

Melton City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to Local Government Victoria's (LGV) Councils and Emergencies Directions Paper (the 'Directions Paper').

LGV, through its Directions Paper, is seeking submissions on a list of 154 tasks or responsibilities that are described in the paper as being councils' current emergency management responsibilities and actions.

In its response, Council does not have the capacity to be able to comment on all of the 154 identified responsibilities of Councils. Instead, Melton City Council has chosen to comment on what it sees as the key local and strategic responsibilities.

There continues to be strong support within Council for leading/coordinating relief and recovery at the local level, although concerns about the current funding and reimbursement arrangements should be noted.

Clarity is also sought from future Ministerial Guidelines around single incident support. Support for collaborations with other emergency agencies and municipalities is essential to value add activities and provide mutual assurance in relief and recovery at the local level.

Melton City Council agrees with the MAV submission:

*Where legislation is the source of the responsibility, it is not quoted verbatim, so the meaning of the statement in the Directions Paper can be interpreted differently to the commonly understood interpretation of the relevant legislation*

- *Several of the references are inaccurate, for example, the paper appears to reference a previous version of the State Relief and Recovery Plan (EMMV Part 4)*
- *Some of the descriptors are derived from guidelines or non-statutory documents, meaning they may be expected in certain circumstances, but they are not requirements*
- *Many of the descriptors reference part 7 of the EMMV, which does not have the same status as Parts 3 and 4. The preamble to the description of councils' role in Part 7 states: This is an indicative list. The nature and extent of work by councils to deliver activities will depend on their capability, capacity and particular circumstances of an event. Municipal councils will utilise a variety of approaches and local arrangements to best affect the delivery of these responsibilities to meet unique municipal needs. Most of the activities in the list below are carried out by councils in close conjunction with, or with direct support by, government departments and agencies. Items from this list therefore should not be in blue or described as requirements, unless they have their basis in legislation or another statutory document.*

Melton City Council agrees with the MAV submission and the recommendations:

- Recommendation: If the final role description is to delineate core requirements and non-core tasks, the core requirement descriptors should be specific, not general statements. They should be derived from legislation or statutory documents only – not guidance documents or policies or plans with a lesser status. Furthermore, they should be quoted verbatim so there is less chance of misinterpretation.
- Recommendation: Core requirements should also be achievable, irrespective of the size or resources available to the council.

Melton City Council agrees with the MAV submission where it questions the methodology used:

*As LGV is aware, there is great variation in the capability and capacity of councils. Some of the statements in workshops may have been made by councils with the resources to be able to undertake them; some may have been undertaken once, because the responsible agency was not present and councils did what had to be done to support their community; some may have been done on behalf of another agency through an agreement. Just because a council undertakes an activity does not make it a current responsibility.*

**Table 1 comments regarding the 21 core capability descriptions**

Core Capability	LGV statement on Council involvement	Melton Council's Response
<i>Community information and warnings</i>	<i>Before, during, after</i>	Implies Council has a core capability regarding community information and warnings. We do not give out warnings regarding emergencies; Council relays verified information from agencies.
<i>Fire management &amp; suppression</i>	<i>Before, during</i>	Council's are not a "fire suppression" agency; we do provide graders and water tankers etc to create breaks and refill appliances on the fire ground.
<i>Critical transport</i>	<i>No council involvement</i>	Council is a road manager and directly involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The establishment of TMPS and alternative routes on Council managed roads</li> </ul>

- Clearing and restoring of damaged roads

<i>Health emergency response</i>	<i>No council involvement</i>	Council's Environmental Health Officer, is directly linked to many emergency health responses such as pandemic and epidemics and other local issues such as gastroenteritis outbreaks.
<i>Environmental response</i>	<i>No council involvement</i>	Council are land managers; officers control the registration of domestic dogs and cats; licensed officers euthanize injured livestock. Council is also directly linked to the management of weeds and pests on both Council managed land and private land.
<i>Economic recovery</i>	<i>After</i>	Council's Economic Development and Advocacy is directly involved with businesses before, during and after emergencies, not just after as the paper suggests. We assist businesses in planning for emergencies and are directly linked to local business through local business and tourism associations.

There are inaccuracies amongst the 154 proposed responsibilities/tasks listed in the Directions Paper. Some tasks are inaccurately sourced and do not reflect the variation in capability and capacity across the sector.

**Table 2 Comments on Responsibilities**

<b>Discussion Point</b>	<b>Extract</b>	<b>Clarification Sought</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Planning, Black, 6	Lead the maintenance and administration of the Vulnerable Persons Register (VPR)	required under Vulnerable Persons in Emergencies (VPE) Policy 2015, not a 'black' statement	Must do: Councils are the coordinators of the register including system administration and oversight of the VPR.
Planning, Black, 8	Develop council business continuity plans detailing procedures and systems to maintain core business and emergency management activities	<i>Local Government Act</i> 1989, Councils are required to develop and maintain adequate internal control systems.	Must do: Recommendations under <i>Local Government Act</i> 1989 and from JMAP Policy (if members) and Auditor General's Office
Planning, Black 9	Improve recovery plans and procedures by exercising and reviewing them.	The MEMP is required to be reviewed and exercised (under the EMMV part 6, Dot point 6 – Monitor and Review, page 6-5).	Must do: Council has prepared its own relief and recovery plan which is audited as a sub-plan to the MEMP during the MEMP audit process.
Operational Management, Black, 32	Identify council-owned and-operated resources, assets and services available for emergency prevention, response or recovery; specify their preparedness; and plan to deploy them.	Councils are required to list Council owned and operated resources in the MEMP	Must do: MEMP audit process.
Public Order and Community Safety, Blue, 75	Proactively enforce relevant regulations and laws that relate to emergency management.	Vague and unclear	Quote specific sections of <i>Emergency Management Acts</i> and EMMV that support this statement.
Building	Engage the community in	Many municipalities lack	

Community Resilience, Blue, 85	developing and delivering recovery activities including by appointing community development and/or community recovery officers.	capacity to provide community development officer or community recovery officers.	Not all events will be funded to provide these roles
Relief Assistance, Blue, 104	Coordinate relief agencies and the community to develop local relief plans	Reference incorrect.	There is no requirement in the EMMV to develop local relief plans.
Relief Assistance, Black, 118	Inform the community about financial hardship assistance payments.	This is the role of DHHS in the first instance, not Council.	Council will support DHHS in notifying the community about financial hardship arrangements.
Natural and Cultural Heritage rehabilitation, Black, 126	As part of emergency planning, identify at-risk cultural heritage sites.	a role for Victorian Fire Risk Register and the MFMP; not a council committee	Many Indigenous sites are unknown to Council as their locations are not publicized. DELWP has cultural heritage officers who can inform the Victorian Fire Risk Register
Natural and Cultural Heritage rehabilitation, Black, 1129	Restore local cultural heritage sites	Council is not responsible for restoring heritage sites.	Sites that are managed by Council may be restored post emergency but this is not a requirement.
Natural and Cultural Heritage rehabilitation, Black, 130	Coordinate remediation and stabilisation works on private and public land.	Likely occurred as a last resort	CFA and or DELWP are largely responsible for their own remediation works.
Natural and Cultural Heritage rehabilitation, Black, 131	Monitor natural and cultural heritage sites	Only partially correct	Council is only responsible for the monitoring of natural sites on land it manages. Dot point needs further clarification.