

Submission to
Local Government Victoria's
Directions Paper
Councils and emergencies

April 2017



Introduction

Brimbank City Council ("Council") welcomes the opportunity to provide Local Government Victoria (LGV) with a Submission in response to its Directions Paper - '*Councils and emergencies*'.

Councils play an essential role in the State's emergency management arrangements by preparing communities to respond to and recover from emergencies. However, current emergency management responsibilities are often not well understood inside and outside the emergency management sector. Emergency management capability and capacity also differs greatly from council to council.

The '*Victorian Preparedness Goal 2016*' identifies twenty one (21) core capabilities the emergency management sector needs to manage emergencies and coordinate efforts: before, during or after an emergency. Of the twenty one (21) core capabilities, councils have some responsibility or take action in sixteen (16) of the core capabilities.

The Directions Paper describes 154 preliminary emergency management responsibilities and actions (Core capability descriptions) of councils before, during and after emergencies related to the sixteen (16) core capabilities of the '*Victorian Preparedness Goal 2016*' (**Appendix 1**).

The draft Submission responds to the key aspects of '*Councils and emergencies*', including:

- Core capability descriptions;
- Principles for defining responsibilities and actions; and
- 'Other' considerations.

This Submission aims to provide clarity on the emergency management responsibilities and actions to enable appropriate resource allocation to manage Council's responsibilities and ensure emergency management agencies and the local community are clear on the role of Council in emergency management and the support that can or cannot be provided.

Response Key Aspects

1. Core Capability Descriptions (Appendix 1).

The descriptions which are Council's responsibility derived from current emergency management legislation, regulations, and plans are currently being accommodated through existing Council resources, as required, without the need for additional funding. However, a number of *Core Capability Descriptions* are considered outside the capability and capacity of Council and would be subject to additional resourcing to implement.

Recommendation:

The following *Core Capability Descriptions* are considered outside the capability and capacity of Council and would require additional resourcing (amount to be determined) for these to be undertaken (Refer Appendix 1 for details):

Numbers: 6, 7, 13, 18, 19, 22, 36, 37, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 96, 97, 98, 102, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 137, 138, 139, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150 & 151.

In addition, descriptions 130 and 143 would need to be amended to remove the reference to Council undertaking any works on private land as this is outside Councils' area of responsibility.

2. Principles for defining responsibilities and actions

The Discussion Paper outlines a number of principles to be used when assessing whether council's emergency management responsibilities are appropriate.

These Principles are that a council's emergency management responsibilities and actions should:

- Reflect the council's strengths and capabilities and align to its normal business functions;
- Complement those of other agencies, businesses and the public;
- Be engaged only where the council is the best-placed organisation to do so (meaning it should not be used as an intermediary on behalf of other agencies, particularly for processes over which it has no control or ownership);
- Be applicable to emergencies of different scales and complexity;
- Be consistent with its capability and capacity, along with its other legislative responsibilities and core business; and
- Provide a platform to collaborate and build partnerships with other councils to enhance the delivery of services.

It is considered that principles 1 and 5 (dot points) should be combined as both these points are similar and could be absorbed into one principle.

Recommendation:

Combine Principles 1 and 5 (dot points) on page 35 for defining responsibilities and actions to use when assessing whether councils' emergency management responsibilities are appropriate.

3. Other' considerations

Council has a key role to play in emergency management through the facilitation of planning and networking partnerships. Council officers should not be considered as a response agency coordinating resources to manage an emergency. Highly trained specialists with appropriate equipment have greater expertise than Council officers that have no or very little emergency response training or appropriate equipment to deal with an emergency event.

Resource Implications

Council acknowledges its role as part of the State's emergency management arrangements to assist in the preparation of the Brimbank community to respond to and recover from emergencies.

The implementation of rate capping has significantly impacted on Council's operating budgets which has required, and will continue to require, Council to review the extent and level of services able to be provided to the community.

Any additional requirements placed on a council to increase its emergency management responsibilities should be acknowledged and appropriately funded.

Further Consultation

The Directions Paper does not differentiate between the capability and capacity of each council. The Directions Paper should be strengthened by defining the variation in capability and capacity across the local government sector and the ability for councils to be flexible in targeting their own community needs.

