett fire soon enough and was not ready to manage the fire effectively on 4 January, particularly when it became highly active after midday. There should have been a clear take-over of this fire on 3 January.

15. There was no effective use of the predictive modelling for the Forcett fire, either in proactively developing a fire management strategy or designing community warnings and evacuations. Significant questions arise from this as to the readiness of TFS personnel to accept this form of intelligence and use it effectively.

16. TFS communications arrangements within IMTs, especially for the Forcett fire, were not suitable or sufficiently effective to manage operational radio requirements or accountability in managing emergency calls.

17. The use of the TFS Six Operational Priorities appears to have been well established and they were readily used. There may be issues around how effective they were in practice and whether improvements or changes should be made, but this is not something which could be easily determined in advance of the fires.

18. In suppressing fires at Dunalley and surrounding areas, it is likely TFS was not ready to continue major fire operations during the night.

19. Some policy positions on issues (such as working at night and air support for fire operations) need to be clarified or developed so there is a consistent and appropriate approach.

20. TASPOL did not adopt an adequate proactive approach to operations for the Forcett fire and they were, consequently, not sufficiently ready to act when the situation became urgent.

21. Policies and procedures for road closures were not developed at a state level. There was a TASPOL policy, but there was no pre-planning, uncertainty about closing and opening roads, insufficient flexibility, and community concerns and needs were not well considered in decision making.

22. Policies and procedures for evacuations were not developed at a state level, and personnel were not ready to implement evacuations in an informed, appropriate and consistent way.

23. While appreciating that the scale of the emergency in the Forcett fire was likely to overwhelm most municipal arrangements, the municipal arrangements for the Tasman Peninsula were not sufficiently ready to cope with a major emergency. The Municipal Emergency Management Plan was more of a 'reference' document and plans and arrangements were not ready for implementation. It was said[8] that specifying roles and responsibilities without the capacity to meet these was 'unrealistic and inappropriate or misleading'. Other councils are likely to be in a similar position.

24. The level of resource availability for emergency services and how that influenced their readiness cannot be determined by the Inquiry.

25. Effective arrangements to register evacuees were not initially available.

26. There was a delay to regional involvement in recovery operations on the Tasman Peninsula.

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8 Email received from General Manager of the Tasman Council, 14 August 2013.

27. There were strategic direction and coordination problems in recovery operations on the Forestier and Tasman Peninsulas.

28. There was no effective capability to use social media or manage negative aspects of community use of social media.

29. While there was extensive use of community alerts and warnings, and it is recognised that knowledge on their use is continuing to develop, TFS was not in a position to design alert and warning campaigns to be the most effective.

The above list is extensive, and it may suggest that few arrangements in preparation were undertaken. This conclusion would not do the agencies and organisations justice as there was much that was done in preparation; rather, this list shows that a critical analysis of operations that were under the pressure of a significant emergency reveals a lack of readiness in some areas.

The following paragraphs describe some of the preparedness actions, and comment on the state of readiness.

Tasmania Fire Service (TFS)

TFS, as would be expected of the primary agency for bushfires, was involved in a broad range of matters to help the community, partner agencies and itself be prepared for bushfires in general and the 2012–13 fire season in particular.

For example, a Bushfire Ready Communities project to build local community capability began in 2009 and Community Protection Plans are being developed. Detail on these initiatives is provided in the TFS submission to the Inquiry.[9] Community education and awareness programs for fire seasons were conducted, public information was made available, and the preparation of personal bushfire plans was encouraged. Further information on projects and initiatives can be found in the TFS submission.

Action was also taken to ensure TFS was operationally ready for the fire season by training and developing its personnel, conducting exercises, managing the Fire Permit Period, arranging aerial fire fighting capability, and making resources available. One particular initiative was to lower the Fire Danger Rating threshold at which total fire bans were declared. From October 2012 to March 2013, there were 1292 bushfires, 39 less than the previous equivalent period despite more unfavourable weather conditions. TFS attributes this reduction to its operational strategies, such as '…the more proactive use of Total Fire Bans, Fire Permit Periods and Permit embargoes combined with successful Public Education and Information programs'.[10]

Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS)

PWS was very active in preparation, consistent with the partnership approach which is taken with TFS and Forestry Tasmania in the Interagency Fire Management Protocol.[11] PWS had a Fire Action Plan, which was updated annually, with flexible arrangements for its personnel to ensure their availability when the fire risk is highest. Daily fire action plans were prepared and there were detailed arrangements in place.

