06

DISASTER RECOVERY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

EMV
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VICTORIA

Regional recovery networks

06

DISASTER RECOVERY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This resource is one in a set of eight booklets designed as a toolkit for local councils to understand, prepare for and actively support the recovery of their communities following a disaster.

The toolkit includes an introduction to the context and complexity of experiencing a disaster; what this means for individuals and the community; and the implications for local councils. The toolkit includes practical tips and tools designed to assist local councils to undertake effective recovery activity.

Each of the booklets in the toolkit is described to the right.

Cover Image: Landscape near Tarra Bulga National Park. Photographer Silvi Glattauer.

Above Image: Bendigo memorial wall at Albert Richardson reserve. Photographer Silvi Glattauer.

	BOOKLET	CONTENT	AUDIENCE
01	Understanding disaster recovery	Provides a broad context and understanding of recovery from disaster and has been designed as a companion document to be read before the specialist information detailed in each of the other booklets.	Councillors, senior managers, emergency management personnel and all staff across council
02	Recovery readiness: preparation for recovery before a disaster	Designed to supplement municipal emergency management planning and support councils to improve recovery readiness by addressing the factors contributing to recovery success.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
03	When disaster strikes: the first days and weeks	Assumes that recovery readiness will have occurred and builds on this preparatory work by addressing the factors contributing to recovery success as they relate to the first days and weeks following a disaster.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
04	Beyond disaster: the months and years ahead	Builds on the immediate recovery experience to move towards medium and long-term recovery. In this stage the factors contributing to recovery success are embedded in the process of recovery planning.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
05	Council business matters: meeting the organisational challenges of disaster recovery	Focuses on council business matters in recovery, including workforce planning and resource management from preparation and post-disaster perspectives.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
06	Regional recovery networks	Showcases the role of regional recovery networks in finding solutions to shared challenges.	Senior managers and emergency management personnel
07	Engaging the community in disaster recovery	Examines how councils can support community-led recovery and engage with the community more effectively to support recovery.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
08	Recovery tools and other resources	Brings together the tools that support decision making and planning described in the other booklets. It also includes additional reading and other useful resources.	Emergency management personnel

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  - Alpine Shire Council
  - Nillumbik Shire Council
  - Mitchell Shire Council
  - Whittlesea City Council
  - Latrobe City Council
  - Wellington Shire Council
  - Baw Baw Shire Council
  - Mt Alexander Shire Council
  - Murrindindi Shire Council
  - Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

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INTRODUCTION

Disasters do not recognise council or other organisational boundaries. Therefore local councils need to be able to work together across municipalities to achieve effective disaster recovery.

The benefits of such an approach can include:

- promoting good practice in disaster recovery and delivering better recovery results for communities
- building the recovery capability of the member councils – with often larger councils supporting smaller ones
- raising awareness of local councils' roles in recovery management
- building relationships and capacity that can be drawn upon on a regional basis
- providing links between councils and those organisations that do not share the same boundaries, such as government agencies and community organisations
- maximising the combined regional recovery capability for the benefit of communities.

There are many existing structures across Victoria that bring multiple councils together to work collaboratively and achieve more effective disaster recovery. Some of these have been in operation for more than a decade while others are relatively recent.

These structures are typically purpose-built to deal with disaster recovery however, some exist within broader emergency management structures (recovery being just one component of their work).

The term 'regional recovery network' is used in this booklet to refer to this wide variety of structures, including 'collaboration projects', 'relief and recovery partnerships', 'emergency management enhancement groups' and others. What sets regional recovery networks apart from other emergency management structures is that they share a common set of characteristics:

- They develop collaborative arrangements across municipal boundaries to prepare and support disaster recovery
- They are comprised of councils working in partnership to consider recovery issues at a multi-council level
- They build collective capability through sharing resources
- They build collective disaster recovery capacity through shared skill development, training and exercise activities
- They develop and practice joint disaster recovery policies, procedures and protocols
- They develop relationships and partnerships with other regional organisations and regional recovery networks from other areas.

The aim of this booklet is to build on the knowledge and experience of existing regional recovery networks by providing further information and insight into the factors that drive their success.

This booklet draws on the direct experience of five regional recovery networks, which is presented as case studies in the booklet's latter sections. Each of these networks includes one or more councils from the 10 councils that participated in the development of the *Disaster recovery toolkit for local government*.

WHAT ARE REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORKS?

A regional recovery network is a formally constituted partnership of neighbouring councils whose emergency management and recovery staff come together as a group to build their capacity to coordinate disaster recovery efforts in the region.

What is meant by 'region' is determined by the councils that have formed the network. Regions generally reflect State Government emergency response and recovery regions[1] but as networks are formed based on practical perceptions of shared needs, some regional recovery networks do not fit neatly into these boundaries. For example, the Central Victoria group is comprised of five councils spanning three State Government regions.

Some councils also choose to participate in more than one network for example, Mitchell Shire Council is a member of the Central Victoria Regional Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group and the Hume Regional Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group.

In some cases membership is extended to include emergency response agencies and other key stakeholders, however, the primary focus is the coordination, collaboration and capacity building of local councils at a regional level.

The names and structures of regional recovery networks vary from region to region. For example, the five regional recovery networks cited in this booklet are:

- Central Victoria Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group[2]
- Eastern Relief and Recovery Partnership
- Gippsland Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group
- Hume Region Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group
- North and West Metropolitan Regions Collaboration Regional Relief and Recovery Project.

The specific roles, functions and membership of regional recovery networks also vary from region to region based on the local needs and circumstances. Nonetheless, the primary objectives of the networks are very similar.

