

# 'Beyond the Gate'

## Aged Care Emergency Support Network

### Building resilience

The 'Beyond the Gate' – Aged Care Emergency Support Project emerged from the City of Mandurah 2014/15 AWARE Umbrella Project, this involved a review of Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs).

The project team set out to develop an Aged Care Support Plan and facilitate the signing of an emergency management MOU. Through research, workshopping, networking, ongoing persistent engagement, many more benefits were realised, such as;

- Better understanding of our vulnerable communities
- Appreciating the challenges facing the aged care community (e.g. dementia clients)
- Understanding the reality, capability & capacity of evacuation centres, hospitals, families
- Strengthened & reinvigorated aged care community network
- Increased level of consultation & cooperation between facilities
- Mutual aid agreement to strengthen community capacity
- Increased internal consultation

Initial research of the aged care facilities indicated that only 16% had considered evacuation beyond the gate or muster point in their emergency plans. In contrast, 84% of the facilities now have a formal arrangement in place by partnering to MOU.

The key outcomes achieved through the Beyond the Gate Project are:

- Clear, concise and practical Vulnerable Community Support Plan
- Resource register & maps to aid emergency planning & response
- Toolbox with resident transfer forms
- Emergency Cupboard Contents List (re Power Outage)
- The 'Beyond the Gate' emergency evacuation workshop
- Heightened accreditation for RACs
- Emergency management and 'beyond the gate' planning introduced into pre-existing networks

The project content and outcomes were shared with the following for information and review;

- DFES Community Engagement Unit
- Aged Care & Independent Living Facilities
- Community Development Team
- Local Emergency Management Committee
- Bush Fire Advisory Committee
- Red Cross
- WA Local Government Emergency Management Advisory Group
- State Emergency Management Committee

The AWARE Umbrella Project (and Beyond the Gate) were evaluated against the principles of the National Disaster Resilient Strategy and the International Public Participation Spectrum, encouraging effective engagement and empowerment.

### **Promoting a Shared Responsibility**

A shared responsibility was encouraged throughout the project and was the fundamental reason behind the MOU. The 'in principle' agreement demonstrated the willingness for resource sharing between partnering aged care facilities and care providers during emergency situations.

From the outset the City of Mandurah encouraged information sharing and promoted the work of other agencies. This collaborative approach presented the community with an 'emergency services' united front, consistent messaging, making the most of agency specific expertise. At the 'Beyond the Gate' workshop, DFES were invited to talk on the At-Risk training program which was being developed and both DFES and Red Cross publications were provided to attendees.

The Beyond the Gate project targeted those who could affect change, namely the facility managers of aged care and independent living facilities. It also aimed to raise the level of understanding for those working with vulnerable communities such as community development personnel, hospital and community care providers. Learning and experience within the sector was shared with workshop participants i.e. earthquake and power outage.

The project team suspected the aged care sector would be difficult to engage, as managers are under a great deal of pressure and may be reluctant to share organisational 'weaknesses' with the authorities.

The engagement approach required was flexible, varied and definitely tenacious, it included the following methods;

- Email surveys and feed request
- Collaborating with internal staff (Community Development)
- Identifying and joining existing aged care networks
- Individual 30min 'intro' sessions with all facility managers
- Workshopping (video, shared experience, scenario, emergency planning activity)
- Continued, inclusive consultation (even to those who declined/ failed to respond previously)
- Unscheduled 'drop ins' to engage the unresponsive
- MOU and resource register progress updates (to all)
- Celebratory morning tea and Xmas function
- Print media

### **Aging population**

Mandurah is a popular retirement destination, resulting in a demographic that is quite unique. The 2011 Census indicated that 20.4% of the population is 65yrs+, compared to the state average of 12.3%, this figure is expected to rise to 23% by 2021. These figures present major concerns for emergency services and a unique set of challenges in relation to mass elderly evacuation/sheltering.

This project was the first of its kind in Mandurah and its success lies in its simplicity, asking:

- Who are we dealing with?
- How prepared are they (and their families)?
- What resources do they have?
- Are they willing to share these resources in an emergency event?

The resulting MOU formalised the gentlemen's agreements that existed between a small number of facilities. It also provided a framework for facilities to assist one another, and do so with confidence that the support was endorsed by senior management.

To a certain extent 'shock tactics' were used to gain the attention and buy-in from facility managers. Content shared at the workshop and forwarded to non-attendees included video and articles relating to the 'Deadly Choices at Memorial' (hospital) where involuntary euthanasia of patients occurred following Hurricane Katrina. This provoked discussion on evacuation triaging, of which there were a variety of views. Following the sharing of this information, the MOU signatories doubled from 8 to 16 facilities.

The project was also unique in that the Vulnerable Communities Support Plan's Resource Register refers to all aged care and independent living facilities in Mandurah, identifying:

- Which facilities are/are not parties to the MOU
- How many residents/beds/units are present
- Level of know family/friend support
- Transportation capability and arrangements
- Catering capability and arrangements
- Pharmaceutical providers

This, combined with the mapping provides an 'at a glance' aid for emergency planning and response.

### **Sustainable outcomes**

This project has been documented via the Vulnerable Communities Support Plan within the Mandurah LEMPs. These arrangements are reviewed every two years, exercised annually and contact lists updated regularly. The City aims for their LEMPs to be clear, concise, up to date, operational documents that capture the current emergency arrangements for the area.

The Beyond the Gate project, highlighted the Principles from National Disaster Resilience (as demonstrated in the workshop presentation attached), it also shared the 27 recognised hazards within WA, with related WESTPLANS. In doing this the project team raised awareness of the potential disasters we should be planning for and the importance of the MOU resource sharing and networking.

The emergency management team will continue to maintain the currency of the MOU, Resource Register and provide emergency planning and preparedness support, via:

- Mandurah Active Aging Network (pre-existing) - quarterly
- Ramsay (Peel Health Campus) Aged Care Network (pre-existing) - quarterly
- Present residents/family within the facilities – on request
- Participate in exercising – on request/or as determined by LEMC
- Joint agency workshops
- Annual Seniors Week event
- Coffee Catch-ups on request

Aged care is one sector within the Vulnerable Communities Support Plan. In the future, the City intends to extend the project to other vulnerable community groups, such as schools and day care centres. They cater for large number of potentially at-risk people, whose emergency plans typically do not go Beyond the Gate.