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9 Submission No. 60.

10 Submission No. 60, at para. 4.24.

11 Submission No. 85.

Before the fire season began, PWS conducted Fire Season Preparedness Days, refresher training and workshops for its personnel. An Emergency Management Plan was developed in 2011 for the Freycinet Peninsula, which was also used during the Bicheno and the Freshwater Lagoon fires. These were reportedly particularly useful in helping the evacuation process for threatened areas. Similar procedures for high public visitation areas within reserves with high fire risks are intended for the future.[12]

Forestry Tasmania

As the other partner agency for fire management, Forestry Tasmania also had a number of preparatory arrangements in place. Each of its districts had a Fire Action Plan (which is updated every year), training was provided for personnel likely to be involved in fire fighting activity, contact lists were updated, equipment was checked, and a pre-season review of roles and responsibilities was conducted.[13]

To avoid the risk that previously-burnt log heaps would cause fire, an infra-red scan was conducted to identify any hot spots that have remained alight. In one district, five log heaps were pulled apart and hot spots extinguished in October 2012.

Tasmania Police (TASPOL)

TASPOL provided the Inquiry with information on its preparation for the fire season.[14] This included reference to a number of exercises that had been conducted. For example, Exercise Red Dawn took place in three phases from November 2011 to August 2012. There was another discussion exercise in August 2012 with TFS on a fire scenario, a desk top exercise with Transend on power failure in October 2012, and some District Management Group desk top exercises in November and December 2012.

Exercises are an accepted means of establishing readiness in the field of emergency services, but they do have limitations. They are not full substitutes for actual operations. How broadly and frequently they are conducted is important, to engage and exercise all relevant personnel and facilities in a way that actually prepares them for emergency operations. In addition, the limited number of major emergencies in Tasmania means that preparations need to be more assiduous to ensure emergency arrangements are ready. It does not appear to the Inquiry that the exercises conducted by the agencies — but especially for TASPOL, considering the size of its organisation — have been sufficiently rigorous to achieve this outcome.

Facilities established by TASPOL for the Police Operations Centre and Forward Command Post at Bellerive were not ready for operations on 4 January, as they were not fully set up and did not have the equipment required.[15] This is a surprising situation, particularly as there was some notice of the potential of the fires. In its submission to the Inquiry, TASPOL said the Police Operations Centre had been used to manage the Royal Tour in November 2012, and to exercise its arrangements in a large scale operation. In this context, the lack of readiness of the Police Operations Centre is difficult to understand.

TASPOL uses an Incident Command and Control System (ICCS), which was updated to the

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12 Submission No. 85, at p. 6.

13 Submission No. 76.

14 Submission No. 78, at pp.18 – 21.

15 January 2013 Tasmanian Bushfires, Internal Debrief Report, Tasmania Police.

ICCS-Plus model in late 2012. ICCS training is included in a number of training courses within TASPOL and is an essential part of promotion to the ranks of sergeant or above.   However, in terms of building and maintaining organisational wide capability, this training is limited in that it is not provided to all personnel who may be involved in emergency management operations, nor is there regular refresher training. When the upgraded ICCS system was approved there was some training provided to District Management Groups on the changes introduced by this new system.   For the general workforce, the new model has been published on the TASPOL intranet site and operational members are expected to familiarise themselves with it.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC)

DPAC is a primary participant in the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) and the emergency management arrangements, especially recovery. In its submission to the Inquiry, DPAC set out preparation issues it has an interest in, though these are mixed with prevention issues and initiatives either not complete at the time of the fires or which have been started afterwards.[16]

State Emergency Service (SES)

Another agency directly involved in the emergency management arrangements is the SES. It was involved in the January fires, though in a relatively minor way, and it provided a submission to the Inquiry.[17]   Of particular interest was the SES role in helping municipal councils with their preparations, which will be discussed later in this section.