Councils will need to be further consulted on the updated role description actions prior to providing support. LGV should continue to engage with the local government sector to ensure the updated role description actions are supported by councils prior to further rounds of consultation.

APPENDIX 1

Councils' current emergency management responsibilities and actions

(As defined by Local Government Victoria (LGV) discussion paper entitled 'Councils and emergencies')

Colouring of descriptions

Some descriptions are coloured **blue**; others are coloured **black**.

Blue descriptions are responsibilities deriving from current emergency management legislation (such as the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*), regulations, policy (such as the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*) and plans (such as the *State Emergency Response Plan* and *State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan*).

Black descriptions are actions that are not a responsibility under legislation, regulations, policy or plans, but which some council's consider to be appropriate emergency management actions for them to undertake.

They may not be appropriate for every council: there is no suggestion they are suitable or relevant for all councils. This raises the question of whether they are an appropriate responsibility for local government or not.

No.	Core Capability Descriptions	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
1.	Lead an all-agencies approach to community-based risk assessment and planning including compliance with relevant legislation and policy at the municipal level.	YES	NO
2.	Prepare and maintain municipal emergency management plans and sub-plans.	YES	NO
3.	Appoint a Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC).	YES	NO
4.	Support hazard-specific risk assessment to inform plans and community resilience-building strategies, using local knowledge and information based on community needs.	YES	NO
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.	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
6.	Lead the maintenance and administration of the Vulnerable Persons Register (VPR).	NO	YES
7.	Support the profiling of the community to identify and record what makes people vulnerable in emergencies and work with Red Cross, DHHS and other agencies to establish a plan to support vulnerable people in the community.	NO	YES
8.	Develop council business continuity plans detailing procedures and systems to maintain core business and emergency management activities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • backfilling for staff with emergency management expertise when they are on leave; • planning to identify and address gaps in Council's emergency knowledge and action. 	YES	NO
9.	Improve recovery plans and procedures by exercising and reviewing them.	YES	NO
10.	Develop settlement and issue-based policies and strategies in planning schemes that clearly express and give direction to urban change, including implementing risk-mitigation strategies (such as flood and bushfire management overlays).	YES	NO
11.	Apply local planning schemes and building controls including development assessments, inspections and advice.	YES	NO
12.	Prepare local recovery plans after emergencies.	YES	NO
13.	Assess capability and capacity needs for undertaking relief and recovery activities, determine councils' ability to meet these needs and plan to obtain additional staff and resources as required.	NO	YES
15.	Plan, together with neighbouring councils and regionally, community information.	YES	NO
16.	Identify appropriate and preferred communication channels for the community and particular groups and people (such as those who are vulnerable and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse).	YES	NO
17.	Support agencies to develop emergency management communications that are relevant and credible to the community.	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
18.	Support implementation of flood warning systems in at-risk areas of the municipality.	NO	YES
19.	Support a whole-of-government approach to emergency preparedness and awareness campaigns.	NO	YES
20.	Communicate with elected Councillors and the Senior/Executive Management team to keep them informed and up-to-date. Done MEMPC & Representative Report.	YES	NO
21.	<p>Support agencies to develop and disseminate information and warnings that are relevant and credible to the community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disseminating information through council communication channels and local networks • developing accurate, timely risk information tailored to community needs. 	YES	NO
22.	Respond to community calls for local relief and recovery assistance (including assistance with equipment, food, clothing, accommodation and health needs) and be the central point to identify resources and information.	NO	YES
23.	Deliver timely, coordinated, accessible and tailored information to the community so it understands relief and recovery assistance mechanisms and processes including through community briefings and meetings.	YES	NO
24.	Assess community needs, to inform recovery information.	YES	NO
25.	Organise local broadcasts through the Mayor and/or Chief Executive Officer (for example, recovery newsletters).	YES	NO
26.	Support agencies to provide community-led recovery information (for example using social media or notice boards).	YES	NO
27.	Provide and staff a recovery centre.	YES	NO
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).	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
29.	Support evaluators and researchers to better understand community information needs and the effectiveness of local warnings.	YES	NO
