

Disaster Liaison Officer Proposal

SCOPE

To provide a level of resource and coordination for the varying types of disasters the people of NSW commonly experience. The Teams would be a mobile, flexible workforce that can travel to other affected areas as required at short notice.

BASIC CONCEPT

Geographically placed small teams of people who will become “owners” of their area of operation. In the advent of a disaster, such as earthquake, bushfire, flood or other, they could be “called up” and put their disaster liaison skills to use.

OWNERSHIP

The team members will liaise with, and form relationships with, local resources within their respective area of operations. Resources should include:

1. Local councils – to provide information within the LGA, resources to include use of Civic Centres and other venues as Evac Centres. Other resources to include council depots for storage, ranger/pound services for animal accommodation.
2. Local Schools – possible use of school halls and similar resources for emergency accommodation.
3. Local hotel/motel resources – to be used as local emergency accommodation, particularly for those who would not be able to stay in other forms of emergency accommodation, ie, elderly and disabled.
4. Local boarding kennels and landholders – emergency animal accommodation.
5. Local loins club, CWA or similar organisations – to assist with emergency food preparation.
6. Other government organisations – Service NSW, SES, RFS etc as required.

Once contact has been made with relevant agencies/businesses, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) could be formulated between the Disaster Liaison team and the agency/business, to be called upon as necessary.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF OPERATION – LOCAL TEAMS

The geographical locations of the teams would focus on known areas of natural disasters, including flooding and bushfire affected areas (historical).

It would be prudent to have varying sized areas – for example the eastern sides of the great dividing range has a lot higher rainfall, and a larger risk of bushfires and floods. Coupled with larger population centres, there should be smaller geographical areas of operation per team.

Regional centres, such as Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Albury, Broken Hill, Tamworth, Dubbo etc can coordinate over a much larger area.

For example, a Wollongong based Disaster Liaison team would potentially cover from Bulli to the Shellharbour area, whereas the Wagga Wagga team could potentially cover most of the Riverina district.

Wollongong, Sydney and Newcastle areas would require multiple teams, based on the larger risks encountered.

BASIC SCOPE OF OPERATIONS

Once established, the Disaster Liaison teams would have regular meetings with external stakeholders (RFS, SES, Police, Councils) to form intelligence about the expected upcoming events (ie, bushfire risk areas, weather events such as el nino etc) and to prepare for the seasons/predicted events appropriately.

Communication with the relationship stakeholders, listed above, would be paramount in times of emergency and disaster (especially during the lead up to the potential emergencies).

The teams would be required to contact external stakeholders, to meet with them on a semi regular basis, form relationships and strike up MOU agreements with them.

In the advent of a serious emergency, these external stakeholders may be called upon at short notice to provide assistance in their respective fields:

- Motel/Hotels
- Animal boarding facilities
- Other government and non government agencies that can provide support as per their MOU

WEBSITE

It is apparent that during times of disaster, the public “pitch in” to help. Quite often, these people will organize donations from friends/family/work colleagues, and then transport these donations to areas of need.

Once they arrive at the affected area/s, they often find that the evac centres do not need more donations, as typically they are inundated. Sometimes the evac centre volunteers will request for the donations to be taken to another affected area.

Quite often, the quality of the donated items are not appropriate.

It is suggested a website for this proposed function be set up. This website will be able to guide persons wishing to donate both goods and services (mainly labor).

The website could also be used to “track” who is coming to an affected area, what they are bringing, what kind of skills they have (for those wishing to volunteer their skills and labour).

DONATIONS

It would be prudent to put a list of essential items that the general public could purchase and donate in times of need. All too often the wrong items are donated (for example, childrens toys, books etc). The following items would be considered essential. For example:

- Water
- Baby food
- Non Perishable canned food
- Toiletries
- Towels/soap etc
- Generators
- Cleaning equipment
- Portable camp beds/blow up mattresses
- Blankets/sleeping bags

SERVICES/VOLUNTEER LABOUR

The website could also have a requirement for people wishing to attend affected areas to register themselves (and any trade or other skills). This would allow for the Disaster Liaison officers know a number of important factors:

- Who is coming
- Length of their stay
- Is accommodation required
- Skills
- Equipment

Knowing the above information would make it easier for the Disaster liaison teams to coordinate which volunteers could be useful in an affected areas, and send them to the tasks accordingly.

The website would be a “live” version, so if a donation request form is filled out, the Liaison officer can guide the donator in what is required. This would take some education for the general public – it could be used as a basic app on a mobile phone. Education to the public could be along the lines of “if you are planning on donating goods or service/labour, please visit the website for information and advice, and to register BEFORE you attend an affected area”.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

This proposed Disaster Liaison team could be placed under the command of the newly formed Resilience Department, headed by Shane Fitzsimmons.

A very basic structure could be:

- NSW Disaster Liaison General Manager (responsible for the whole Function) x 1
- NSW disaster Liaison North Region Manager (will manage a complete geographical area from approximately the Hawkesbury River to the Queensland border, and all areas to the west) x 1
- NSW Disaster Liaison South Region Manager (will manage a complete geographical area from approximately Kiama to the Victorian Border, and all areas to the West)
- NSW Disaster Liaison Sydney Region Manager (will manage the geographical area of Wollongong, Central Coast and the greater Sydney area) x 1
- Zone Managers – will report to their respective Region Manager. The Zone managers main duties will be to ensure their geographically based teams have a formulated disaster plan,

have formed relationships, have MOU agreements with the appropriate stakeholders, have the correct training.

- Area Manager – manages a small team of Disaster Liaison officers. Ensures that relationships and resource goals have been met in the area managers locality, and that they can be relied on in times of need.
- Disaster liaison Officers – duties as directed by the Area Manager

EQUIPMENT AND PREMISES

It is proposed that each Disaster Liaison team has a fully functional 4wd utility vehicle, that would be capable of travelling into disaster areas.

The Disaster Liaison team would require a type of factory unit/warehouse in a safe area in their base town. This could be used to store emergency equipment (ie, generators, sleeping equipment etc) that could be utilized in an emergency

The premises could possibly be used as a command and control centre in the case of a disaster

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

It would be proposed that the Disaster Liaison Officers could be trained in certain areas, to help mitigate the risks of entering a disaster area:

- First aid
- Chainsaw operation
- 4wd course
- Basic firefighting course
- Operate small boat
- Small engine repair and maintenance
- Electrical safety

Ongoing training to be identified and implemented as required.

Regards,

Wattle Flat

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