These include:

- promoting, facilitating and advocating for continuous improvement in municipal emergency and recovery management
- sharing information and practice on emergency and recovery management between and within councils
- advocating for local government in relation to emergency and recovery management
- providing a forum for local government practitioners to meet emergency management agencies and other key stakeholders
- providing a mechanism for councils to collectively identify and act on identified issues and needs
- providing a link between emergency management and recovery practitioners and other emergency and recovery structures such as the State Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

- acting as a resource and providing advice to Regional Emergency Management Committees and Regional Recovery Committees
- coordinating and facilitating regional training and exercising
- providing a forum to promote, support and pursue consistency across the region (and ultimately the State) in areas such as:
    - Municipal Emergency Management Plans
    - emergency management and disaster recovery language and terminology
    - common recovery practices such as post-impact assessment, case management
    - relief and recovery centres operations
    - common templates, policies and procedures
    - common uniforms and tabards (for example aligning tabards with the Australian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) – white = Incident Controller, yellow = Planning, red = Operations and blue = Logistics)
    - joint training and exercising.

Regional recovery networks can be characterised by:

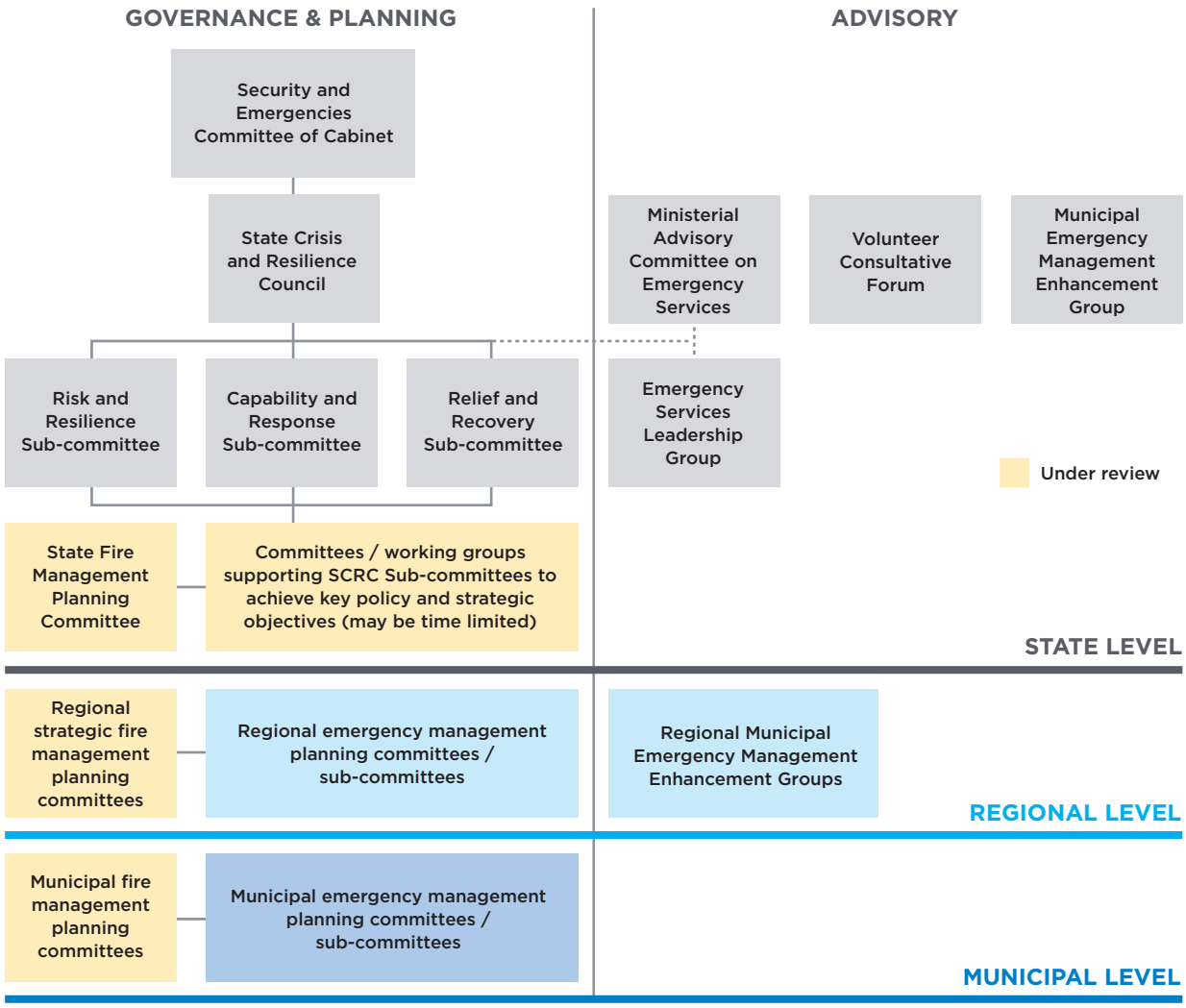
- participation that is driven by mutual member benefit rather than legislative requirements
- 'ownership' by the membership
- the capacity to accommodate multiple views and address issues without the need to formalise prescriptive policies
- the delivery of advocacy, coordination, capacity building and advice outcomes through collaboration and influence.

The case studies on each of the five regional recovery networks showcased in this booklet are designed to unpack the details of membership, function and activities to create an understanding of how these objectives and characteristics are achieved.

WHERE DO REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORKS FIT IN THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

Emergency management in Victoria, including disaster recovery, is undertaken through a structure of emergency management and planning committees, as summarised in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: VICTORIA'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE[3]



Operational disaster recovery roles, along with all other emergency management roles, are delegated to committees within the structure.

Regional recovery networks are not part of this formal structure and therefore would not typically feature in the chain of command responsible for disaster recovery.

Nonetheless, regional recovery networks can provide valuable advice and input into each of the emergency management and planning committees within the structure. In particular, they can contribute to establishing and operating specific recovery structures such as Regional Recovery Committees following a disaster.

