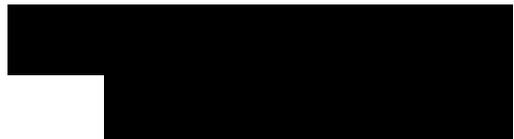




COUNCILS AND EMERGENCY DIRECTIONS PAPER

Submission from Southern Grampians Shire Council

Prepared by



Southern Grampians Shire is a leading, innovative and creative community offering many opportunities with the best of country living.

With a population of 16,510, the Southern Grampians Shire covers an area of 6,652 square kilometres with Hamilton the main retail and service centre supported by the nine surrounding townships of Balmoral, Branxholme, Byaduk, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld, Glenthompson, Peshurst and Tarrington. This district also has a large role in the production of food and fibre.

Within the region we have a number of risks that can impact on the local and the wider community. The most common and regular emergency is fire, however, in recent years we have seen flood and heat emergencies. Another concern is pandemic for people and livestock as these can have broad implications on the community. While these risks and others have been identified and the Council may have a role the mitigation or support the process of mitigation. The Council is **not a response agency** should an emergency occur. The Council **should not** be considered a response agency in any form. These emergencies are outside the scope and capabilities of Council.

Major event (Emergency) can be defined as “**where the available resources are or are likely to be overwhelmed.**” If this occurs then the Council will need support from other agencies (response agencies), not the other way around. Also the local response agencies may need to draw on other resources from out of the district to combat the incident.

Response agencies are funded and have the expertise to supply these response services, whereas Council is not. If Council does respond then it carries the cost of this if it occurs during business hours. If this expense is incurred then it will have a ripple effect on Council’s ability to perform its normal business. The effect of this will increase time to recovery, as the Council will have lost the capacity to provide services to the community. Furthermore may not have the ability to restore infrastructure or do this restoration in a timely manner. It is the restoration of infrastructure and services that aids in the recovery process from the emergency. The more quickly a community can return to normal the better the recovery.

During these emergencies when they occur, the provision of support to the response agencies in the form of physical and human resources **should not be assumed.** This support will be contingent upon the availability and capability of the Council at that time.

Over the years Councils have divested themselves of heavy equipment and plant with these being outsourced to private enterprises. Current funding for Council has led to leaner structures with little if any spare capacity. What equipment and resources the Council does own or operate will be engaged in other work and may not be in a position to be released at the time of the emergency. The Council will provide support if it is within its capability at that time on a fee for service basis.

The tone of the directions paper appears to be attempting to place more responsibility on Council without any increase in funding. The work a Council should be expected to do during an emergency should only be that which it has the capacity to do over and above its normal business. This support needs to be performed without increasing the burden on the community. In this response we have examined the areas where we see Council has a role within the current legislation and arrangements.

We will also comment on the points where Council may have a lead or support role outside current legislation. The directions paper in part appears to be very prescriptive or could become prescriptive if these statements remain as presented. Moreover, many of these and other statements are core business of Council, and have no place within this document.

For the purpose of this response we have removed a hundred and seven points that have been identified as core Council business. There are another fourteen that could be removed or amalgamated into other points.

The manner in which this directions paper is written also implies that the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) has the legal standing of regulations. This is clearly not the case. The EMMV is a set of guiding principles and ideals that help differing agencies to develop plans and action for the management or the mitigation of an emergency and risk. Also the EMMV helps to inform other agencies of the roles of the other services to avoid duplication, not to shift responsibility from one agency to another.

It also needs to be highlighted that directions paper has a number of elements in it that if fully adopted could impose requirements on Council that it does not have the capability, capacity or is funded for. Furthermore, may enshrine actions that are currently core business and remove the ability of discretion and agility of Council to shape its future and respond to community pressure and demands.

In the table below is listed the current requirements of Council under the various Acts of parliament as they currently stand. However, some of the wording is inappropriate and places an interpretation that does not exist or is inaccurate. We will also comment on those that we believe we should have a role in providing where the Council has the capability to do so with appropriate funding.

