INTRODUCTION
The Western Australian (WA) Department of Health (DOH) has an obligation within WESTPLAN - Health to ensure that an efficient health response can be activated to meet health disaster and emergency management requirements.

AIM
Intense media and public interest can be anticipated following the impact of a disaster or major incident involving multiple casualties. The following actions will assist with the handling of the media and public inquiries.

RESPONSIBILITY
Operational Directive 0113/08 outlines WA DOH media communication. During an emergency event, as during normal business, the overall responsibility for the preparation of DOH media statements and coordination of media inquiries lies with the DOH Public Affairs branch.

This branch will specifically coordinate activities at a Statewide level, including:
- providing up-to-date information to media outlets and service their inquiries;
- providing media management and communication assistance to senior staff involved in an emergency event;
- coordinating community announcements to be disseminated via Western Australian media outlets;
- liaising with public relations staff across the health system;
- liaising with Government Media Office; and
- liaising with media and public relations staff from other government and non-government agencies involved in any emergency event (eg. WA Police, FESA, St John Ambulance).

If additional communication costs are likely to be incurred by the DOH, as a result of an emergency event, this should be discussed with the State Health Coordinator.

In order to effectively carry out these responsibilities, the Manager Public Affairs or nominated delegate will attend the State Health Emergency Operations Centre, if activated. The Manager Public Affairs or nominated delegate will also attend key meetings within the DOH in relation to the disaster or major incident where relevant.
RELEASE OF INFORMATION
The DOH Public Affairs branch will work with Local, State and Commonwealth government agencies, as well as non-government organisations, to coordinate the media response and release of public information to the disaster or major incident. Media releases and public information must be restricted to information that specifically relates to the functions of individual organisations and to areas under an organisation’s direct control.

The DOH must cooperate with the Hazard Management Agency (HMA) responsible for the management of media and public information during an emergency, as specified by the Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA). Public information released from the DOH must be provided to the HMA’s Public Affairs branch, who will issue media releases and prepare media releases as required.

NOTIFICATION OF DISASTERS OR MAJOR INCIDENTS
The State Health Coordinator or delegate is responsible for notifying the DOH Public Affairs branch of disasters or incidents, which are likely to result in media and/or public interest. The DOH Public Affairs branch can be contacted on 9222 4333 (all hours).

STATE PUBLIC INFORMATION EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUPPORT PLAN
(WESTPLAN – PUBLIC INFORMATION)
If WESTPLAN - Public Information is activated, coordination of media and public information between Western Australian agencies will be in accordance with the provisions of the plan.

WESTPLAN - Public Information outlines arrangements for the DOH to request support for providing and managing public information via the State Emergency Public Information Coordinator (SEPIC). The role of SEPIC is performed by the Director of Media and Public Affairs, Western Australia Police.


MONITORING AND REVIEW
The Senior Policy Officer, Disaster Preparedness and Management Unit is responsible for the monitoring and review of this document on an annual basis.

Dr Peter Flett
DIRECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WA

This information is available in alternative formats upon request from a person with a disability.