

# Exercise 'When the Taps Don't Turn On'

## Briefing Note

## Exercise In Confidence

### Exercise Title:

*When the Taps Don't Turn On: A Strategic Discussion on Water Disruption, Impact and Resilience*

### Purpose:

This discussion exercise will explore the strategic consequences of a large-scale water disruption across the Wheatbelt Emergency Management District. It is not an operational exercise and does not test response or restoration arrangements.

LEMC members participating are asked to contribute through the lens of:

- Community impact
- Governance and assurance
- Business continuity and service delivery
- Recovery readiness
- Prevention and preparedness for future events

The exercise is designed to explore patterns, assumptions and system behaviour under prolonged stress.

### What the Exercise Is (and Is Not):

This exercise is:

- Strategic and discussion based
- Consequence focused
- Designed to surface assumptions, gaps and strengths

This exercise is *NOT*:

- A test of emergency response procedures
- A technical review of water infrastructure
- A performance assessment of agencies or individuals

### Exercise Objectives

By the conclusion of the exercise, participants will have:

1. Developed a shared understanding of the consequences of a prolonged water disruption for communities and essential services.
2. Reflected on system interdependencies, redundancy and fragility under sustained stress.
3. Identified current preparedness and recovery strengths and gap at a district level.
4. Generated practical, forward-looking resilience priorities for consideration and action.

### A Note on Hazard Responsibility

Water disruption is not included as one of the 28 prescribed hazards by the State. This however, does not mean water disruption is a risk, nor that we shouldn't use it as a scenario to test our district resilience. What it does mean however, is that there is no dedicated Hazard Management Agency, or State Hazard Plan to guide decision making around prevention, preparedness, response or recovery activities. Should a water disruption occur and meet the criteria of emergency conditions, the HMA

### Exercise In Confidence

would be determined based on what has caused the disruption. This might mean that if weather damaged infrastructure causing a disruption, DFES would take HMA responsibilities, if it was a contamination it would fall to Dept Health / WA Country Health Services, a terrorism act would mean WA Police Force assume control etc. It would mean the HMA's job was to coordinate all the stakeholders able to contribute to the minimisation of harm and impact, as well as the restoration of services. If a disruption was caused by something outside of the prescribed hazards (for example, like a supply issue), but still met the criteria of an emergency then the coordination of the PPRR elements would be managed through the State or District Emergency Coordinator in WA Police Force.

### Participant Preparation (Please consider ahead of time)

Participants are encouraged to reflect on the following **before attending**. You do not need to prepare formal responses or bring documents, but you will be called upon and asked to contribute to the discussion.

1. Community & Impact
  - a. Which communities, sectors or cohorts rely most heavily on continuous water supply?
  - b. Where would impacts escalate fastest if disruption lasted weeks, not days?
2. Continuity & Dependencies
  - a. What critical services would your organisation or LGA struggle to sustain?
  - b. What critical services or functions depend directly or indirectly on water availability?
  - c. What assumptions does your continuity planning rely on (e.g. access to water, workforce availability, transport)?
3. Redundancy & Vulnerability
  - a. Where do you *think* redundancy exists?
  - b. Where might hidden single points of failure exist?
  - c. What do you think our district tends to underestimate when disruptions last longer than expected?
4. Recovery & Resilience
  - a. What recovery pressures would emerge early?
  - b. What preventative or preparedness gaps does a scenario like this expose?
  - c. Where does Wheatbelt resilience genuinely come from, and where is it more fragile than we like to acknowledge?

### Participation Expectations

- Engage openly and constructively
- Speak from a systems and district perspective
- Challenge assumptions respectfully
- Focus on learning, sharing and improvement

### Logistics

- Format: facilitated discussion
- Duration 60 minutes



**Exercise In Confidence**

- Materials: provided on the day
- Lunch: provided on the day
- Location: Northam Co-Location Building, Henry Street, Northam.

Any questions or queries, please contact Community Emergency management Manager John Idland  
0448 008 653 or [john.idland@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:john.idland@dfes.wa.gov.au).