Planning

Current legislated requirement	EMMV guideline	Council may have a role.	Key
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Number from directions paper	Directions paper position	Councils position
1	Lead an all-agencies approach to community-based risk assessment and planning including compliance with relevant legislation and policy at the municipal level. ¹	While the Council may lead this, Councils major function should be to coordinate the activities of those who have the expertise. In some instance this may be Council, but others would be other agencies eg SES for flood, the various fire authorities for fire Department of Health and Human Services for pandemic etc.
2	Prepare and maintain municipal emergency management plans and subplans. ²	This needs to be the responsibility of the committee as outlined with in the planned amendments of the Emergency Management Act 2013. It may be appropriate for the Council to lead the committee as the Council will be impacted by all of the other agencies and the Council needs to be able to control what happens within its boundaries. Furthermore, has a wider focus than any of the individual response agencies. Council will continue to have a presence after the event. Moreover, the Council is the community’s representatives for these matters.
3	Appoint a municipal emergency management planning committee	This is current and appropriate as the plan developed by this committee will have a direct impact on the Council. The plan should be owned by the committee with the Council being one member and a stakeholder not the owners as it currently is.
4	Support hazard-specific risk assessment to inform plans and community resilience building strategies,	This is a continuation of point one and is implied within that point. It does not need to be repeated here.

	using local knowledge and information based on community needs. ⁴	
5	Lead implementation and coordination of specific risk treatments on private and Council land in partnership with emergency management agencies, including flood/fire management, maintaining a register of at-risk groups. ⁵	The Council should only lead this if it is within its current capability and appropriately funded for it. However, once a risk is identified it needs to be addressed by the <u>committee</u> . The committee could be held liable if it identifies a risk and does nothing to mitigate it. <u>Again it should be the committee that is held accountable not the Council alone.</u> A funding base needs to be developed for this work so that the committee is empowered to organise the mitigation of the risks.
11	Apply local planning schemes and building controls including development assessments, inspections and advice. ⁶	This is core business of Council and does not need to be included in the EMMV.

Community information and warnings

Deliver public information and warnings that are authoritative, consistently constructed and relevant for all Victorians and visitors in all emergencies.

Provide timely and tailored information that supports the community to make informed decisions before, during and after emergencies.

14	Support agencies to plan, prepare and deliver consistent, all-hazards customised information and messages to the community, using Council communication networks. ⁸	While this is an appropriate action for the Council it should not be performed at Council expense alone as this is a shared responsibility.
18	Support implementation of flood warning systems in at-risk areas of the municipality	This needs better definition. What is meant by a flood warning system? These systems can be as simple as a stick in the ground to an electronic device. Regardless of the system type, it needs to be at a minimum a State wide system to be truly effective. In most cases these systems are only useful to the communities downstream from the water that may cause an issue. Also currently once installed these warning systems become the responsibility of the Council to maintain, therefore the Council will need to be appropriately funded for this to be carried out. Staff will need appropriate training and education to interpret the information obtained by the system. If it is a manual system, then funding will be required to pay staff to monitor at times of high risk
19	Support a whole-of-government approach to emergency preparedness and awareness campaigns.	This is a motherhood statement and needs to be better defined. Also could have wide ranging financial implications to all sectors of government.
26	Support agencies to provide community-led recovery information (for example using social media or notice boards)	This is an important function as the recovery process can and does occur during the emergency. The community needs to be well informed about this to aid in this process. Effective communication is important in the recovery process. However this could be part of point 14 and not repeated here.
28	Support agencies to analyse community needs to inform recovery messages and planning from a range of sources (such as public meetings, a call centre, a recovery centre and debriefings)	This core business for Council however, other agencies involved in this process may need some input from the community and Council to develop their action plans arising from the incident.
29	Support evaluators and researchers to better understand community information needs and the effectiveness of local warnings	Research is important to examine what has occurred and drill down on the data gather during the emergency. This will enable for lessons to be learnt. A period of reflection on the action is required to develop and grow as a

		<p>community. However, this needs to be performed in a timely manner by appropriately trained people. This information should inform future practice and prepare all involved for the next event. Also feed into the risk mitigation and treatment area. Furthermore fully funded to allow for the appropriate engagement of an independent a research team to remove bias that may occur if performed in house. Also to allow for Council to return to normal business while the research is being undertaken. We also need to consider the research design so that the appropriate data is collected. This scoping needs to be completed before an emergency so as to ensure the appropriate data is collected in an ethically and in a timely manner.</p>
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Operational management

Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities, including operational communications.