CONTRIBUTORS TO EFFECTIVE REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORKS

The full benefits of participation in a regional recovery network are derived from the effort put in by the membership and the knowledge, skills, relationships and support generated by the network.

Successful regional recovery networks operate as partnerships. They work collaboratively to contribute to effective disaster recovery through planning and capacity building before disasters. Following a disaster they can provide advice and support to members in affected councils.

The experience of existing regional recovery networks highlights several factors that contribute to their success as partnerships. These include:

- Shared need
- Shared values
- Management buy-in
- Partner appreciation
- Partner capacity
- Open communication
- Clear decision making
- Resource investment
- Formal and informal interaction
- Reliable processes and systems
- Reflection and review.

Details of each of these factors are outlined below.

SHARED NEED

Having a shared need is central to any effective network because it is the needs that motivate involvement and focus joint action. It important therefore to be clear about what needs the regional recovery network exists to address. This means:

- documenting a clear purpose – detailed in a network 'terms of reference' or 'constitution'
- identifying needs at a local and regional level
- understanding how specific communities operate to determine the most logical regional coverage (including 'communities of interest' or 'communities of practice' along with geographical communities)
- developing clear strategic directions, aims and objectives
- focusing on relevant topics and local and regional solutions
- complementing (not duplicating or competing with) other emergency management and recovery structures and roles.

TIPS

'Start with a tangible area in need of improvement, especially where there is a need to build trust and gain buy-in.'

Eastern Region Relief and Recovery Partnership

'Identify who the key players are.'

'Don't worry about boundaries – make the membership those who will benefit – our group goes over three different Department of Human Services' boundaries and several Country Fire Authority boundaries.'

'Conduct a needs analysis.'

Central Victorian Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

SHARED VALUES

Values underpin behaviour and influence the way we are able to work with others. By agreeing the principles that guide our work we can find common ground and are less likely to pull in opposite directions. This means:

- agreeing on a set of principles of community recovery, for example adopting the National Community Recovery Principles
- being accountable to each other for the work of the network – while acknowledging the recovery responsibilities that each member retains within their own municipality
- recognising the size and relative capacity of different members and appreciating the resource differences between large and small municipalities to ensure realistic expectations and sustainability.

TIPS

'Work with like-minded councils or geographically similar locations.'

'Form close working relationships.'

Gippsland Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

MANAGEMENT BUY-IN

Management buy-in strengthens the influence, scope and performance of a regional recovery network by ensuring that council leaders from all member councils actively endorse the work of the network. This means:

- making sure councillors, chief executive officers and executive managers are aware of and support the work of the network
- ensuring managers sign-off on the network 'terms of reference' and work plans
- aligning network activity with regional relationships and groups
- ensuring network members can properly represent the issues of their communities and their councils
- sending pairs of council members to support continuity of representation
- ensuring network members have adequate authority to make decisions committing council support and resources
- providing regular reports of network proceedings to management forums
- ensuring succession planning to ensure ongoing member representation.

TIPS

'It must have support from key people before the process starts, key people must include:

- a Chief Executive Officer who agrees to be a sponsor and who is prepared to get the support of all Chief Executive Officers of the councils that would be involved
- the support of key leaders of the Emergency Services at the Regional Level
- a council and someone in that council prepared to drive not just the establishment process but the ongoing administrative support to the group after it has been established. This is extra work but it has to be done.'

Hume Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

'The process to establish a MEMEG must be carefully considered, almost tactically because some will question why it needs to happen. Identify the potential barriers to the concept before you start the process and this will allow you to prepare the process better. Some of the barriers will include:

- change!! Why change? We don't need to change? It already works so why change?
- people are quite often already busy and they don't have time for more work
- some councils genuinely have very little capacity to implement change
- cultural barriers.'

Hume Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

TIPS

'Ensure that you have support from each council's Chief Executive Officer and management teams and that emergency management is considered an important function of councils operation.'

North and West Metropolitan Region Collaboration Regional Relief and Recovery Project

'Get Council executive support up front.'

Central Victorian Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

'Get organisational support.'

Gippsland Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

PARTNER APPRECIATION

Working together as a network should be regarded as an effort of equals. The relative size of councils is less important than recognising the professional expertise and perspectives each member brings to the task and building on these strengths to get things done. This means:

- involving members in the design and set up of regional recovery network
- rotating meeting venues or meeting in a central location – whichever best meets the needs of member organisations
- showcasing the strengths of each member council to provide local context that progressively builds greater regional understanding of local recovery needs
- using the expertise of member organisations to assist each other to identify and address areas of vulnerability
- acknowledging the achievements of individual members or member organisations.

TIPS

'Ensure you have a suitable governance structure in place.'

'Get the right people on the working groups and encourage participation.'

North and West Metropolitan Region Collaboration Regional Relief and Recovery Project

PARTNER CAPACITY

Regional recovery networks build capacity for disaster recovery. However, a key to effective networks is also investment in building the capacity of partners to participate in the network itself. This means:

- sharing opportunities to undertake network roles
- assigning projects across groups of network members so that all members have the opportunity to develop their skills
- undertaking developmental and capacity building activities and presentations at network meetings
- leveraging other partnering initiatives for the benefit of the network
- designing and implementing a program to cater for the long term and strategic professional and organisation development needs of members.

TIPS

'In the words of Neil Comrie AO, APM – "community first, sector second, agency third". Let's avoid silos between Local Governments and between collaborations and strive for state-wide integration and interoperability.'

Eastern Region Relief and Recovery Partnership

'Reinforce partnerships with partner agencies for clarity of role and better buy in.'

Eastern Region Relief and Recovery Partnership

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication between members, between member councils and with other relevant stakeholders is critical to the functioning of the regional recovery network. This means:

- encouraging and supporting members to communicate back to their councils or other member organisations
- developing communication technology and capacity to support effective recovery operations – for example technology to assist with rapid impact assessment
- fostering an open culture of sharing relevant recovery information, issues and solutions
- maintaining and supporting communication and involvement with other regional recovery networks
- using the Municipal Association of Victoria portal for regional recovery networks.

