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IS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONSIDERED A COMPONENT OF BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT?

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Abstract

Emergency Management (EM) and Business Continuity Management (BCM) frameworks incorporate measures of strategic and operational aspects. Defined within a number of Australian and international standards as well as guidelines, such concepts may be integrated to provide increased resilience for disruptive events. However, it has been found that there is some degree of misalignment of concept integration amongst security and EM bodies of knowledge. In line with cognitive psychology exemplar-based concepts, such misalignments may be associated with a lack of precision in communality in the approach to EM and BCM.

This article presents stage 1 of a two-stage study. Stage 1 comprised a critique of international literature. Findings indicate that EMs operational function, as an initial response, is saliently considered integrated with the response strategies of BCM. However, the strategic link between BCM and EM concept integration are still distinguished by many separate views. As such, this study has concluded that EM is considered an operational component of BCM by the majority; however, with a broader misalignment of strategic integration. Understanding underpinnings of such misalignment will aid in raising the standards and application of professionalism within Security, EM and BCM domains, supporting clarification and definition of professional boundaries.

Keywords

Business Continuity Management; Emergency Management; Response; Concepts

INTRODUCTION

Business Continuity Management (BCM) has evolved to become a necessary component of contemporary corporate security. The integration of Emergency Management (EM) within this concept of managing business continuity has featured in numerous discussions, where lack of terminology consensus has caused confusion and debate (Hiles, 2011, p. 97; Standards Australia, 2006, p. 7). Within the Australian context, it has previously been articulated that EM may form part of BCMs response strategies, in line with the theory of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) (Standards Australia, 2004a, p. 76, 2006, p. 78). In recent years, however, this integration of EM within BCM has been excluded with the release of an industry standard (Standards Australia, 2010).

Even so, the importance of aligning both concepts has been highlighted in various contemporary works (ASIS International, 2010, p. 17; Business Continuity Institute, 2010, p. 10; Craighead, 2009, p. 494). Furthermore, the prominence of concept integration is salient in a number of additional academia, industry standards and guides (Fay, 2011, p. 257; International Organization for Standardization, 2011, p. 2; National Fire Protection Association, 2013, p. 5; Saima, 2011, p. 57; Talbot & Jakeman, 2009, p. 233; Vellani, 2007, p. 179). Such works, however, include a degree of dissimilarity in terms of where integration should occur. These contradictions indicate the importance of the distinction between the concepts BCM and EM, and as such, raise concern in regard to the concepts current integration across the Australian security industry.

This paper presents stage 1 of a two-stage research project to investigate the relationship between BCM and EM within the Australian context. Although standards and guides exist, there are dissimilarities between modern approaches to the integration of the concepts; these are discussed in this paper, which argues that the divergences are a result of a lack of precision in communality of the approach to EM and BCM.

Significance of the Study

Business Continuity Management (BCM) has become a vital concept for mitigating harm associated with disruptive events (Elliott, Swartz, & Herbane, 2010; Hotchkiss, 2010). Within the Australian context, it has previously been articulated that Emergency Management (EM) may form part of BCM's response strategies in line with the theory of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) (Standards Australia, 2004a, p. 76, 2006, p. 78). With the release of a business continuity standard, however, the integrated elements of EM have been excluded (Standards Australia, 2010). Even so, it has been found that additional standards and industry guides still recognise the importance of aligning and integrating both concepts (ASIS International, 2010, p. 17; Business Continuity Institute, 2010, p. 10; International Organization for Standardization, 2011, p. 2; National Fire Protection Association, 2013, p. 5).

In security literature, a general agreement on the integration of EM within BCM has been identified. Such integration, however, has been viewed in contradictory ways (Craighead, 2009, p. 494; Fay, 2011, p. 257; Saima, 2011, p. 57; Talbot & Jakeman, 2009, p. 233; Vellani, 2007, p. 179). These contradictions include dissimilar views on the degree of integration and EMs role as tactical, operational or strategic concept. Consequently, such contradictions may cause confusion in regard to implementing EM within the broader BCM concept (Standards Australia, 2006, p. 7).

Therefore, in order to clarify EMs role within BCM, gaining an understanding of the identified contradictions is necessary. Such understanding would enable clarification for better direction of corporate practice, more effective delivery of internal education and accurate informing of organisational policy. Also, broader industrial benefits would include increased professionalism with a defined body of knowledge, with clear operating boundaries and defined career paths.