30	Appoint a municipal emergency resource officer. ¹³	This needs to be reviewed in light of other suggested changes as this may not be the appropriate position in the current climate and the future role of Council in the emergency arena. The position description would also require updating to reflect the intent of the role.
33	Support agencies to develop procedures to use Council resources. ¹⁵	<p>This is a poorly worded point. It is not up to other support agencies to develop procedures on how to use Council’s resources. This is the role of Council as the owner or operator of the resources to develop these plans.</p> <p>The Council has the right under the act to determine what and how the resources are to be used if any.</p> <p><i>‘Municipal emergency management plan</i> <i>(1) A municipal Council must prepare and maintain a municipal emergency management plan.</i> <i>(2) A municipal emergency management plan must contain provisions—</i> <i>(a) identifying the municipal resources (being resources owned by or under the direct control of the municipal Council) and other resources available for use in the municipal district for emergency prevention, response and recovery; and</i> <i>(b) specifying how such resources are to be used for emergency prevention, response and recovery;’</i></p>

<p>34</p>	<p>Lead risk-mitigation measures through business-as-usual works by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where Council is a road authority, managing vegetation on roadsides to ensure a safe, efficient road network¹⁶ • mitigating risks to Council-owned assets and infrastructure 	<p>This section is too specific. The Act does not state anything about vegetation it is far more general than that. Furthermore it is the road authorities' responsibility to see that the road is fit for purpose (normal use). If modification needs to occur because of an emergency it should be the responsibility of the lead agency to organise and fund this modification.</p> <p><i>'The principal object of road management is to ensure that a safe and efficient network of roads is provided primarily for travel and transport and that road reserves are available for other appropriate uses.'</i></p> <p>The second point should be removed as this is what and business needs to do as part of good business practice it is also core business of Council.</p>
<p>41</p>	<p>Support response agencies to effectively deliver emergency response services locally by:¹⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after consultation, making Council resources, facilities and services available to agencies during response, relief and recovery phases • providing Council resources as requested by agencies to secure affected areas • providing a Council liaison officer (emergency management liaison officer) to an emergency management team to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ share knowledge, data and information about community needs and consequences ○ ensure Council is consulted and involved in emergency decisions that will affect the Council and community. 	<p>As a general principal this is accepted however, it is contingent upon Council's capability at the time and competing demands for services.</p> <p>These resources should not be assumed as the Council may not have them at their disposal at the time of request.</p>
<p>42</p>	<p>Support response agencies to access affected areas</p>	<p>Only if it's within Councils capability at the time. Also the wording of this is very nondescript what is meant by access Council only has limited powers in</p>

		this area. The Fire authorities have enormous power here and it is up to them as the lead agency to determine this, furthermore they should have the resources to do so.
43	Support Provide agencies response agencies with resources and information to partially or fully close roads and determine alternative transport routes. ¹⁸	This is linked to point 34 and should be read in conjunction of the Road Management Act 2004.
48	Scope requirements for planning to establish a municipal / community recovery committee and if necessary form, lead and support the committee. ²⁰	This should only be for our LGA. But if the event covers more than one LGA then we would form a sub-committee of a larger recovery group. Also will need to be funded to defray the cost of staff not fulfilling their normal duties.
52	Lead the establishment a recovery centre, coordinating across agencies to ensure sufficient staff, resources and equipment.	While not a requirement, the Council should be a lead in this role as it will impact on Council services and the community. Also Council will be able to prioritise against its strategic plan to ensure appropriate stakeholder engagement and resource management.
53	Support recovery case management and gather data from relevant agencies locally	This is poorly defined and too broad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is meant by case management? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is this individuals, families, small section of the community or the total LGA • What agencies are we referring to? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response agencies Police, Fire, Ambulance< SES etc ○ Or other support agencies St John, Red Cross etc • What is the data for? • Who is going to interpret this data? • What type of data? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quantitative ○ Qualitative ○ Mixed
54	Conduct post-emergency needs assessments, coordinating with response and recovery agencies locally.	Is this is linked to points 52 and 53 how does it differ? Consider removing.
57	Lead the establishment a recovery centre, coordinating across agencies to ensure sufficient staff, resources and equipment.	Council is capable of providing these facilities for this purpose. But the centres will need to be manned by other agencies with the appropriate skill