TIPS

'Share information readily.'

Gippsland Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

CLEAR DECISION MAKING

Decision making is a vital aspect of regional recovery network effectiveness. It is critical that all members and member councils understand how decisions are made. This means:

- understanding the level of decision making authority delegated to network members
- creating open structures for clearly recording, planning and managing the work of the network
- developing clear expectations of decision making processes amongst network members
- understanding the pathways and processes for decision making at a more senior level
- using proactive strategies to clarify issues and unblock decision deadlocks.

TIPS

'Ensure you have a suitable governance structure in place.'

'Get the right people on the working groups and encourage participation.'

'If you have conflict due to various opinion which will be common in particular in large groups, run a mini workshop looking at the pros and cons to come to an agreement that way all parties have had a chance to be heard in a fair way.'

North and West Metropolitan Region Collaboration Regional Relief and Recovery Project

RESOURCE INVESTMENT

Adequate resources will be necessary to fund the development and implementation of regional recovery network objectives. This means:

- attracting adequate funding for the ongoing operation of the network, including secretarial and executive support
- exploring options for member councils to share and contribute to costs
- seeking external funding for projects and developmental activities to build the capacity of member organisations and the network as a whole
- ensuring benefits of the network are well described to demonstrate the return on investing in the network
- investigating options for sharing and coordinating resources – people, equipment, facilities and systems to support the network.

TIPS

'Proactively seek funding to make things happen.'

'Seek support from larger regional councils – for example the City of Greater Shepparton Emergency Management Coordinator is the chairperson of the Hume Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group and council provides him with executive support for that role.'

Central Victorian Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group

RELIABLE PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

When a regional recovery network operates using reliable processes and systems, it allows members to focus on their shared goals and actions. This means:

- developing and using common language and terminology
- promoting consistency in set up and operation of Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres (MECC)
- developing consistency in information systems, for example software used in relief and recovery centres – '*Mecc*' and '*Mecc central*' (now '*Crisis Works'*) information management systems
- developing interoperability between councils data collection technology, council/member systems, equipment and resources
- conducting effective and productive meetings
- ensuring meetings are well chaired and followed up
- using effective agendas with standing agenda items designed to maintain focus on core issues and relationships the network wishes to influence
- developing a work plan of key initiatives
- using working or action groups to develop specific ideas and initiatives for the network with a smaller group of interested members rather than attempting such outcomes through network meetings.

TIPS

'Steal shamelessly – don't re-invent the wheel and work better together.'

'Develop opportunities for shared procedures partnerships and preparedness activity, to build local government capability across Victoria.'

Eastern Region Relief and Recovery Partnership

INFORMAL INTERACTION

Effective networks are built on strong relationships and it is necessary to make time to invest in this aspect of the regional recovery network. This means:

- providing opportunities for informal social interaction, such as food and drink breaks at meetings or an occasional barbeque lunch for members
- including personal development activities alongside or within meetings to allow for less structured development of shared understandings
- using a skilled chairperson to keep the tone of meeting business-like but relaxed
- ensuring meeting frequency and structure fits the needs of network members – not meeting too often or too infrequently
- allowing for members to bring colleagues to become familiar with the network to broaden its base and create secondary relationships critical during operations.

TIPS

Include field visits, guest speakers, facilities inspections of member organisations and other less formal activities to build and bind the group.

REFLECTION AND REVIEW

It is useful to periodically reflect on the how the network is performing to check it is still relevant to all members and still achieving its objectives. This means asking the following questions, for example annually, of all members and member councils:

- How clear are the network objectives?
- How clear are network members on the specific ways they contribute to the network objectives?
- How consistent are the network goals with member organisation goals?
- What level of senior management support in member organisations is there for the network?
- How clear are network members on the communication and decision making channels?
- How effective are communication and decision making processes?
- How well are member roles and responsibilities understood by each network member?
- To what degree do all network members do what they say they will and achieve agreed targets and milestones?
- How does the network celebrate its successes and recognise the contribution of all its members?

Ultimately, the decision whether to continue with membership of a regional recovery network will depend on whether a member organisation considers that the benefits of participation outweigh the costs and whether better outcomes are delivered for disaster affected communities.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS OF EFFECTIVE REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORKS

The recovery functions considered by regional recovery networks are connected to the activities of other organisations and emergency management structures.

The activities of a regional recovery network therefore must involve input from others and equally importantly aim to influence others.

Important relationships to be maintained and further developed by regional recovery networks include:

All other non-emergency and non-recovery specific divisions of councils – disaster recovery affects the whole council as an organisation and it is important to build the capacity of all council business units to contribute to effective disaster recovery.

Emergency and recovery organisations within the region:

- Relief and recovery partners – Australian Red Cross, Victoria Police, Salvation Army, Victorian Council of Churches
- Commonwealth recovery agencies – Centrelink
- Emergency response agencies – Fire, Ambulance, Police, State Emergency Service.

Organisations and networks within the region:

(Note: In some cases the regional boundaries do not necessarily align)

- Natural Resource Management Committees
- Regional Economic Development networks
- Regional Transport Planning networks.

Organisations outside the region:

- Other regional recovery networks
- Regional Emergency Management Committees
- Neighbouring councils in other regions and states.

State organisations and peak bodies:

- Emergency Management Victoria
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- State Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group
- Interstate recovery authorities (where applicable).