Research Question

The study aimed to identify how the contradictory views of Emergency Managements integration within Business Continuity Management are reflected throughout the Western Australian professional security industry. Therefore, the study put forward the Research Question: *To what degree does Western Australian Security Managers consider Emergency Management to be a component of Business Continuity Management?*

BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is a concept that embodies the process of identifying potential harm to an organisation and increasing resilience in relation to such recognised risks, which facilitates stabilisation for contextually driven key objectives to be achieved (Smith, 2003; Standards Australia, 2004a, 2006, 2010). As identified by Smith and Brooks (2012, p. 199), the occurrence of a disruptive event is likely to cause a degree of harm, particularly where there has not been sufficient preparation. Striving to mitigate such harm, the concept of BCM has become one of importance (Elliott et al., 2010; Hotchkiss, 2010). For example, Hiles (2011, p. xxix) observed that the United Kingdom economy is losing £11.1 billion a year to major disruptions due to lack of BCM. Furthermore, BCM has also proven to be a concept associated with reducing loss of life and property damage in a disruptive event (Hiles, 2011).

Thus, BCM is vital to minimise harm associated with disruptive events to organisations and personnel. Forming part of such minimisation of harm is Emergency Management, which in the past was articulated as part of BCM response strategies (Australian Standards, 2006, p. 78). Current Australian standards, however, indicate that such an integration of the concepts should not be considered (Australian Standards, 2010).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Knowledge is necessary for human beings in order to adequately interact with the dynamic surroundings of contemporary society (Eysenck & Keane, 2000). In essence, knowledge may be defined as the foundation of facts and information (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013). Knowledge expands beyond methodical evidence (Clancey, 1997), is constructed on evolution (Eysenck & Keane, 2000) and built on previous knowledge (Novak, 1993).

Gaining knowledge is related to the structure of memory, where memory requires a certain form of knowledge-organisation in order to distinguish irrelevant details from those of importance (Eysenck & Keane, 2000). Thus, solitary knowledge acquisition is not sufficient. Therefore, organising and categorising is necessary for retaining knowledge. The final product of knowledge organisation may be considered as concepts (Eysenck & Keane, 2000).

In line with the theory of exemplar-based concepts, concepts are products of an individual's or groups' experiences (M. A. Erickson & Kruschke, 1998; Shin & Nosofsky, 1992). If a concept cannot be fully comprehended, related experiences incarnate the foundation of understanding, thus, although mechanisms of previous memorisations aim to compensate for lack of knowledge (Eysenck & Keane, 2000; Rips & Collins, 1993), standardisation of concepts is required for universal interpretation. In a case point, Draper (2012, p. 284) suggested that standards and guidelines aim to provide concept communality; specifying an "approach to a specific subject area" as well as supporting concept implementation. As pointed out by Blades (2011, p. 22), alignment of concept comprehension may encourage professional discussions, and as such, facilitate a common understanding.

METHODOLOGY

To address the Research Question, the study employed an interpretative analysis divided into two distinct stages (Figure 1). Stage 1 used a literature critique, reviewing international literature and developing conceptual visualization maps. Stage 2, to be undertaken at a later date, will use semi-structured interviews. Qualitative aspects addressed, through an assortment of literature and interview questions, related to the integration of Emergency Management within Business Continuity Management.

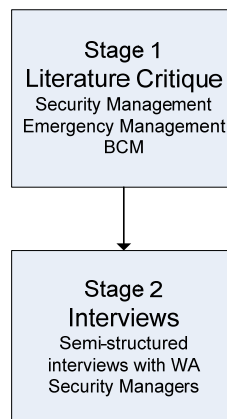


Figure 1: Study Design

Data Analysis

Analysis of literature was conducted to "discover commonalities, differences and similarities" between individual views of the investigated concepts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 539). This analysis used literature and will later use individual data collected from interviews, amalgamated to focus on key themes (Cohen et al., 2011).

Reliability and Validity

As pointed out by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 204), a primary cause of invalidity in qualitative studies is bias, which may be defined as understating or overstating the “true value” of a theme or attribute. To address such issues, the study has analysed the characteristics of the literature, researchers, respondents and substantive content of the questions. As such, the study recognises the potential of bias within each of the elements that form part of the study. Furthermore, understanding preconceived attitudes and expectations of the researcher to seek literature or participants’ responses supporting such opinions is addressed through the use of a priori process.

