**Australian Red Cross**

**Submission to the Tasmanian Floods Inquiry 2016**

**November 2016**

**Read by MB on 13 Dec**

# Background

This submission relates to the opportunities and challenges Red Cross experienced through the 2016 Tasmanian floods response, relief and subsequent recovery efforts. In particular it describes matter relevant to items 2, 4 and 5 of The Inquiry terms of reference, ie:

•*Community preparation, resilience and awareness, including awareness of insurance matters, relating to major flood events in Tasmania*

*•The use and efficacy of forecasting, community alerts, warnings and public information by authorities in responding to flood events*

*•The effectiveness of transition from response to recovery in the week following the June floods; including capacity and priorities for infrastructure repair, and immediate assistance payments*

1. **Summary**

The 2016 floods occurred in the context of an unprecedented year of emergency events across Tasmania on the back of arguably the most extensive fire response situation Tasmania has faced in modern times. Emergency management agencies had already faced a prolonged response operation and many of the flood affected municipalities had also been impacted by the fires.

Red Cross is an emergency services organisation and has invested significant resources over the past decade in particular, to build and maintain a substantial range of support services in Tasmania as part of a national service capacity (see Section 2).

Unfortunately, for community sector organisations such as Red Cross, the Tasmanian emergency arrangements contain a fundamental limitation in that community sector participation is typically restricted to service delivery if and when invited to do so by a level of government. Those state arrangements leave critical aspects such as who is responsible for making that service delivery request, lines of control and command over individual service functions and cost responsibilities largely silent. As a result, Red Cross finds the current system somewhat dysfunctional as a framework to facilitate the meaningful inclusion of state wide community organisations in the building of disaster resilience in Tasmania.

This situation was borne out though the Red Cross experience offering assistance to the 2016 floods effort.

Paradoxically, Red Cross experienced the most effective engagement through emergency management arrangements where its services were least needed, ie in Southern Tasmania. In Northern Tasmania reasonable opportunity for involving Red Cross occurred, albeit working through municipal and state relationships rather than regional operational arrangements. Where the greatest relevance for the provision of Red Cross services existed, ie in the North West region and with the Floods Recovery Task Force, Red Cross found itself on the outside of what appeared to be a “closed shop” process.

That is not to say that the arrangements are ineffective across the board. Emergency Management in Tasmania appears to be highly effective in coordinating the delivery of government agency response and relief services. From the perspective of an organisation active in emergency management across the country this was quite apparent in the 2013 SE Tasmanian fires and again this year with the fires and floods response, especially so considering the scale and complexity of the 2016 events.

However that focus on government hazard response and relief service management appears to deprive community sector organisations of the essential enabling elements necessary for delivering or investing in service capacity. This includes a lack of defined roles, clear activation procedures, participation in emergency exercises, the use of industry standard advice mechanisms such as advice-standby-activate-stand-down notices or situation reports, or the sharing of impact or recovery intelligence or planning. There is also the structural impediment of the community sector being restricted to operational engagement through only the social recovery sub-committees. As a result, involvement in building resilience or capacity development is excluded and the sector’s role is mostly limited to one of an ad-hoc ‘just in time’ supply line during the immediate relief provision phase.

Community sector organisations such as Red Cross are able to value-add to public sector capabilities with large-event surge capacity, complementary expertise and national disaster response experience, access to philanthropic funding, and unique community trust and engagement opportunities. The high level of community trust in organisations can also leverage high levels of community giving for large events through appeals partnerships with government. The ability of organisations to invest in and maintain such a capability is however highly dependent on the existence of operational arrangements that allow organisations to plan around an expected level of utilisation.

In the Tasmanian absence of those elements, organisations such as Red Cross find it increasingly difficult to retain skilled volunteers due to inactivity, which challenges our continuing investment in developing emergency services capacity. In turn relief and recovery efforts are likely to excessively rely on government agency support, or be unnecessarily restricted in the range or extent of support available to affected communities.

As noted, current Tasmanian arrangements effectively allocate hazard management responsibilities across government agencies, along with lead responsibilities for the management of response and recovery services. However key aspects such as responsibilities for resilience development, capacity building, or deployment operating procedures are effectively left silent. There are also structural gaps in the control and command arrangements for the delivery of non-government services. As a result, where such development does occur, it does so in the absence of a consistent state wide approach, is largely reactive rather than preparatory and has the strength and weakness of being highly dependent on the individual expertise of key personnel.