30.	Appoint a Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (MERO).	YES	NO
31.	Appoint a Municipal Recovery Manager.	YES	NO
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.	YES	NO
33.	Support agencies to develop procedures to use Council resources.	YES	NO
34.	<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 network • mitigating risks to Council-owned assets and infrastructure. 	YES	NO
35.	Manage and maintain a Council Emergency Coordination System and/or Council operations and facilities that can be used during emergencies.	YES	YES
36.	Ensure Council officers are trained to safely undertake emergency management roles and responsibilities (such as traffic management, emergency management liaison officer and municipal recovery manager).	NO	YES
37.	Develop response, relief and recovery activities and participate in those led by agencies and other councils.	NO	YES
38.	Engage relevant stakeholders in gathering, analysing and sharing recovery information.	YES	NO
39.	Implement Council's Business Continuity Plan.	YES	NO
40.	Implement collaborative plans and arrangements to maintain Council's capacity, including by using neighbouring (partner) Councils' resources.	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
41.	Support response agencies to effectively deliver emergency response services locally by: <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. 	YES	NO
42.	Support response agencies to access affected areas.	YES	NO
43.	Provide agencies with resources and information to partially or fully close roads and determine alternative transport routes.	YES	NO
44.	Conduct local recovery activities.	YES	NO
45.	Support the transition from relief to recovery with relevant emergency management teams.	YES	NO
46.	When safe, deploy Council officers to affected communities to deliver recovery services.	YES	NO
47.	Work with the community and recovery agencies to adapt recovery plans to reflect newly identified or changing community needs and priorities.	YES	NO
48.	Scope requirements for planning to establish a municipal / community recovery committee and if necessary form, lead and support the committee.	YES	NO
49.	Support agencies to analyse community needs for the planning of service provision.	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
50.	Establish processes to gather information from a range of sources (such as public meetings, a call centre, a recovery centre and debriefings) to inform recovery planning.	YES	NO
51.	Continually assess recovery needs, redeploy staff to recovery roles and implement surge arrangements to fill gaps.	YES	NO
52.	Establish a recovery centre, coordinating across agencies to ensure sufficient staff, resources and equipment.	NO	YES
53.	Support recovery case management and gather data from relevant agencies locally.	NO	YES
54.	Conduct post-emergency needs assessments, coordinating with response and recovery agencies locally.	NO	YES
55.	Coordinate local outreach with relief and recovery agencies to undertake the initial assessment of relief needs.	NO	YES
56.	Work with local services including psychosocial services to utilise existing services and programs to support recovery efforts and reassure the community.	NO	YES
57.	Support agencies to take a coordinated approach to recovery at the regional level.	NO	YES
58.	Conduct the transition of local recovery arrangements back to the previous management arrangements.	NO	YES
59.	Clear blocked drains and local roads including by removing trees on council land and on roads.	YES	NO
60.	Lead the management of environmental health issues (such as food and sanitation safety, vector control and animal disposal) with relevant agencies.	YES	NO
61.	Support agencies to coordinate volunteer efforts after emergencies.	YES	NO
62.	Coordinate animal welfare within Council resources.	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
63.	Support agencies to coordinate and manage services to meet the immediate needs of affected livestock locally.	YES	NO
64.	Support agencies to monitor emerging needs and adapt services to minimise the long-term consequences on health and wellbeing.	YES	NO
65.	Implement standardised systems and processes to facilitate surge arrangements and exchange officers between neighbouring (partner) councils to maintain capability and capacity during and after emergencies by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying data needs for relief provision and planning for data management • establishing data-sharing agreements and procedures with agencies. 	NO	YES
66.	Collect, analyse and share information about current and emerging local risks, hazards and consequences with agencies, businesses, service providers, the community and other emergency management partners.	NO	YES
67.	Clarify and communicate council's emergency management role locally, to develop a shared understanding of emergency management activities with agencies and the community.	NO	YES
68.	Work with other organisations to integrate information systems, tools and networks of trained personnel to deliver intelligence requirements (such as by using Crisisworks and Emergency Management Common Operating Picture ([EM-COP])).	NO	YES
69.	Support regional and state information-sharing forums, committees and meetings.	NO	YES
70.	Support agencies by providing council-owned data and intelligence about properties, residents, assets, facilities, community demographics, needs and consequences.	NO	YES
71.	Capture, process and manage large volumes of data from multiple sources to share with the community and stakeholders.	NO	YES
72.	Capture and analyse lessons, share the findings with other councils and agencies, and work cooperatively to identify and implement solutions.	NO	YES