In terms of reliability, Oppenheim (1992, p. 147) suggested that wording is important, as changes may cause the question to be understood differently. Therefore, the study maintained a priori approach in the literature critique as well as in the later interview guide (Cohen et al., 2011). Validity used face validity and convergence concept measures (Erickson, 1986).

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONCEPT RELATIONSHIPS

Stage 1 of the study critiqued international literature (Table 1). Business Continuity Management and Emergency Management concepts were extracted and reviewed, for the purpose of critiquing the similar and dissimilar use of terms as well as expressed degree of concept integration.

| Publication | Publication Type | Publication Date |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| International Standard Organisation 22313 Standard for BCM Systems | Standard | 2011 |
| National Fire Protection Association 1600 Standard on disaster/emergency management and business continuity programs | Standard | 2013 |
| Emergency Management | Journal | 2011 |
| Contemporary Security Management | Book | 2011 |
| High-rise security and fire life safety | Book | 2009 |
| Security risk management body of knowledge | Book | 2009 |
| Strategic security management: A risk assessment guide for decision makers | Book | 2007 |

Table 1: Critiqued Literature

Contradictory Views of Concept Integration

The International Standard Organisation ISO 22313 Standard for Business Continuity Management (BCM) Systems (2011, p. vii) stated that BCM involves the “capability for an effective response that safeguards the interests of key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value-creating activities”. With the standard’s declaration on how the BCM is efficient in responding to sudden and gradual incidents, the approach to incorporating Emergency Management (EM) aspects within BCM seems apparent (International Organization for Standardization, 2011, p. 2).

Likewise, the National Fire Protection Association 1600 standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (2013, p. 45) embraced the approach of incorporating EM aspects within Business Continuity. It was highlighted that both concepts incorporate systems that aim to sustain operational continuity by appropriate preparation, response and recovery (National Fire Protection Association, 2013). Within these works, EM was defined as an “ongoing process to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, maintain continuity during, and to recover from, an incident that threatens life, property, operations, or the environment” (National Fire Protection Association, 2013, p. 5).

From the above discussion, Figure 2 was developed to provide an overview of the various views of the concepts tactical, operational and strategic integration across the reviewed standards. EM and BCM standards appear to integrate a variety of aspects within the primary concept. Although the elements of responding to emergencies are consistently articulated throughout the reviewed works, it is the additional strategic aspects of the concept that may be considered as integrated within BCM that remain dissimilar.

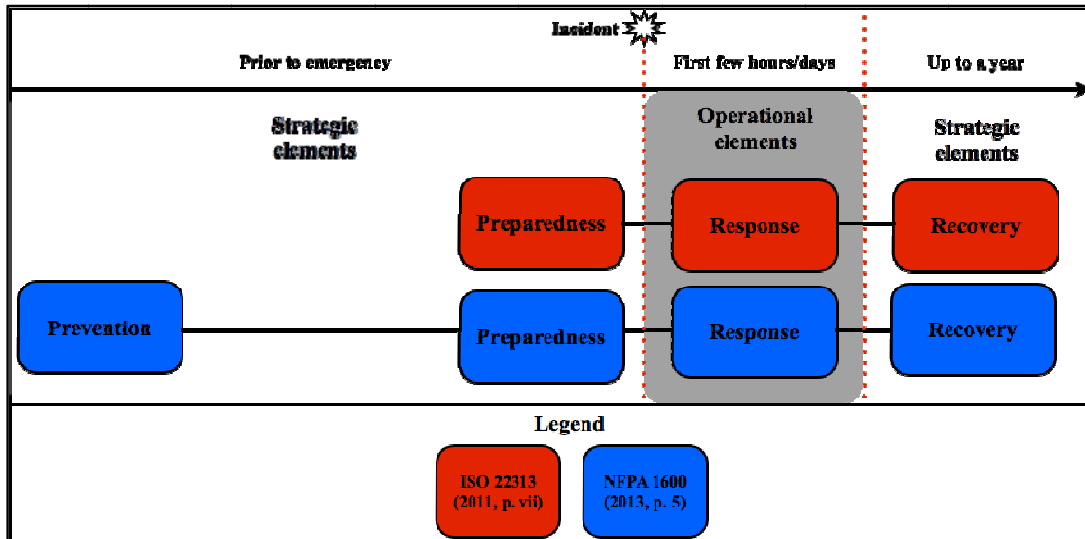


Figure 2: EM as a component of BCM according to reviewed standards

EM was defined by Craighead (2009, p. 494) as the “management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness [and] response”. Craighead (2009, p. 494) stressed that EM only should address the preparedness prior to, as well as to, the initial response to an emergency. Thus, it was accentuated that EM only embraced the immediate post-incident elements of recovery, where post-incident rehabilitation should be embodied within business continuity planning, extending beyond the scope of EM (Craighead, 2009).