In respect to the situation as described, to enhance Tasmanian capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from floods in the future, Red Cross makes the following recommendations:

1. *That Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to ensure meaningful community sector emergency management representation is included in state level emergency management bodies.*
2. *That the Recovery and Risk sub-committee to SEMC be tasked with developing a strategic framework that guides the cooperative delivery of preparedness messaging across all agencies or organisations active in emergency preparedness.*
3. *That public appeal governance models, operating principles and sample processes be established as a standing resource to enable the speedy establishment of public appeals as required following disaster events.*
4. *That, drawing on the new state SEMC sub-committee structure, Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to replace the current REMC-RSRC regional committee structure with one that brings together the government, commercial and community sectors for the coordinated development of resilience, capacity development and inter-agency control across the full prevention to recovery continuum.*
5. *That Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to define the control and command lines between organisations, agencies and management bodies for the provision of services involving non-government providers (eg personal support, catering, pastoral care, spontaneous volunteers, registration, clothing, donated goods and outreach).*
6. *That Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to require operational planning at a regional level to establish utilisation trigger points and expectations, deployment procedures, capacity auditing and cost recovery expectations and conditions with non-government agency emergency service providers operating in each region.*
7. **Background**

**Red Cross Emergency Services**

Red Cross operates an Australia-wide Emergency Services program, with a national suite of training, operational structures and professional development. In turn this draws on the international disaster experience and expertise of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In Tasmania the program represents capabilities in delivering:

* All-hazards Emergency Preparedness presentations and resources – The Pillowcase Project (schools delivery) and Community Rediplan (household)
* Operation of the national disaster registration and inquiry service *Register.Find.Reunite* for Tasmania Police (Management of the system, training for police and local government and provision of registration teams, inquiry centre services and data entry)
* A state-wide pool of Psychological First Aid trained volunteers able to provide personal support to the public and emergency services personnel in response and recovery.
* Significant expertise in the coordination of multi-agency door to door operations (outreach). That expertise includes an outreach training package, extensive experience by Tasmanian personnel in the coordination of outreach operations across the country, and Geospatial Information System (GIS) based planning, coordination and data integration into Tasmanian government data systems. In particular the Red Cross utilisation of GIS in outreach was pioneered in Tasmania, with successful trials for the Bushfire Recovery Unit after the 2013 SE Tasmania fires, recognised at the Australasian Fire Authorities national conference 2015 and featured in the Asia Pacific Fire Magazine (Issue 57 – April 2016)
* Recovery programs and resources in the form of *Recovery Lesson Plans* and teacher support resources, youth recovery messaged MP3 playlists developed in conjunction with JJJ Radio, the *Communicating in Recovery* training and handbook for emergency managers and community leaders, and access to a network of community leaders and recovery professional from past disasters. Personal information resources also include ‘*Dealing with a Major Personal Crisis*’, the ‘*Talking with Children about Emergencies*’ parents guide, ‘*Looking After Yourself And Your Family After A Disaster*’, the ‘*After the Emergency*’ children’s workbook and ‘*Cleaning up After an Emergency (Wind and Water Damage*)’
* An evacuation centre management training program, sheltering standards and operator field guide
* The independent facilitation of disaster exercises or operational reviews (eg Flinders Council tsunami scenario, Northern Midlands Council industrial fire scenario, Meander Valley Council operational exercise, West Coast Council evacuation centre operations, Devonport Council evacuation centre review)
* In-house experience by Tasmanian personnel in the coordination of mass impact relief and recovery operations mobilising ad-hoc workforces of up to 900 people Examples include Cyclones Marcia (30,000 people seen) and Yasi, Victorian Black Saturday fires, Brisbane storms (7,000 homes visited)
* In-house Tasmanian staff experience coordinating large scale community recovery operations, including community recovery programs for the 2006 Tasmanian East Coast and 2013 Blue Mountains fires in NSW, involvement in various recovery operations across most mainland states, and in the writing team for the National Recovery Manual.
* Significant experience in the operation of disaster appeals in partnership with the Tasmanian government.

**State Arrangements relative to the Community Sector**

Arrangements under the Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan have traditionally been structured under the concept of Emergency Management Committees at the state, regional and municipal levels (SEMC, REMCs and MEMCs respectively).

At the state level the SEMC was supported by a Security and Emergency Management Advisory Group which in turn had at times some form of Recovery sub-committee and until 2015 an Emergency Services Volunteering Working Group. The later two appear to have been disbanded and replaced by four sub committees covering *Risk*, *Recovery & Resilience*, *Capacity & Capability* and *Collaborative Leadership* respectively.

At the regional and municipal level the structure of REMCs and MEMCs supported by social recovery sub-committees remains, with the other three recovery elements (economic, build and ecological) covered by direct representation in the respective EMCs.