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
73.	Conduct ongoing intelligence-gathering and information-sharing activities about local mitigation and recovery activities.	NO	YES
74.	Undertake municipal functions as required by local government, building, electricity, water and land use planning legislation and regulations.	YES	NO
75.	Proactively enforce relevant regulations and laws that relate to emergency management.	YES	NO
76.	Build local partnerships with businesses and not-for-profit organisations.	NO	YES
77.	With other partners, support agencies to empower individuals and the community to exercise choice about and take responsibility for risks.	NO	YES
78.	Encourage and assist the community to participate in emergency management education and training programs provided by Council and agencies.	NO	YES
79.	Advocate for community needs at the regional and state level including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community preparedness and local leadership • adequate emergency management funding and resources • compatible and consistent emergency management information systems • consistent and streamlined legislation that supports council's role in emergency management at all stages of an emergency. 	NO	YES
80.	Gather knowledge about local assets, values and support systems including about the community's history and what people value as important, now and for the future.	NO	YES
81.	Develop and deliver emergency management and community resilience training for Council officers.	NO	YES
82.	Monitor and evaluate the community's engagement with emergency management and its capacity to prepare for, act during and recover from emergencies.	NO	YES

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
83.	Support emergency management teams by ensuring local information and contacts are provided as part of community decision-making during emergencies.	NO	YES
84.	Conduct community engagement activities to implement lessons learned about community resilience.	NO	YES
85.	Engage the community in developing and delivering recovery activities including by appointing community development and/or community recovery officers.	YES	NO
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 Officer • developing and maintaining a Municipal Fire Prevention Plan • 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 CFA. • issuing permits to burn, and • 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 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing pillar fire hydrants in reticulated areas when the CFA issues written notice to do so - meeting the costs of providing, installing, marking and maintaining all fire plugs in the municipality. 	YES	NO
87.	Develop emergency management resource-sharing protocols between councils.	NO	YES
88.	Maintain and store essential equipment and materials to support emergency management activities and meet the needs of affected communities (such as sandbags).	NO	YES

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
89.	Support agencies to source and supply personnel, equipment, materials, services and facilities to support emergency management activities and meet the needs of affected communities.	NO	YES
90.	Manage, coordinate, supply and deliver resources promptly and efficiently using best-practice methods locally.	NO	YES
91.	Develop impact-assessment processes and data-collection systems.	NO	YES
92.	Lead Council's impact-assessment processes, systems and tools for core Council services.	NO	YES
93.	Collect secondary impact-assessment data about the scale and characteristics of the impact on the social, economic, built and natural environments.	YES	NO
94.	Initially assess impacts on essential infrastructure and services.	YES	NO
95.	Support agencies to gather information about how the emergency is affecting animals.	NO	YES
96.	Support agencies to use Council's spatial data to verify property losses.	NO	YES
97.	Conduct a process to gather incident and impact intelligence from initial and secondary impact assessments to inform relief and recovery planning.	NO	YES
98.	Conduct longitudinal mapping of the impact focusing on wellbeing, liveability, sustainability and viability.	NO	YES
99.	Undertake municipal functions as required by public health and wellbeing legislation and regulations.	YES	NO
100.	Include emergency management in Council plans including in the municipal public health and wellbeing plan and the Council plan.	YES	NO
101.	Establish programs to detect and identify risks to public health locally (such as through heatwave planning).	YES	NO
102.	Conduct epidemiological and other investigations.	NO	YES