Other relevant stakeholders:

There are several other organisations, government agencies and businesses in the region who may be significant stakeholders in disaster recovery. Examples include:

- Key industry groups
- Key industry service organisations – Rural Financial Counselling Service, stock and station agents
- Regional Development Victoria
- Regional/tourism development boards
- Regional Emergency Management Committee – convened by Department of Human Services
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Department of Human Services – Emergency Management Coordinators
- Department of State Development, Business and Innovation
- Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure
- Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

Many of these organisations will be included in planning and capacity building activities of the Regional Emergency Management Committees and individual councils. Regional Recovery Committees may also engage with some of these key organisations where resourcing permits and where specific initiatives are being undertaken – for example, a working group developing a specific volunteer management initiative in an alpine region may include engagement with the relevant tourism or alpine resorts association.

TIPS

Build relationships with other councils and relevant stakeholders both within and outside the region.

Position network members to be involved in recovery roles and functions – promote inclusion in regional emergency management teams and incident control centres.

Work together to build the capacity of all council business units to contribute to disaster recovery – particularly those staff with frontline community contact such as customer service, rates and payments and the outdoor depot workforce.

EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORKS

(AS DESCRIBED BY EACH OF THE NETWORKS[4])

GIPPSLAND MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENT GROUP

ESTABLISHED

Established well in excess of 15 years ago. Used to be known as the Gippsland Emergency Management Forum.

Gippsland Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group (GMEMEG) meets on a quarterly basis and facilitates at least one state forum per year.

MEMBERSHIP

6 councils:

Baw Baw Shire Council

Bass Coast Shire Council

South Gippsland Shire Council

East Gippsland Shire Council

Latrobe City Council

Wellington Shire Council

Relevant Municipal Emergency Response Coordinators

Victoria Police

SES Regional Officer

STRUCTURE

Rotational chair for two year duration with administration supplied by hosting municipality

- Membership is open to all local government emergency management practitioners. This includes Municipal Emergency Managers, Municipal Emergency Resource Officers, Municipal Recovery Managers and Municipal Fire Prevention Officers and their delegates.
- Observers, guests and visitors will always be welcome and encouraged to attend MEMEG Regional Forums meetings.

PURPOSE

To coordinate emergency response, relief and recovery support from across the region in an agreed process as well as advocating on a united front with agencies.

To provide a link between regional local government emergency management practitioners and State MEMEG.

To provide opportunities for discussion, development and information sharing on emergency management between/within local government.

To promote, facilitate and advocate for continuous improvement in the municipal emergency management sector.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To advocate on behalf of local government in the area of emergency management.

To form action groups as required, to manage identified issues.

To provide a forum for emergency management agencies to meet with local government practitioners.

ACTIVITIES

Gippsland MEMEG have provided a standard approach to setting up and operating emergency relief centre/s across the Gippsland region to enhance capability of Councils who are signatories to the Protocol for Inter-council Emergency Management Resource Sharing who make up the Gippsland Regional Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group (MEMEG).

Training together.

Collocating in times of emergency in relation to Emergency Relief Centres and Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres.

LEARNING

Be flexible in working together.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Response related agreed working practices.

ADVICE TO OTHER REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORKS

1. Work with likeminded councils or geographically similar locations
2. Form close working relationships
3. Share information readily
4. Set you common terms of reference
5. Get organisational support.

RESOURCES

We rely on grant applications and have no active budget.

Meeting rooms and catering are provided on general agreement from the host council.

DOCUMENTATION DEVELOPED BY THE NETWORK

Emergency Relief Centre Standard Operating Procedures.

This new document was developed by the six Gippsland municipal councils in response to the experience gained from the Black Saturday Bushfires and the major floods that have impacted the region over a period of several years.

The primary aim of the document is to provide a minimum standard of universal emergency management relief service delivery across the Gippsland Region.

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CENTRAL VICTORIA MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENT GROUP

ESTABLISHED

Established in 2001 and meets quarterly.

MEMBERSHIP

Hepburn Shire Council

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Mitchell Shire Council

Moorabool Shire Council

Mount Alexander Shire Council

STRUCTURE

Sub – Committees are organised when required.

Chair is elected from the membership – current Chair is Manager Community Safety from Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

PURPOSE

The aim of the group is to build emergency management capacity and capability across all participating councils.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To promote, facilitate and advocate for continuous improvement in the municipal emergency management sector.

To provide a link between regional local government emergency management practitioners and MEMEG.

To provide opportunities for discussion, development and information sharing on emergency management between/within local government.

To advocate on behalf of local government in the area of emergency management.

To provide a forum for emergency management agencies to meet with local government practitioners.

ACTIVITIES

- Established Terms of Reference.
- Conducted a desktop exercise – Exercise Phoenix – to identify the differences in Policy, Procedures and SOPs of the participating Councils. A range of recommendations were compiled from the exercise with the focus on communication.
- Two workshops were held to develop communication needs of the councils before, during and after with a communication framework developed as a key output.
- A communications sub-committee was established to facilitate the development of the actions in the communication framework.
- Applied for a Natural Disasters Resilience Grant to develop a Regional Relief Centre model (still waiting on outcome of the submission).
- Shared a range of policies and procedures.
- Agenda items are determined by the needs of the group.

OUTCOMES

Greater support and understanding of each Council's needs and issues.

Stronger relationships amongst councils.

Essentially all the dot points under activities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

Support from council executive.

Strong buy-in from all councils.

Appropriate representation from all councils.

Willingness to share information.

LEARNING

Important to share resources as much as possible.

Need a champion to lead the group.

We can't do this on our own.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Our group would really like to develop a Regional Relief Centre Model (grant applied for), this will involve a lot of training and exercising together and sharing of resources. If we are not successful with the grant we will need to give consideration as to how we do this without the additional funding.

ADVICE TO OTHER REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORKS

1. Identify who the key players are
2. Get Council executive support up front
3. Don't worry about boundaries – make the membership those who will benefit. (Our group goes over 3 different Department of Human Services' boundaries and several Country Fire Authority boundaries)
4. Conduct a needs analysis
5. Proactively seek funding to make things happen.