For community sector organisations active in emergency management this delivers the following engagement points in standing emergency management bodies:

State level:

No engagement point other than the now inactive State Emergency Services Volunteering Working Group (this was an effective model of an active government / community sector partnership cooperatively planning and coordinating sector capacity such as the ‘Join, Learn, Be Ready’ volunteer recruitment campaign)

Regional:

No sector representation exists in the Northern or North West REMCs. The Southern Regional Emergency Management Committee has included Red Cross from 2013 onwards as a result of a Tasmania Police review of the SREMC 2013 fires response. All REMC membership otherwise appears focussed on response agency and critical infrastructure manager membership.

There is also a sub-regional EMC operating across 4 municipalities in the NW (The Mersey-Leven) with no apparent community sector representation. Devonport Council did table a request for Red Cross participation however that was rejected by the committee chair.

The three regional Social Recovery Committees include most community organisations involved in emergency management excluding Surf Lifesaving Tasmania.

It should be noted however that outside of the RSRC-RSRC structure, the network of regional SES coordinators do engage well with Red Cross, especially in the facilitation of cooperative capacity development for local government.

Municipal:

Some municipal emergency management or social recovery committees in the Southern or Northern regions include a degree of membership by community sector emergency management organisations.

In practice the Regional Social Recovery Committees appear to operate with two main functions; to support and engage municipal recovery officers in the execution of their statutory social recovery planning obligations, and administratively as a means of establishing and maintaining contact arrangements for the Tasmanian Health Service chairperson to draw on when there is a need to augment government led relief service provision. In effect, other than for one organisation within the SREMC there is no forum at the regional or state level where community sector emergency management organisations can engage in the development of community or stakeholder resilience, the planning of service capacity against potential needs, or in the coordination of stakeholder activations across an emergency event.

To illustrate the above, social recovery committees do not undertake any of the following: passing on event incident action plans, situation reports or impact briefings to participants, mapping of sector capability or capacity, assessment of sector capacity or capability against potential service needs, allocation of participant roles, establishment or maintenance of activation trigger thresholds and procedures, or any form of strategic or operational planning or recovery. Services have been advised that if they want to know what’s going on they should use the internet and as communicated by one Regional Social Recovery Coordinator this year *“Services were reminded that should they be required to assist during an emergency they will be contacted if and when needed.”* (NWRSRC April 2016 meeting minutes)

Regional social recovery committees also appear to have a limited operational brief in that for larger scale events, once the event ceases to be under REMC response management the social recovery committee stands down from the event. From that point onwards either day to day agency arrangements or an event specific recovery body takes over. However in neither case will there be recovery committee developed initial assessments or planning to facilitate the transition to a new recovery lead.

1. **Red Cross 2016 Flood activities**

A chronological listing of Red Cross engagement and activities across the floods event is contained in Appendix 1. A summary of that engagement is as follows:

In the initial response phase of the floods Red Cross provided registration support in the central north at four Launceston and Meander Valley evacuation centres. Management arrangements generally worked well once activation requests were received and the municipal evacuation centre management worked quite effectively.

It should be noted however that the actual activation notices generally followed rather than preceded the opening of the centres and in the absence of prior planning or situation advice from the REMC. As a result Red Cross was unable to strategically pre-deploy key personnel prior to traffic congestion blocking East West transit across Launceston.

In the North West, despite some information coming from public information streams about evacuation centres opening in a number of municipalities there was no advice regarding potential or actual evacuation centres coming through the social recovery communication channels. Red Cross had to resort to chasing contact with individual councils at a time when they were understandably preoccupied with a fast hanging situation.

Of particular concern in the North West was the way in which registration using the national Register.Find.Reunite forms was undertaken without involving Red Cross. In a repeat of occurrences through the preceding fires, it appears that Red Cross badged forms with related privacy declarations were completed by untrained personnel and withheld from Red Cross following the event. As a result Red Cross has been unable to deliver on its document security responsibilities to Tasmania Police. Red Cross was also not able to enter that evacuee registration data into the Register.Find.Reunite database, depriving Tasmania Police and other emergency managers of a critical dataset for disaster victim identification and missing person investigations.

During the initial response phase, Red Cross and the Tasmanian Council of Churches were requested by the Office of Security and Emergency Management to provide weekend personal support for agency personal and the public at the Launceston Service Tasmania support centre and state TEIS call centre. The feedback from both centres indicated a high degree of appreciation from staff and the public for the support.

In the case of the TEIS deployment, the control authority for that request appears clear cut. For the Launceston Service Tasmania situation however it conflicted with the operational coordination by the Regional Social Recovery Coordinator, leaving the two community organisations in an awkward position.

