4.4   **COUNCILS AND EMERGENCIES DIRECTIONS PAPER – MAV SUBMISSION**
(GL: D17███████)

Responsible Director: ████████████

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the draft submission prepared by the Municipal Association of Victoria in response to phase one of the Councils and Emergencies Directions Paper prepared by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Local Government Victoria) which focuses on identifying and agreeing on Victorian Councils' current emergency management responsibilities and actions.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the draft submission prepared by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) in response to a directions paper prepared by Local Government Victoria (LGV) about the role of Councils in emergencies.

BACKGROUND

Councils in Victoria have an important role in the development and implementation of emergency management arrangements by helping communities prepare, respond to and recover from emergencies. However there is no shared and documented agreement about the responsibilities and actions of councils. As part of the State Government's Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2016-19 Local Government Victoria is leading a "Councils and Emergencies Project" which aims to improve the capability and capacity of the local government sector to align with Victoria's overall emergency management system.

DISCUSSION

One of the priorities of the Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2016-2019 is to enhance the capability and capacity of Local Governments to meet their obligations in the management of emergencies. The action plan notes that:
- Local Government's roles and responsibilities in emergency management can be varied and inconsistent, and
- There is a need to better understand Local Government's capability and capacity to meet these roles and responsibilities

The core elements of capability are:
- People: people and personnel
- Resources: physical equipment and assets

- Governance: the enabling factors including legislation, funding, authorising environment, arrangements, doctrine and policy
- Systems: learning and development, information technology, financial, infrastructure and assets management, workforce management, workplace health and safety, quality control and incident management systems
- Processes: capacity planning, risk management, continuous improvement, information flow and planning

Capacity is the extent to which the core elements of capability can be sustained before, during and after an emergency.

The Councils and Emergencies Project will run for three years (2016-2018) with three phases. Phase One will focus on identifying and agreeing on councils' current emergency management responsibilities and actions. Phase Two will assess the capability and capacity of the sector, identify capability and capacity gaps. Phase Three will develop strategies and plans to address emergency management capability and capacity gaps.

Phase One commenced in mid-2016 and following a series of consultations with councils and emergency management agencies the Councils and emergencies discussion paper was released and feedback sought. It describes councils' current emergency management responsibilities and actions, based on their current legislative, policy and planning obligations. Local Government has been invited to confirm or suggest amendments to how the paper describes councils' current emergency management responsibilities and actions. Refer to attachment A.

There are 21 core capabilities required by the total emergency management sector. The *Directions Paper* sets out 154 identified current emergency management responsibilities and actions of councils – before (65), during (26), after (63) emergencies – against 16 of these core capabilities. Some derive from current emergency management legislation (38) and others are actions that some councils consider to be appropriate actions (116) for them.

The core capabilities are
- Planning
- Community Information & Warnings
- Operational Management
- Intelligence and Information Sharing
- Public Order and Community Safety
- Building Community Resilience
- Fire Management and Suppression
- Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- Impact Assessment
- Health Protection
- Relief Assistance

- Economic Recovery
- Natural and Cultural Heritage Rehabilitation
- Built Recovery
- Social Recovery
- Assurance and Learning

Following the release of the Discussion Paper the MAV conducted a series of consultations with councils and documented the findings of these meetings in a draft submission giving feedback on the Discussion Paper. Refer to the draft submission report attached. (Attachment B).

The submission notes concerns about the accuracy and acceptability of the role descriptions in their current form and the lack of engagement with councils in the development of policy and documents related to emergency management by the State Government.   It then focuses on those responsibilities and actions in blue text (those that derive from current emergency management legislation, regulations, policy and plans) and comments on selected responsibilities and actions in black text.   The feedback on these and the associated recommendations are considered reasonable and appropriate.

The Directions Paper sets out (page 35) principles for defining a council's emergency management responsibilities and actions when it state they 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
- 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
- provide a platform to collaborate and build partnerships with other councils to enhance the delivery of services.

The MAV submission notes the value of these principles and proposes another that acknowledges the need to respect the relationships that councils have with their community.

In its submission the MAV proposes the use of a "maturity model" approach to defining councils' role in emergency management that recognises the capability and capacity variation between councils and the communities they support. Under the model council responsibilities would be split into:
- essential responsibilities – reflect legisltation or statutory responsibility
- good practice tasks – ones that all councils should aim to undertake, often in collaboration with other councils or agencies
- extended tasks – ones that are beyond the scope of the majority of councils

This proposal is a positive contribution to the Councils and Emergencies Project and worthy of further development with Local Government Victoria. It recognises that Councils have different levels of emergency risks and different levels of resourcing.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Councils and Emergencies Project is an important initiative of the State Government to reach sector wide agreement on the role of councils in emergencies and to identify gaps in capability and capacity. Should the outcomes of the project (in 2018) have policy implications for Council they would be the subject of a further report.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be no immediate social implications of the proposed recommendation. However the final outcomes of the Councils and Emergencies Project may lead to an improved capability and capacity of Council and the Monash community to plan for and respond to emergencies.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed recommendation should not have any direct or indirect human rights implications.

CONCLUSION

The Councils and Emergencies Project being undertaken by the State Government, and the associated Directions Paper, are positive developments in achieving improved emergency management arrangements in Victoria. The work of the MAV in facilitating a Local Government response to the Directions Paper and it is recommended that Council endorse the MAV's draft submission.