

Indigo Shire Council's submission to:
Council and Emergencies Direction Paper

The Indigo Shire Council covers an area of approximately 2038km² and has a population of around 15,200. As LGV would be aware with this small population spread over the entire Shire, the capability and capacity to fill all its responsibilities in an emergency are limited.

Indigo Shire Council strongly agree with the comments of the MAV that there is no consistent view about the role of councils in emergency management. This needs to be addressed in order for all councils to understand their responsibilities in order to work more effectively with all agencies involved in emergency management.

In general, the requirements relating to relief and recovery are ambitious for a small rural council. Resourcing needs to be reviewed in line with this. There is enormous variability across local government areas in their resources and availability to respond. In addition to this, councils have been required to implement policies and procedures in regard to neighbourhood safer places which has resulted in significant increase in risk and potential Liability. This situation and the expectation that these additional obligations can be met with little or no financial support from State or Federal Government is unsustainable and unsatisfactory. It is worth noting the small municipalities, such as Indigo Shire Council with the lowest rate base are often located in areas prone to emergency events such as Bushfire, Flood and Storm.

Comments Regarding

Numbers as per Direction Paper

- **30. Appoint a MERO:**
We agree with the MAV that a MERO was more relevant when council owned a lot heavier equipment. The MERO's roll in supplying council recourses and or local businesses that can provide recourses needs clarification.

- **85. Engage the community in developing and delivering recovery activities including by appointing a community recovery officer.**
Indigo Shire had a large Bushfire in our area in 2015 and our current Community Recovery Officer is still working with some residents.
There is 9 small towns and communities with in our Shire and working with these is a full time commitment.

86. Meeting the cost of providing, installing, marking and maintaining all fire plugs in the municipality.

The Council does not require fire plugs to be installed so should not be responsible for their provision, installation, marking and maintenance. ISC agree with the MAV that it is not appropriate for councils to pay for all fire plugs.

- 95. Support agencies to gather information about how the emergency is affecting animals.

This point is very unclear and requires clarification.

- 88. Maintain and store essential equipment and material to support emergency management activities and meet the needs of affected communities (such as sand bags).

Council should not be required to maintain and store essential equipment, ie sandbags, unless paid for and provided by the responsible Emergency Response Agency.

- 104. Coordinate relief agencies and the community to develop local relief plans.

Indigo Shire Council has a different view and agrees with MAV that there is no specific requirements around developing local relief plans and that it be delivered in partnership with the appropriate agencies. If Coordination was a requirement, then we agree with MAV that stronger support from State Government and a certainty of reimbursement for council expenditure.

- 136. Survey and determine the occupancy of damaged buildings.

Need clarification of the meaning of this point. In the EMMV it states.

“surveying and making a determination regarding occupancy of damaged buildings”

As the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) states in their draft submission, it is now more difficult to be certain of reimbursement for recovery activities through the Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements, and this coupled with the rate capping and a freeze on indexation of Federal Assistance Grants, means that an activity that may have been undertaken in the past will not be possible in the future.

We believe that more information about how EMV could better support Councils would be a good asset, especially with new people coming on board all the time.

Centralised resources including fact sheets and templates should be available online from EMV to guide Councils in the event of an emergency. There is great inefficiencies in the current system requiring each municipality to handle events in isolation.

Indigo Shire Council would strongly advocate for a central recovery officer to be employed full time at region specific levels for general community resilience work. In the event of an emergency, this officer should be deployed to the specific Shire to support recovery until grant funding is made available for employment of a fixed term recovery officer.

On behalf of Indigo Shire Council.

Regards

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