RESOURCES

Initially received a grant to establish the group and develop the communications framework.

Group is now sustainable, councils equally contribute resources to the running of the group and contribute additional resources when required.

DOCUMENTATION DEVELOPED BY THE NETWORK

Exercise Phoenix Training Plan.

Communication Framework.

Terms of reference.

CONTACT

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EASTERN RELIEF AND RECOVERY PARTNERSHIP

ESTABLISHED

Established in 2010 and meets every 2 months at Council offices (rotates around region).

MEMBERSHIP

Boroondara City Council

Knox City Council

Manningham City Council

Maroondah City Council

City of Monash

Nillumbik Shire Council

City of Whitehorse

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Department of Human Services

Municipal Recovery Managers were the original members, however this has now broadened to include Municipal Emergency Resource Officers, Emergency Management Officers, Municipal Fire Prevention Officers and others as emergency staffing within Councils has evolved.

Non-financial member: State Emergency Services.

STRUCTURE

Hosting Council chairs and is responsible for minutes.

Five working groups, made up of Eastern Relief and Recovery Partnership (ERRP) members, report to the ERRP which may be called upon to endorse actions and decisions.

Working Groups:

Document Management

Operations and Logistics

Memoranda of Understanding and Agency Engagement

Training

Exercise (new)

PURPOSE

From Eastern Region Recovery Partnership Terms of Reference:

"That the Councils of the Eastern Region and surrounds will work in partnership to apply best practice in the delivery of relief and recovery services to their communities."

(Focus to date has primarily been on Emergency Relief Centres)

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

From Eastern Region Recovery Partnership Terms of Reference:

"The objectives of the partnership will include, but not be limited to:

- To develop, review and evaluate common systems and processes across all member Councils including standard operating guidelines.
- To build and maintain collaborative working arrangements with all agencies involved in relief and recovery.
- To provide training and professional development for the staff required to undertake relief and recovery roles.
- To obtain funding and resources for the partnership.
- To advocate on behalf of local government in the Eastern Metropolitan Region to State stakeholders such as the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner and other State Government agencies."

ACTIVITIES

- Development of Eastern Metropolitan Region and Surrounds Emergency Relief Centre Standard Operating Guidelines which include arrangements, procedures and role statements.
- Development of Memorandum of Understanding and Term of Reference between participating Councils.
- Identification and development of Emergency Response Centre Facility Plans for large and strategically located facilities across the eastern metro councils (includes standard approach to Plan template).
- Development of Memoranda of Understanding (reviewed annually) between councils and:
    - Victoria Police
    - DHS
    - The Salvation Army
    - Australian Red Cross
    - Emergency Accommodation Agencies (draft)
    - Personal Support Agencies (draft).
- Establishment of Emergency Response Centre portal for storage of final documents.
- Annual exercise to test Emergency Relief Centres, the arrangements, partnerships and staff capability.

HOW THE NETWORK OPERATES

- Guest speakers on subjects relevant to relief or recovery may be invited.
- Standard agenda item is report from each of the working groups.
- Yarra Ranges Council oversees and administers portal.
- Storage of equipment specific to Emergency Relief Centres, which includes 2 x shipping containers and 2 x shared trailers. Equipment provides for sleeping, first aid, animal management, signage, segregation and safety.

OUTCOMES

- Increased capacity to provide trained resources in support of the management of Emergency Relief Centres in another council.
- Greater efficiencies (through the development of consistent procedures, documentation, systems) across municipalities.
- Strong working relationships which will ensure emergencies run more smoothly when the procedures don't quite fit the situation at hand.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

- Momentum and energy generated as a result of working as a team
- Chief Executive Officers are signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding, so support and awareness at the highest level (includes ongoing financial contributions).
- Strong Municipal Recovery Manager contribution and ownership, which has led to the employment of dedicated EM staff in a number of councils.
- Benefits of collaboration have been realised.
- Willingness to share and support, and spread the load across individuals and Councils as workloads change (consistency).

LEARNING

The consistency of Emergency Management arrangements across Councils through well-developed partnerships, procedures and preparedness means a much larger more reliant workforce is available, with increased capability.

Planning at the municipal level should be consistent and sharable.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Working with DHS to customise “Intro to Relief and Recovery Centres” training.

Working with North and West Metro towards consistency across the 2 regions (arrangements, training). Early conversations with Southern metro as well as rural/regional Victoria to ensure broaden further.

Soon to explore opportunities to expand consistent arrangements in other areas of relief and recovery.

Also looking into how best to achieve appropriate local government representation in the incident and regional level “Emergency Management Team” space to support preparedness and achieve more timely intelligence to inform consequence management.

ADVICE TO OTHER NETWORKS

1. Start with a tangible area in need of improvement, especially where there is a need to build trust and gain buy-in.
2. Develop opportunities for shared procedures partnerships and preparedness activity, to build local government capability across Victoria.
3. Reinforce partnerships with partner agencies for clarity of role and better buy in.
4. Steal shamelessly – don’t re-invent the wheel and work better together.
5. In the words of Neil Comrie AO, APM – “community first, sector second, agency third”. Let’s avoid silos between Local Governments and between collaborations and strive for statewide integration and interoperability.

RESOURCES

Councils and Department of Human Services contribute $ to fund regional projects each year. Yarra Ranges administers budget and reports.

Some grants have been sought for example. Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme funding for update of Standard Operating Guidelines in 2011.

DOCUMENTATION DEVELOPED BY THE NETWORK

Eastern Metropolitan Region and Surrounds Emergency Relief Centre Standard Operating Guidelines which include arrangements, procedures and role statements.

Memorandum of Understanding and Term of Reference between participating Councils.

Emergency Relief Centre Facility Plans for large and strategically located facilities across the eastern metro councils (includes standard approach to Plan template).

