

Our Ref: DOC [REDACTED]

12 May 2017

Local Government Victoria
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
PO Box 500
Melbourne Victoria 8002

Dear Sir/Madam,

Council and Emergencies Directions Paper Submission

Please find enclosed a submission for the Council's and Emergencies Directions Paper from the Hepburn Shire Council

If you wish to discuss this submission further, please feel free to contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Councils in Emergency Discussion Paper Submission

The Hepburn Shire Council (HSC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Local Government Victoria's (LGV) *Councils and Emergencies Directions Paper*. It provides the Shire with the opportunity to assist in improving the way emergencies are managed within Victoria.

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 submission giving feedback on the Discussion Paper. The HSC was involved in the MAV's consultation sessions and supports its submission.

As a result of the MAV's consultation and submission, instead of addressing all 154 proposed responsibilities, the HSC will separate its comments into two categories; MAV submission and HSC comments.

MAV Consultation and Submission

The MAV submission notes concerns about the accuracy and appropriateness 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 supported by the Hepburn Shire Council.

The MAV submission notes the value of the principles listed on page 35 of the *Directions Paper*. It also proposes that another principle could be added 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 this model, council responsibilities would be split into 'essential', 'good practice' and 'extended'.

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.

HSC Comment

In addition to the supported MAV submission, the Hepburn Shire believes that the discussion paper does not appropriately identify the responsibilities and capabilities of all Victorian Council's, especially those in regional Victoria.

There are 154 proposed responsibilities or actions listed in the Directions Paper. Regional Council's are already under increased pressure to provide more to the community with limited funding and resources. These responsibilities and actions clearly show that the direction proposed puts more pressure on local governments to do more but does not provide the means to do so.

The identification of actions coloured in black within the *Directions Paper* is likely to cause confusion within the community about the responsibility of Council's in emergencies. Whilst it is noted that these items are not the responsibility of local government, the fact that they have been identified and labelled within the document may add to the communities misunderstanding of Council's role within emergencies.

Many of these actions may already be undertaken by a number of local governments and can be seen a good practice but it also adds undue pressure on Council's already limited finances and resources.

Each local government has a different capacity to be able to fulfil its emergency management responsibilities. Whilst a "maturity model" as recommended by the MAV may be appropriate, consideration is needed for those regional local governments with limited funding and resources.

If these additional actions are going to be recommended or required to be undertaken, additional support should be provided to Council's to ensure they have the capacity to implement each identified action. Without this, some local governments will not be able to provide their communities with the recommended levels of support before, during and after emergencies.

Conclusion

The Hepburn Shire Council supports the submission made by the MAV and believes it provides a platform for a better direction. It is important for a clear direction to be developed for emergency management in Victoria but this direction must also be appropriate to the capacity of all involved. If it isn't appropriate for the capacity of all involved, additional support should be provided for effective implementation.

Throughout the stages of emergencies, those affected need to be provided with a clear direction about every aspect. Accordingly, it is important for the result of this direction paper to benefit every community of Victoria. Providing unrealistic and unachievable role descriptions is likely to increase the frustration of those affected by emergencies and in turn reduces the resilience we are all trying to achieve.