

Response to “Councils and Emergencies Directions Paper”- Nillumbik Shire Council

The community of Nillumbik has a history of emergencies. Notably the 2009 Bushfires had devastating effect.

41 fatalities

135 houses destroyed

An area of 9, 800 hectares burnt (23 per cent of the Shire).

These fires also had immense impact on Nillumbik Shire Council’s capacity to both meet the needs of the community during this event and in the recovery from it whilst maintaining the delivery of core business services.

The experience of this and other emergencies in Nillumbik has highlighted the need for effective and efficient emergency management arrangements. Clarity of role before during and after emergencies is an essential part of this. Experience in Nillumbik is that council’s role is often misunderstood which is accompanied by unrealistic expectations of council’s capabilities.

It is understood that the intent of emergency management reform in Victoria is to be more community focussed with an aim of ‘Safer More Resilient Communities’. Also as the closest tier of government to the community, local government has a crucial role in helping to achieve this.

The Councils and Emergencies Directions Paper attempts to define councils’ role by listing 154 actions and responsibilities. It also lists six principles for defining responsibilities and actions. However, there seems to be little correlation between these two lists.

Many of the references to legislative requirement are wrong or inaccurate. The Municipal Association of Victoria’s response to the paper provides comprehensive details of these inaccuracies. LGV has updated its references in recent correspondence to correct these inaccuracies.

It is acknowledged that in compiling the list of 154 actions and responsibilities, LGV conducted extensive consultation with council officers. However there does not seem to be any selection criteria applied to the list to determine their appropriateness as a responsibility of local government.

Some of the listed items are very specific e.g. 30. Appoint a municipal emergency resource officer and others vague and open to interpretation e.g. 90. Manage, coordinate, supply and deliver resources promptly and efficiently using best-practice methods locally.

Council’s role in the supply of resources is an example where there is great variance of opinion across the sector. This often leads to unrealistic expectations and frustration during emergencies. This paper does nothing to clarify council’s role in relation to the supply of resources during emergency.

This paper does not effectively describe the role of local government in emergencies. It does not address issues of role clarity nor does it appear to support the principles of a community focused approach to emergency management.

MAV in their response to this paper have put forward a ‘Maturity Model Proposal’. Officers support this proposal as providing sound methodology for determining councils’ role in emergencies. It recognises the importance of having an effective and efficient emergency management system.

The Maturity Model recognises the different level of capacity across local government to respond to an emergency event. The Model is based on splitting councils' responsibilities into 'essential' or core responsibilities, 'good practice' activities which all councils should aim to achieve and 'extended' activities which may only be provided where a high risk profile exists. It is recommended that Council support this model.

Clear definition of the role of local government in emergencies is essential for the provision of effective and efficient emergency management systems that support safer and more resilient communities. The LGV Directions Paper does not provide this clarity in its current form.

The response prepared by the Municipal Association of Victoria provides a way forward for addressing this and it is recommended that Council support the MAV submission to the LGV Directions Paper.

At the Ordinary Council meeting held on the 2nd May 2027, Nillumbik Shire Council carried a motion to: Endorses the Municipal Association of Victoria's response to the Local Government Victoria Council and Emergencies Directions Paper.

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