Memoranda of Understanding (reviewed annually) between councils and:

- Victoria Police
- DHS
- The Salvation Army
- Australian Red Cross
- Emergency Accommodation Agencies (draft)
- Personal Support Agencies (draft).

Emergency Relief Centre portal for storage of final documents.

Documents can be accessed through a portal link Emergency Portal.

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http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Emergency-management-portal/Relief-recovery
Emergency Portal

HUME REGION MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENT GROUP

ESTABLISHED

Established in December 2012.

Currently meets every two months at Benalla (central location in the Hume Region).

MEMBERSHIP

Membership comprises:

All Local Government Areas within the Hume Region;

Alpine Shire Council

Benalla Rural City Council

Greater Shepparton City Council

Indigo Shire Council

Mansfield Shire Council

Mitchell Shire Council

Moira Shire Council

Murrindindi Shire Council

Strathbogie Shire Council

Towong Shire Council

Rural City of Wangaratta

City of Wodonga

Emergency services:

VicPol

VICSES

CFA

DHS

The four Resort Management Boards (RMB)

Representatives of other agencies and organisations are also invited to speak on specific subjects/topics.

STRUCTURE

- Aligned to the Victoria MEMEG.
- Sponsored by the Chief Executive Officer, Greater Shepparton City Council, through the Hume Region Local Government Network.
- Currently comprises one committee.
- Currently chaired by Peter Gunn, one of the members.

PURPOSE

The Hume Region Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group (HR MEMEG) is a Regional level committee of local government.

The HR MEMEG supports and advises local government emergency management practitioners and advocates on behalf of the local government sector on emergency management.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Identify, articulate and support the needs of local government emergency management practitioners.
2. To provide opportunities for discussion, development and information sharing on emergency management between and within local government.
3. Raise awareness of local government roles, capabilities and capacities in municipal emergency management across all relevant agencies.
4. Promote, facilitate and advocate best practice in municipal emergency management.
5. Contribute to increased knowledge and awareness of emergency management within local government.
6. Promote the integration of emergency management into the normal business of Councils.
7. Encourage and enhance sharing of emergency management knowledge and skills.
8. Provide a link between Hume Regional local government emergency management practitioners and agency emergency management practitioners.
9. To develop a partnership with the Victorian MEMEG.
10. To provide a forum for emergency management agencies to collaborate with local government emergency management representatives.
11. To form working groups as required.

OUTCOMES

- Combined Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme application for funding – result of application still pending.
- A number of personnel within the emergency service providers have seen the value (efficiencies) and used the MEMEG to communicate with all councils.
- HRMEMEG successful in having guest speakers attend meetings to address all councils within Hume Region (the feedback has been that it is a great forum to speak to all councils at the one venue).
- Council Emergency Management staff forming relationships with Emergency Management staff from other councils.
- The Victorian MEMEG extending membership of that committee/group to the chair of the HRMEMEG.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

- Genuine support and involvement of all stakeholders at appropriate levels.
- ‘Vision’ for all involved.
- Preparedness of everyone to be actively involved in the process.
- Change, it’s inevitable and it should be accepted (within reason).

LEARNING

- All council staff in Emergency Management agree that council's want to perform their Emergency Management roles and responsibilities the same way but prior to MEMEG being formed they felt they were working in isolation. MEMEG gives them the opportunity to learn what and how other councils perform these functions and come together using agreed and common practices.
- That quite often work is duplicated and there is not enough sharing of ideas, projects, Standard Operating Procedures and guidelines. Councils need to come together to not just reduce their own workload but to learn from previous experiences and to share resources and knowledge.
- Silos!! The formation of a Regional MEMEG removes the silos at the regional level but to ensure it just doesn't become a bigger silo, regional and the state MEMEG must also collaborate for the same purposes.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

- The HRMEMEG is only recently established and as a result we are still 'finding our way'. At the last meeting a process was commenced to identify agreed actions and these will be included in an Action Plan to give clear and agreed direction to MEMEG.
- To dedicate meetings to a single theme, the 'theme' will be determined by the group identifying EM areas in council to focus on. that is: have a meeting dedicated to Communications Staff from all councils and invite a guest speaker relevant to that area.

ADVICE TO OTHER NETWORKS

The process to establish a MEMEG must be carefully considered, almost tactically because some will question why it needs to happen. Identify the potential barriers to the concept before you start the process and this will allow you to prepare the process better. Some of the barriers will include:

- change!! Why change? We don't need to change? It already works so why change?
- people are quite often already busy and they don't have time for more work;
- some councils genuinely have very little capacity to implement change;
- cultural barriers.

It must have support from key people before the process starts, key people must include:

- a Chief Executive Officer who agrees to be a sponsor and who is prepared to get the support of all a Chief Executive Officers of the councils that would be involved.
- the support of key leaders of the Emergency Services at the Regional Level
- a council and someone in that council prepared to drive not just the establishment process but the ongoing admin support to the group after it has been established. This is extra work but it has to be done.

RESOURCES

Funding and resources at this stage are provided by the one council (Greater Shepparton City Council).

One of the 'visions' is that we can place ourselves into a position where we can apply for funding for administrative support, training and a project worker.

DOCUMENTATION DEVELOPED BY THE NETWORK

Terms of Reference and Business Rules.

CONTACT

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NORTH AND WEST METROPOLITAN REGIONS COLLABORATION REGIONAL RELIEF AND RECOVERY PROJECT

ESTABLISHED

Established in December 2013 (prior to that the North Metropolitan Region Collaboration commenced in 2010 and the West Metropolitan Region Collaboration in 2011).

The Project Control Group meets bi-monthly (held in multiple locations hosted at any of the following councils – Hobsons Bay, Hume, Maribyrnong, City of Yarra, Moonee Valley, Nillumbik).