Contrary to Craighead (2009, p. 494), Vellani (2007, p. 179) considered EM an integrated component of BCM. In practice, however, Vellani (2007, p. 179) suggested that EM is a reactive concept, which only should address an emergency “that is imminent or has occurred”, and should not mitigate an emergency that “can still be prevented”. Thus, in contrast to other authors (Craighead, 2009, p. 494; Saima, 2011, p. 57; Talbot & Jakeman, 2009, p. 233), Vellani (2007, p. 179) stressed that EM only encompasses actions following incidents.

Talbot and Jakeman (2009, p. 233) argued that EM is the “discipline that involves preparing, supporting and rebuilding an organization when natural or man-made emergencies occur”. The authors (2009, p. 233) argued that EM and BCM have a significant relationship, however, distinct differences between the frameworks were articulated; EM aims to preserve life as well as property, which BCM does not. Even though dissimilar in practice, the importance of integrating the concepts was emphasised, as accordingly, EM plans may be considered the first phase of BCM following a disruptive event (Talbot & Jakeman, 2009).

According to Fay (2011, p. 257), EM is interrelated with the strategic elements of Business Continuity, as both concepts strive towards the same objectives; protecting an organisation’s critical capabilities from harm and providing stability for business operations. Such a view was expanded upon by Saima (2011, p. 57), who argued that EM is a “strategic process, and not a tactical process”. Saima (2011, p. 57) expressed that the concept is embodied as an “interdisciplinary field dealing with the strategic organizational management processes used to protect critical assets of an organization

from hazard risks that can cause disasters or catastrophes” and aims to ensure “continuance of the organization within their planned lifetime”. Thus, Saima (2011, p. 57) argued that the concept as a whole represents a strategy aimed at ensuring business continuity, where elements of response occur on a separate level of management.

Depicted in Figure 3, numerous dissimilarities between definitions and opinions on the concept of EM and its integration within BCM exist. With individual exceptions (Saima, 2011, p. 57), it is salient throughout the reviewed works that EM may entail initial incident response. Still, similar to the reviewed standards and guidelines, it is the link to elements of BCM that distinguishes the separate opinions.