		sets. Council can coordinate these to reduce waste and duplication however, will need funding for any resources and consumables used
60	Lead the management of environmental health issues (such as food and sanitation safety, vector control and animal disposal) with relevant agencies.	This should be done in conjunction with the other agencies eg, DHHS, DELWP etc. The Council may have a role in coordination and lead when it has the expertise. Otherwise the lead agency should be that agency which has the best skill set for that purpose.
61	Support agencies to coordinate volunteer efforts after emergencies. ²²	This is too broad a statement. Coordination at an emergency is the role of Victoria Police many organisation have a mixture of paid and unpaid staff (SES, CFA, Red Cross etc). Also when an emergency occurs there are many people who do volunteer at the time however, it should be up to the lead agency or VicPol to decide the need and determining the skill set of these people and if they are deployable. Furthermore, these people need to be registered before deployment so they can be tracked for OHS reasons. This will require an effective database to be developed for this purpose. Once the database is developed who should be responsible for its maintenance of this database
62	Coordinate animal welfare within Council resources. ²³	Agreed to avoid duplication of services. However this does not mean that Council should be in field unless the Council has the best expertise in this area. The lead agency could be RSPCA or other similar organisation that have the appropriate skill set to do so.
63	Support agencies to coordinate and manage services to meet the immediate needs of affected livestock locally. ²⁴	Remove covered in point 62
64	Support agencies to monitor emerging needs and adapt services to minimise the long-term consequences on health and wellbeing	Remove covered by point 60

Public order and community safety

Provide a safe, secure and orderly society through the active prosecution of regulations and laws related to the prevention of serious emergencies and to afford a safe environment for those communities affected by an emergency and any responding personnel engaged in emergency operations.

74	Undertake municipal functions as required by local government, building, electricity, water and land use planning legislation and regulations. ²⁵	The author of the directions document has again developed a catchall statement. The statement needs to be more specific about the emergency space quoting specific parts of the Acts. The reference contained within the directions paper (25) covers eleven different Acts of parliament of which all cover core business of the Council. If there is a specific reference to the emergency provision then it should be appropriately referenced or this point removed. Council will and does comply with its legal responsibility.
75	Proactively enforce relevant regulations and laws that relate to emergency management. ²⁶	Council will meet its obligations. This is another motherhood statement that has no reference to any section of either Act, furthermore there are does not appear to be any regulations or laws within these Act’s that require Council to enforce. If there is then these need to be referenced correctly.

Building community resilience

Communities strengthen their lifelines by better connecting and working together with appropriate support.

81	Develop and deliver emergency management and community resilience training for Council staff	It is incumbent on any organisation to ensure their staff has the requisite skills to carry out the tasks they are required to do. If an organisation fails to do this then they would be in breach of the OHS Act.
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Fire management & suppression

Provide firefighting capabilities to manage and suppress fires of all types, kinds, and complexities while protecting lives, property, and the environment in the affected (land and water) area.

86	<p>Support agencies in line with relevant fire legislation and regulations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appointing a municipal fire prevention officer²⁸ • developing and maintaining a municipal fire prevention plan²⁹ • identifying, designating, signing, maintaining and annually reviewing bushfire safer places and their plans, and (for Councils in Country Fire Authority [CFA] areas) reporting back annually to the CFA³⁰ • issuing permits to burn³¹ • taking all practicable steps (including with planned burning) to prevent the occurrence and spread of fires and minimise their danger on land that Council manages or is responsible for³² • providing pillar fire hydrants in reticulated areas when the CFA issues written notice to do so³³ • meeting the costs of providing, installing, marking and maintaining all fire plugs in the municipality.³⁴ 	<p>Council will meet its legal obligation here</p>
	<p>Under the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 are able to issues these permits however, Council is not required to do so. The CFA is the responsible agency</p>	
	<p>Council will meet its legal obligation here</p>	

Impact assessment

Provide all decision-makers with relevant information regarding the nature and extent of the hazard and any potential consequences during and after an emergency to ensure efficient, timely and appropriate support for communities.

95	Support agencies to gather information about how the emergency is affecting animals.	Covered and or include in point 62
94	Initially assess impacts on essential infrastructure and services. ³⁶	This statement is not clear as Council should only assess infrastructure that Councils has expertise in or is responsible for, eg drainage, building rubbish collection etc. Other agencies need to assess their infrastructure it not incumbent on Council to do it for them.
96	Support agencies to use Council’s spatial data to verify property losses.	This should be performed under Council supervision and be cost neutral.

Relief assistance

The provision of well-coordinated, integrated and timely assistance to meet the immediate health, wellbeing and essential needs of affected communities, during and immediately after an emergency event, with the aim to support social cohesion and build resilience.