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
103.	Communicate information about public health locally.	YES	NO
104.	Coordinate relief agencies and the community to develop local relief plans.	YES	NO
105.	Develop protocols and procedures that are agreed with relief agencies.	NO	YES
106.	Design a scalable organisational structure to deliver relief services.	NO	YES
107.	Work with other councils to develop a collaborative approach to relief.	NO	YES
108.	Contribute to regional relief planning.	NO	YES
109.	Identify, plan and document relief centres or other locations to provide emergency relief services that meet health and other community needs.	NO	YES
110.	Develop plans and procedures for emergency shelter.	NO	YES
111.	Plan for the needs of domestic animals as part of relief activities.	NO	YES
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.	NO	YES
113.	Work with health practitioners to understand the health and psychosocial implications of emergencies and the implications for relief.	NO	YES
114.	Develop surge arrangements for relief, recovery and business-as-usual activities in the short, medium and long-terms.	NO	YES
115.	Coordinate relief services locally	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
116.	Establish and manage relief centres where appropriate, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • register relief centre attendees • coordinate the provision of food, water and materials to affected communities • provide temporary shelter options for displaced local people • coordinate and manage services to meet the physical and psychosocial needs of affected local people. 	YES	NO
117.	Start recovery case management by gathering data from relevant agencies.	NO	YES
118.	Inform the community about financial hardship assistance payments.	NO	YES
119.	Manage enquiries about donations of goods and offers to volunteer.	NO	YES
120.	Support efforts to reunify family and others separated during an emergency.	NO	YES
121.	Support a coordinated approach to relief at the regional level.	NO	YES
122.	Help affected businesses to access information and advice locally.	NO	YES
123.	Support the community to work with insurers.	NO	YES
124.	Support organisations to offer technical advice about re-establishing local businesses.	NO	YES
125.	Assess business and economic needs.	NO	YES
126.	As part of emergency planning, identify at-risk cultural heritage sites.	NO	YES
127.	Coordinate natural environment rehabilitation works locally.	NO	YES
128.	Restore local cultural heritage sites.	NO	YES

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
129.	Assess impacts to natural and cultural heritage sites.	NO	YES
130.	Coordinate remediation and stabilisation works on private and public land.	NO	YES
131.	Monitor natural and cultural heritage sites.	NO	YES
132.	With the support of Heritage Victoria, develop ways to mitigate or avoid adverse impacts to cultural heritage sites during recovery, reconstruction or rehabilitation works.	NO	YES
133.	Identify community needs and priorities for restoring the built environment including essential services, commercial and industrial facilities, public buildings and assets and housing.	NO	YES
134.	Identify standards for clean-up and recovery.	NO	YES
135.	Identify likely resource and equipment requirements for council recovery activities in the short, medium and long terms and determine supply chains in consultation with other agencies to ensure adequate resourcing.	NO	YES
136.	Survey and determine the occupancy of damaged buildings.	YES	NO
137.	Conduct stabilisation and remediation works on council or community infrastructure and land to prevent further damage to the built environment.	NO	YES
138.	Support safety assessments for essential and critical assets and infrastructure.	NO	YES
139.	Working with the community, prioritise the restoration of local assets and infrastructure, ensuring the restored assets and infrastructure are sustainable and more resilient to future emergencies.	NO	YES
140.	Coordinate the rebuilding and redevelopment of Council and private assets.	YES	NO
141.	Restore Council-owned assets, prioritising business operations and commercial or community facilities essential for community wellbeing or recovery activities.	YES	NO
142.	Coordinate clean-up activities including the disposal of dead animals.	YES	NO

No.	<i>Core Capability Descriptions</i>	Currently undertaken within Council budget	Requires additional resourcing (amount to be determined)
143.	Support the restoration of private and non-Council assets within the scope of existing Council services.	NO	YES
144.	Review physical infrastructure needs and establish long-term recovery infrastructure where necessary.	NO	YES
145.	Support agencies to restore essential assets and infrastructure.	NO	YES
146.	Establish planning scheme exemptions for emergency accommodation and clean-up works, and streamline planning and building construction approvals.	NO	YES
147.	Coordinate health programs to ensure the continuity and availability of advice and activities.	NO	YES
148.	Assess and deliver services for the medium- to long-term psychosocial needs of the community.	NO	YES
149.	Provide access to short-, medium- and long-term housing options for displaced people.	NO	YES
150.	Assess and deliver financial re-establishment assistance.	NO	YES
151.	Support community services to provide shelter, food, counselling and other assistance to people at socioeconomic disadvantage.	NO	YES
152.	Conduct after-action reviews of Council operations during emergencies, to inform future planning.	YES	NO
153.	Conduct incident management reviews and modify Council plans and procedures to draw on lessons learned.	YES	NO
154.	Assess and review outcomes for the community after an emergency, looking for opportunities to improve outcomes in future.	YES	NO