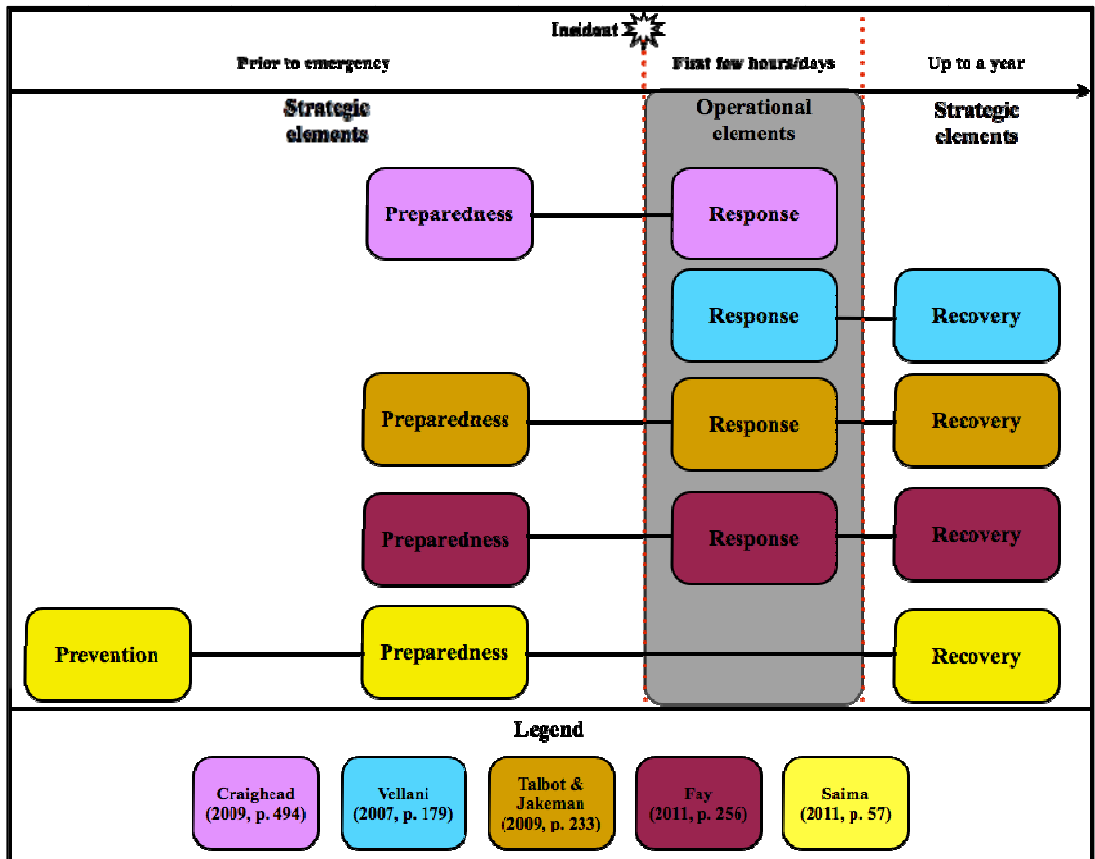


Figure 3: EM as a component of BCM according to reviewed security literature

INTERPRETATION

The reviewed literature approached Emergency Management (EM), and its integration within Business Continuity Management (BCM) in dissimilar ways (Figure 4). In line with the theory of exemplar-based concepts, it may be argued that the reviewed approaches of the concept originate from a variety of distinctive experiences. Still, the majority of literature included aspects of response. Performed since ancient times, initial and operational aspects of EM may be argued as embedded within human culture (Canton, 2007), whereas strategic response is still relatively new (Drewitt, 2012). Nonetheless, although certain views propagate for a significant integration, the embodiment of EM within the larger strategic concept of BCM appears to vary throughout literature.