104	Coordinate relief agencies and the community to develop local relief plans. ³⁸	Agreed. These should be developed and in place prior to any emergency
105	Develop protocols and procedures that are agreed with relief agencies.	Agreed. These should be developed and in place prior to any emergency
106	Design a scalable organisational structure to deliver relief services	This should be part of points 104 and 105
108	Contribute to regional relief planning.	Covered by points 104, 105
109	Identify, plan and document relief centres or other locations to provide emergency relief services that meet health and other community needs.	Agreed and part of the planning process.

110	Develop plans and procedures for emergency shelter.	Define the difference between this and point 109
111	Plan for the needs of domestic animals as part of relief activities.	Covered by point 62
112	Support service providers and local groups to educate the community about donated goods and volunteering and develop messages and procedures about donated goods and volunteers.	Council can coordinate this however, it should be the lead agencies ie Red Cross who determine the needs and provide the information to be disseminated.
113	Work with health practitioners to understand the health and psychosocial implications of emergencies and the implications for relief	This is a role for DHHS and coordinated through the health commanders on scene. Consider removing from this document.
114	Develop surge arrangements for relief, recovery and business-as-usual activities in the short, medium and long-terms	This should be included within point 105
115	Coordinate relief services locally. ³⁹	Covered by point 104, 105 and 106
116	<p>Establish and manage relief centres where appropriate, including:⁴⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • register relief centre attendees • coordinate the provision of food, water and materials to affected communities⁴¹ • provide temporary shelter options for displaced local people • coordinate and manage services to meet the physical and psychosocial needs of affected local people.⁴² 	<p>Registration of people at relief centres is the responsibility of VicPol and often carried out by Red Cross</p> <p>Coordination of these services is an important role to avoid duplication however, the supply of food etc should be left to those what have the capability to do so eg Red Cross, Country Woman’s Association etc</p> <p>The provision of temporary shelter will be dependent upon available capability. This also needs to be defined as to what is the minimum standard of shelter. This raises the question as to who funds the purchase/higher and or maintenance of these facilities.</p> <p>The third point is covered under point 113</p>

All points listed under the following headings and descriptors are covered by the core business of Council. These items do not have a place within the Councils and Emergencies Directions paper.

Intelligence and information-sharing

To provide timely, accurate and actionable decision support information, resulting from the planning, collecting, processing, analysis and evaluation from multiple data sources, which is needed to be more proactive in anticipating hazard activity and informing mitigation, response or recovery activities. It also includes the assessment of risks, threats and hazards so that decision makers, responders, and community members can take informed action to reduce their entity's risk and increase their resilience.

Logistics and supply chain management

Deliver essential commodities, equipment, and services in support of impacted communities and survivors, to include emergency power and fuel support, as well as the coordination of access to community staples. Synchronize logistics capabilities and enable the restoration of impacted supply chains, including removal of debris.

Health protection

The coordination and implementation of legislation, programs and monitoring procedures to minimise public health risk from infectious disease, contaminated food, and contaminated drinking water supplies, radiation and human environmental health hazards. This includes the development and implementation of strategies to promote and protect public health.

Economic recovery

Return economic and business activities (including food and agriculture) to a healthy state and develop new business and employment opportunities that result in a sustainable and economically viable community.

Natural and cultural heritage rehabilitation

Protect natural and cultural heritage resources through appropriate planning, mitigation, response, and recovery actions to preserve, conserve, rehabilitate, and restore them consistent with post-disaster community priorities and best practices and in compliance with applicable environmental and heritage preservation laws.

Built recovery

To restore essential infrastructure and establish safe areas during and following an emergency, ensuring the provision of facilities and services to support and benefit communities

Social recovery

The longer term provision of assistance and access to services that allows individuals, families and communities to achieve an effective level of functioning after an emergency event. This includes safety, security, shelter, health and psychosocial wellbeing and re-establishment of those elements of society necessary for well-being

Assurance and learning

Support continuous improvement to improve emergency management practice and community safety by extracting understanding from experience and research, reviewing community consequences, investigating causes and outcomes, providing assurance and translating lessons into behaviour change

Principles for defining responsibilities and actions

The consultation activities also brought forward ideas for principles to use when assessing whether Councils' emergency management responsibilities are appropriate. These principles might have application when considering any future changes to Council's current emergency management responsibilities and actions