Department of Education

A number of other government departments and agencies also provided submissions, and they reflect a range of preparatory actions. For example, the Department of Education has worked closely with the TFS in a Bushfire Ready Schools project. Schools are assessed according to how safe they are for students to remain there during a bushfire threat, over a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 rated the highest. Evacuation plans were developed for schools rated 1 and 2, and the process has begun for schools rated 3. At the start of the 2012–13 fire season, 18 Department of Education schools were rated at either 2 or 3. 'More robust Bushfire Response Plans' are being developed.[18]

Municipal Councils

The role of municipal councils in emergencies has been discussed elsewhere, and the concept of their involvement has been questioned. How ready they were to undertake their responsibilities for the fires not only relates to their readiness, but also to what realistic role they should have.

A State Preparedness Project conducted by the SES from 2009 to 2012 included a claim of 'transforming plans into a consistent framework'.[19]   It is apparent that a template approach was taken to the council plans, as the ones examined by the Inquiry fit a model. Apart from being able to say that you have a plan, this approach is hardly likely to develop plans in tune with local

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16 Submission No. 84, at pp. 13-23.

17 Submission No. 63.

18   Submission No. 49.

19 Submission No 63, at p. 11.

requirements or install a sense of ownership, and is not consistent with the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission recommendation that plans should be tailored to the needs of individual communities.[20] There is also a risk that the plans will not be developed in a way that is ready for implementation.

It is likely that there was, and will be, a variable capacity to develop and implement emergency plans, depending to some extent on the resources available to the council:

- the Tasman Council did not activate its emergency plan or establish an emergency coordination centre, and it did not have a specific recovery plan, though a recovery management committee was set up in the week following the fire

- the Municipal Coordinator at the Sorell Council activated its plan and set up an emergency coordination centre, though the centre was not formally opened during the emergency as there was very little support required to be provided by the Council to the emergency agencies. The Council does not have a specific recovery plan as well

- the Central Highlands Council activated its plan as it was requested by the SES to do so, but did not set up an emergency coordination centre. No recovery centre was established and there was also no specific recovery plan

- a similar situation occurred with the Derwent Valley Council, though it was not requested to activate its plan and did not do so

- the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council activated its plan and coordinated activities without opening a centre. Again, there was no specific recovery plan.

A number of councils seemed to manage the various centres they opened and coped with the emergency quite well. However, it could not be said that the emergency management arrangements were ready.

The state of readiness of the agencies and organisations for the fires on 3 and 4 January necessarily involves preparations in an overall sense, and more specific and immediate preparations required to deal with the threats emerging. This specific action, while important in putting the final stages into place, cannot be considered as a substitute for not maintaining an overall state of readiness, nor will it rectify substantial deficiencies in those preparations. The overall state of readiness will substantially determine the outcome of the emergency management arrangements.

Comment and discussion has been provided in other parts of the Report relevant to the state of readiness for response and recovery operations, including specific action in preparation for the 3 and 4 January, and this has been brought together in the previous list in this section.

In terms of the more specific or immediate preparations, the Inquiry is satisfied that agencies and organisations were broadly alerted to and briefed, where appropriate, on the risk on 3 and 4 January, except for the predictive modelling which was undertaken by TFS for the Forcett fire on 4 January. The Inquiry is not certain how far this information was circulated outside TFS, but understands that it was limited.

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20 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission, recommendation no. 3.

The responsible fire agencies – TFS, PWS and Forestry Tasmania — took reasonable specific action for 3 and 4 January to make facilities and resources ready for fire operations, though the information from the predictive modelling was not used by TFS in preparation to the extent that it should have been used. Other agencies mainly alerted and placed on stand-by their arrangements, which generally was suitable action to take.

TASPOL also alerted and placed on stand-by the arrangements it had. However, for the Forcett fire, advice from TFS on the potential of the fire was not used as well as it should have been, possibly because the operations commander spent so much of his time on 4 January attending committee meetings, and a 'wait and see' rather than a proactive approach was taken to the fire by senior management.

Effective emergency response and recovery operations need commitment, cooperation and coordination across a wide range of public sector, local government and community agencies and organisations. Maintaining an appropriate state of readiness in this complex environment is a challenge which requires an ongoing, mutually supportive and inclusive approach. The emergency management arrangements need to be designed to achieve this outcome.

Previous comment has been made in PART D, and in the list above, on the narrowness of membership of the SEMC. It is important to link in those agencies and organisations which need to prepare for emergencies, either through membership of appropriate bodies, such as SEMC, or by another process. In the context of maintaining a state of readiness, this arrangement should be examined as part of the review recommended in PART J for the emergency management arrangements.