Of note at this point are the actions of the Public Information Unit. Early in the process the PIU was actively engaging with stakeholders such as Red Cross to collate and disseminate a single source of daily updated key messaging. In this, the PIU appears to have acted on the experience of the 2013 fires response and is to be commended for their proactive approach.

In terms of cost recovery, no discussion occurred at any stage during the deployments around what cost recovery arrangements might or might not apply. As with the preceding fires this year and generally for lower level activations, Red Cross covered all the costs of involvement. The absence of pre-existing cost recovery guidelines or inclusion in the activation request did however leave a vulnerability for both Red Cross and the government should the situation have suddenly escalated (e.g. if the Launceston levee had breached or a large rural dam failed)

Once the initial floodwaters had receded, on request, Red Cross provided a volunteer to assist Launceston City Council with a day of outreach operations and had a team of volunteers conduct a day of outreach at Railton for Kentish Council. Later in the month Kentish Council also contacted Red Cross seeking financial support to assist the residents of Lorinna with transport costs to which a small contribution was made.

In late July the Northern manager of St Vincent De Paul initiated a discussion forum for organisations providing support services in the 63 region, similar to the state level group initiated by the Bushfire Recovery Unit in 2013. This initiative is to be commended and has been highly effective and has enabled Red Cross to direct philanthropic support to address the needs of a number of central north households grappling with infrastructure replacement needs.

In overall recovery terms, where Red Cross was able to assist the assistance occurred through reactive engagement by local government or St Vincent De Paul, with no engagement occurring from either the Recovery task Force or regional emergency management operations. Additionally, no advice was received regarding the floods inquiry call for submissions.

Following the floods, a number of Tasmanian councils approached Red Cross requesting the delivery of Red Cross evacuation centre training. That training took place in November with 75 agency and local government staff and evacuation centre volunteers undertaking training in Hobart and Launceston.

1. **Analysis and Recommendations**

The matters raised in this submission variously relate to strategic state level or regional operational arrangements. A common thread however relates to the structural arrangements defined or otherwise in the Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan.

Three core issues appear to be involved:

Firstly, at a state-wide strategic level, there is currently no place in emergency management arrangements where the experience and needs of the community emergency management sector is included in state level emergency management. This acts to deprive state decision makers of input from a key stakeholder group, in turn creating a communication disconnect in informing that sector, and impeding the development of delivery partnerships with the sector.

An example of the input this sector could make is in the area of community preparedness. Current emergency preparedness in Tasmania varies enormously according to the resources that respective agencies can bring to bear. Flood preparedness risks being lost in the shadow of other higher profile issues such as fire preparedness. Both however have a large degree of commonality, as do tsunami, storm and various other hazard specific preparedness approaches.

Red Cross has long experience in the delivery of all-hazards household emergency preparedness, working with communities to add the ‘Prepare to Recover’ element to compliment essential ‘Prepare to Survive’ agency messaging. Rather than having to reactively liaise with the ten different hazard preparedness areas represented on the Tas Alert site, it would appear more efficient and effective to see a strategic approach driven at a state level involving all stakeholders.

A similar situation applies in respect to public appeals following significant disasters. The community sector is a critical partner in harnessing private and community sector giving towards disaster recovery. Engagement with the community sector in strategic capacity development would allow for the development of pre-event guidelines and governance models for the timely decision making and partnership establishment of appeals following disaster events.

*Recommendation one: That Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to ensure meaningful community sector emergency management representation is included in state level emergency management bodies*

*Recommendation two: That the Recovery and Risk sub-committee to SEMC be tasked with developing a strategic framework that guides the cooperative delivery of preparedness messaging across all agencies or organisations active in emergency preparedness.*

*Recommendation three: That public appeal governance models, operating principles and sample processes be established as a standing resource to enable the speedy establishment of public appeals as required following disaster events.*

The second issue relates to the perceived inability of the current regional arrangements to adequately span the three main stakeholder sectors (government emergency management and infrastructure, non-government infrastructure and community emergency management) across the prevention to recovery continuum. Apart from the effective exclusion of the community sector from active participation in emergency management, this situation also creates a potential disjuncture in recovery transition. The risk in this regard is that the response focussed REMC structure with its split membership in respect to recovery, is unlikely to contain either the experience or timeframe of involvement to undertake the initial recovery planning essential to any subsequently appointed recovery body such as the Floods Recovery Task Force.