Working Group meetings are monthly (held in multiple locations hosted in turn across the 14 councils).

Collaboration Forum (all Emergency Management Officers, Emergency Management Coordinators, Municipal RMs, Municipal Emergency Resource Officers from the 14 councils are invited) held twice a year).

MEMBERSHIP

Membership comprises:

Banyule City Council

Brimbank City Council

Darebin City Council

Hobsons Bay City Council

Hume City Council

Maribyrnong City Council

Melbourne City Council

Melton City Council

Moonee Valley City Council

Moreland City Council

Nillumbik Shire Council

Whittlesea City Council

Wyndham City Council

Yarra City Council

STRUCTURE

The Governance Structure is as follows:

- NWMR Collaboration Project Sponsor – Chief Executive Officer.
- NWMR Collaboration Project Control Group – (Managers and Directors from North and West Metro Region councils). The project Control Group in essence will report up to the Project sponsor if there is any major issue that may impact on the progress of the objectives.
- A Team Leader is appointed to lead each working group. They are responsible to ensure meetings are scheduled, minutes and agendas are taken and sent out. Follow up on actions from each meeting.
- The Team Leader reports to the NWMR Collaboration Relief & Recovery Coordinators who report progress and any issues up to the Project Control Group.

PURPOSE

The NWMR Collaboration is working to develop and maintain a sustainable and replicable regional emergency relief and recovery collaboration model.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Objectives include:

- Enhance the capacity and capability of NWMR councils to support relief and recovery after major events;
- Enhance the coordination of NWMR resources and knowledge sharing, to improve efficiency and consistency of service delivery; and
- Minimise adverse community impacts in the NWMR, by developing a common operational and governance platform.

HOW THE NETWORK OPERATES

We run eight working groups (meeting monthly) specific to particular subject areas, such as:

1. ERC Standard Operating Guidelines
2. Staff Training
3. Exercise
4. Facility Auditing
5. Post Impact
6. MECC Central
7. Regional Recovery Planning
8. Regional Resource Planning.

These working groups are the ‘legs’ of the NWMR collaboration.

We invite speakers or subject matter experts to attend working group meeting as required.

OUTCOMES

The following are the outcomes to date

- Consistent Standard Operating Procedures reflecting *best practise* in Emergency Relief Centres across NWMR.
- Consistent auditing of Emergency Relief Centres facilities across NWMR.
- Designated resource team, structures, decision making and infrastructure for providing regional relief and recovery services across multiple municipalities following an emergency, with clearly understood activation procedures.
- Over 400 trained and regularly trained personnel throughout the NWMR (who have undertaken recent, simulated emergency scenario training) to deliver emergency relief and recovery services.
- Establishment of *Recovery Inception Framework* through the Regional Recovery Planning applicable across NWMR (specifying the key activities and associated timeframes of emergency relief and recovery services, with a focus on the first six weeks).
- Extension of *Rapid Impact Assessments* to all municipalities across NWMR (a standardised tool and procedure for recording, storing and interpreting emergency incident information).
- Enhanced overall capacity and capability of NWMR councils to provide relief and recovery following an emergency (due to shared resources and improved work practises).
- Bi monthly regional Forum provides the avenue to keep all Municipal Emergency Resource Officers Municipal Recovery Managers, Emergency Management Coordinators and Emergency Management Officers updated on the progress of the working groups.
- Quarterly newsletter provides another form of communication about the project (distributed to councils, agencies, recovery partners).
- Utilising 'Yammer' to facilitate communication across the 14 councils and across all Emergency Management Teams.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The development of a consistent, standardised best practise Regional Recovery Plan.

ADVICE TO OTHER NETWORKS

In no particular order:

1. Ensure that you have support from each councils Chief Executive Officer and management teams and Emergency Management is considered an important function of councils operation.
2. Get the right people on the working groups and encourage participation.
3. If you have conflict due to various opinion which will be common in particular in large groups, run a mini workshop looking at the pros and cons to come to an agreement that way all parties have had a chance to be heard in a fair way.
4. Communicate and keep all relevant people and players updated.
5. Ensure you have a suitable governance structure in place.

RESOURCES

The NWMR Collaboration is currently only funded by Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner and contributions from each council as in-kind and a further $5k per council per annum.

DOCUMENTATION DEVELOPED BY THE NETWORK

- MOU between the 14 councils
- Governance structure
- SOGs
- Facility Audit Template (endorsed and approved by each councils Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee)
- Post Impact Template
- Training Material (relevant to our training program)
- Exercise Plans
- Standardised protocols
- Bimonthly Newsletter (RECU).

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NEXT STEPS

Use the following checklist to assess whether you are getting the most from your involvement in regional recovery networks.

REGIONAL RECOVERY NETWORK REVIEW

The regional recovery network (or networks) council works with has reviewed its effectiveness in the previous 12 months (see section 4.11)	☐
The regional recovery network (or networks) is assisting in achieving council's disaster recovery objectives	☐
Council network members understand their role and have the support of senior management	☐

TIP

Get in touch with the contacts listed in the case studies in this booklet to pursue approaches and resources that might assist your own regional recovery network(s).

Additional reading such as existing recovery resources, materials and web links can be found in **Book 8: Recovery tools and other resources**.

ENDNOTES

1 Emergency Management Victoria, 2014, *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*, http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/

2 The term 'Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group' is also used at a state level to describe the group of local government and on other emergency management agencies that advises and advocates on emergency management strategy and policy. The Terms of Reference for this group is provided under the State and Regional Emergency Management Planning provisions detailed in Part 5 of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria 2014.

3 Emergency Management Victoria, 2014, *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*, http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/

4 This content has been taken directly from each network and some of the information may be out of date at the time of publishing.

This resource is available electronically on the internet at:

www.emv.vic.gov.au

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format please phone (03) 9027 5472 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required.

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