It is acknowledged that substantial action was taken in preparation for emergencies by the responsible agencies, but the emergency management arrangements were not as ready as they should have been to respond to a major emergency.

Recommendation 75 – that a process be established for the timely implementation of approved recommendations from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Recommendation 76 – that an exercise program — to establish and maintain an acceptable state of readiness for agencies and organisations required to be involved in emergency operations — be developed and implemented.

Recommendation 77 – that training and development of personnel to establish a suitable state of readiness, be included in the recommended review by Tasmania Police of its approach to emergency management.

Recommendation 78 – that membership of the State Emergency Management Committee, and other processes to link in appropriate agencies and organisations to emergency management, be included in the recommended review of the emergency management arrangements.

Accountability and Improvement

The examination above of the state of readiness of the emergency arrangements for the bushfires concludes that they were not as ready as they should have been. It appears that this state of affairs is not confined to bushfires, and applies in a more systemic way to the overall readiness of the emergency management arrangements.

It is also apparent to the Inquiry that the pace of reform and change is slow. State of the art arrangements cannot always be expected as improvement is a continuous process, but a sound and solid base should be the minimum requirement, and delays in establishing this should not be acceptable.

Managing substantial change is not an easy process. Recognising the need to change by those in leadership positions is a precondition; and a process that ensures change is effectively implemented must be established. This is not to suggest that organisations are not professionally led and well-intentioned, but that the priority for change and the commitment of resources needs to be established in a way that obtains results.

Further, change requires people to think differently. In substantial change, an appropriate mindset often needs to be developed, as people cannot always see or understand the change required.

Some comments in material provided by TFS and TASPOL to the Inquiry do not engender confidence that change will occur without a process which creates appropriate accountability.

For example:

- the TFS Operational Review of the 2012–13 Tasmanian Bushfires said of the new fire arrangements that although the model was not fully practiced or understood, once it was embedded in the command and control culture, it would 'serve the state well'.[21] However, as was pointed out in PART E of this Report, the TFS Operational Review failed to mention some fundamental difficulties with the model identified by the Inquiry.

- TASPOL's debrief report, in the section on preparedness, said:

  On balance, the internal debriefs revealed relatively few concerns held by members in respect to the instruments, activities and exercising relied upon to support this agency's bushfire preparations.[22]

To some extent, this last comment may reflect the limitations of debrief processes. Debriefs are a standard and useful process to use following operations to identify areas which worked well or are in need of improvement. They are necessarily limited in that they are normally not a rigorous objective critical process, but rely on people describing or reviewing matters relating to their own or a colleague's performance.

The Inquiry does not intend to make too much of these comments; they are only used to reinforce the difficulties in managing change.

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21 Operational Review, Tasmanian Bushfires 2012/13, Tasmania Fire Service, at p. 24.

22 Tasmania Police, January 2013 Tasmanian Bushfires, Internal Debrief Report, at p. 17.

An accountability process would involve:

- identifying responsibilities

- setting priorities, establishing targets and approving work plans

- ensuring resources are available to achieve desired outcomes

- monitoring and measuring performance against targets.

An accountability improvement process can be established in line with the model suggested in PART J, for consideration in the recommended review of the emergency management arrangements. It is suggested in that model that a body — such as a Security and Emergency Council — is established. Accountability reporting to this Council would be a suitable mechanism.

The conclusion of this Report recommends that a mechanism be established to monitor and report on implementation of approved recommendations in this Report. This mechanism can also complement the process established for accountability, reporting to the Security and Emergencies Council for so long as necessary to achieve a satisfactory outcome on those approved recommendations.

It is also envisaged that there is an ongoing process of providing State of Readiness reports to the Security and Emergency Council. The Western Australia Government, as previously mentioned, has initiated annual State of Readiness reports. A similar process is recommended in this Report for agencies and this may be incorporated into an overall report. Individual agencies should provide a report as this has a better alignment with the accountability chief officers should have for the readiness of their agencies. The State Controller or chair of the SEMC could be responsible for providing an overall State of Readiness report.

Recommendation 79 – that an accountability process be established for managing improvement in the emergency management arrangements, including annual State of Readiness Reports by relevant departments and agencies and on the overall emergency management arrangements.