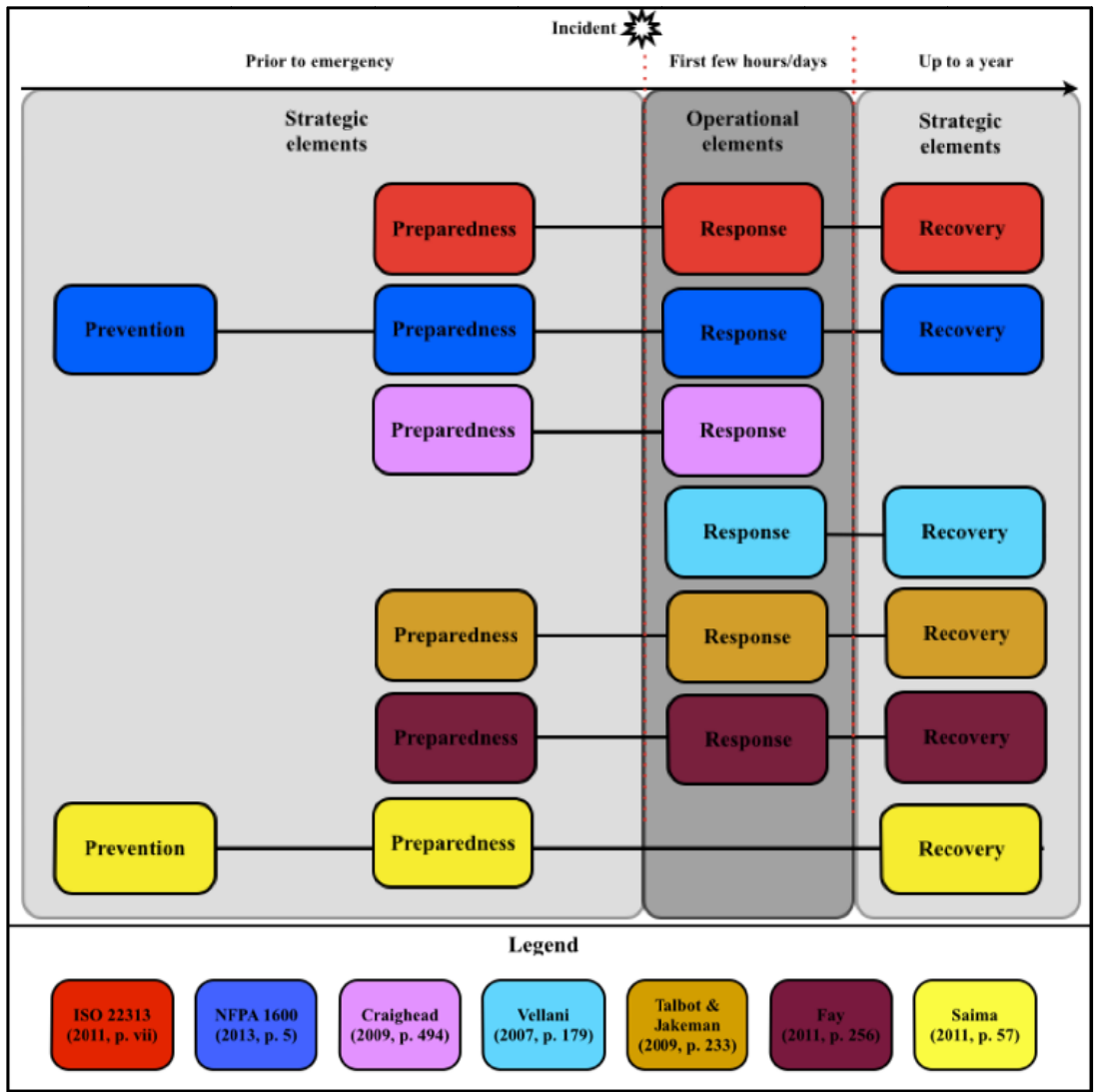


Figure 4: EM as a component of BCM according to reviewed standards and literature

Thus, although it is generally agreed that EM may form part of an initial BCM response, it is the embodiments of EM within the strategic aspects of BCM that appear to vary throughout the literature. Such contradictory views of the concepts integration raise issues related to a lack of a defined body of knowledge, where there is no defined interrelationship between how the concepts are used to complement each other. As argued by Hiles (2011, p. 97), the understanding of concepts is correlated with successful implementation. As such, one of the factors that should be taken into consideration is the lack of commonality in language, which may be argued as associated with confusion and therefore, less accurate implementation of BCM response strategies.

As such, it may be argued that in order to raise commonality of approach in the industry in achieving alignment in terms of the concepts representations, there are a number of factors that should be considered. These factors include raising the professionalism of the security and EM practice domains, and gaining greater commonality of language with national and international standards.

In response to the posed Research Question “*To what degree does Western Australian Security Managers consider Emergency Management to be a component of Business Continuity Management?*” the study found that according to the reviewed literature, EM is considered an operational component of BCM by the majority; however, with a broader misalignment in terms of

the concept's strategic integration. The degree at which Western Australian Security Managers hold such views will be investigated in the study's later second stage.

Study Limitations and Further Investigations

There are limitations of the study. First, it was beyond its scope to consider the investigated issue outside of Western Australia. Second, the study has only considered a limited number of different standards, industrial guidelines and international literature.

From an operational perspective, responding to emergencies has been embraced by society for many years (Nicholson, 2003). Thus, it is a well defined and proven concept that may be associated with common understanding throughout the industry. The integration of tactical and operational with strategic elements, however, may be lacking. Therefore, the following points need further consideration:

1. Is Emergency Management considered a reactive or proactive concept?
2. Does applied Business Continuity Management reflect elements of Emergency Management?
3. If so, are tactical and operational Emergency Management aspects integrated within the overarching strategic concept of Business Continuity Management?

These aspects will be further investigated in the following stage 2, when Western Australian security managers are interviewed to gain from their practical experience and views on the factors found in this initial study.

CONCLUSION

In contemporary society, maintaining continuity for the sustainability of business objectives has become a vital component for modern organisations. Such an approach has been embraced by Business Continuity Management (BCM), which aims to identify and increase resilience to potential organisational harms. As part of ensuring business continuity, the response strategies include responding to an emergency as well as mitigating emergency related any-long term effects. This process has previously been considered as Emergency Management (EM); however, a review of international and national standards, guidelines and security literature, suggests that distinct dissimilarities exist in terms of EM concept perception, which may be associated with exemplar-based concept theories. Therefore, to better direct corporate practice, conduct internal education and inform organisational policy, a review to align appropriate standards and guides as well as future research in regard to the concepts integration is suggested.

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