*Recommendation four: That, drawing on the new state SEMC sub-committee structure, Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to replace the current REMC-RSRC regional committee structure with one that brings together the government, commercial and community sectors for the coordinated development of resilience, capacity development and inter-agency control across the full prevention to recovery continuum.*

The third core issue relates to the inadequacy of current arrangements in providing community sector emergency management organisations with clarity of expected roles, activation procedures and control/command structures. The inherent risk here, observed in the floods and other disaster events, is that available capacity and expertise is under-utilised and where it is utilised, involving significant inefficiencies. Uncertainties between local government and state agencies over cost responsibilities when engaging community sector services appear to unnecessarily interfere with the timing of service requests, and the overall uncertainty of utilisation hinders community sector investment in emergency management capacity.

*Recommendation five: That Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to define the control and command lines between organisations, agencies and management bodies for the provision of services involving non-government providers (eg personal support, catering, pastoral care, spontaneous volunteers, registration, clothing, donated goods and outreach).*

*Recommendation six: That Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements be amended to require operational planning at a regional level to establish utilisation trigger points and expectations, deployment procedures, capacity auditing and cost recovery expectations and conditions with non-government agency emergency service providers operating in each region.*

1. **Appendix 1 – Chronology of Red Cross engagement in the 2016 floods response and recovery operations.**

6 June

* Severe weather event information from facebook/BOM/TAS ALERT. No situation reports or incident action plans from REMCs or RSRCs
* SMS request to Tas Police for Situation Report
* Contacted NW SES, advised to put Red Cross volunteers on standby
* Contacted NRSRC chair requesting info, advised that parts of Launceston & Deloraine Caravan Park inundated
* Team activated to Deloraine evacuation Centre at request of Meander Valley Council
* Red Cross team activated to Albert Hall evacuation centre on request from Launceston City Council
* Liaised with Break O Day re potential East Coast needs
* Register.Find.Reunite paper registrations commenced in New Norfolk by Derwent Valley Council
* Emergency Services Manager visited Albert Hall evacuation centre. NRSRC Chair advised that planning would occur on 7/6/15 around possible evacuation centre operations on 8/6/16

7 June

* Attended SREMC advised of situation for Southern Floods.
* Reports from volunteers of evacuation centres announced at Utas and Silverdome
* Red Cross teams deployed to UTAS & Silverdome evacuation centres on NRSRC request for immediate registration support as the centres were already open
* Tas Police request activation of Register.Find.Reunite for the Northern Tasmanian floods

8 June

* Launceston evacuation centre update received from Launceston City Council

9 June

* Premier and Cabinet request for Red Cross and Council of Churches provision of personal support services for public and emergency services personnel at Launceston Service TAS and Hobart TEIS call centre

10-13 June

* Red Cross / Council of Churches provide personal support services for public and emergency services personnel at Launceston Service TAS and Hobart TEIS call centre

12 June

* NRSRC meeting with an update by providers on the activities to date. No incident action planning or situation reports distributed. Red Cross offers recovery outreach coordination and personal support assistance.
* Requested registration numbers and Red Cross registration forms from NW SES Coordinator. Advised to contact NWRSRC chair
* Public Information Unit commences daily updating of key messaging with emergency management stakeholders
* Requested registration numbers and forms from NWRSRC chair. Advised that registration forms had been forwarded to local police as Red Cross had no jurisdiction over the forms and for Red Cross to contact NW regional police command if further action required
* NW SES Coordinator and Tasmania Police Registration manager of NW situation.

14 June

* Red Cross personnel at TEIS call centre and Launceston Service Tasmania stood down

15 June

* Request from Launceston City council for a Red Cross volunteer to support LCC outreach operations. One volunteer attended per request.

21 June

* Approached by Kentish Council to assist with Lorinna resident transport costs for medical services. Funding support arranged through the council.

27 July

Task Force Recovery Expo held at Deloraine. Contacted Task Force requesting space for Red Cross to provide recovery support information but told the Task Force had already identified the service providers and that there was insufficient space to add Red Cross.

**Huonville:**

In response to situation reporting from the SREMC in early July Red Cross contacted Huon Council, established liaison arrangements and provided soft copies of flood clean up guides.

**Railton outreach**

At the request of Kentish Council, three Australian Red Cross Emergency Services volunteers conducted Outreach in flood-affected Railton on 25th June 2016.  Twenty-three properties (residences and businesses) were visited. Of these, 15 were not at home, and 8 were at home. Approx. 3 residences were not habitable. No direct referrals were made, however information sheets produced by Kentish Council and Red Cross resources were provided.

**East Coast:**

During the flooding in Break O’Day municipality Red Cross liaised with the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator and had support teams and flood cleanup information on standby at times of high flood risk.

**Appeals:**

A large number of organisations announced appeals shortly after the floods. Red Cross resolved that there were an amply range of opportunities to direct public giving to the floods recovery and did not establish a separate Red Cross appeal.