

Benalla Rural City Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2022-2025

Prepared by the Benalla Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee



cover photo: Tornado, Samaria Road, Benalla, published 27 March 2013, Benalla Ensign. Photo credit Luke Dennis

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout the municipality of the Rural City of Benalla, and we pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past and present.

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<https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/guidance-and-advice/emergencies-and-disasters/>

Version Control Table

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Foreword

Why do we need a Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP)?

Extreme weather, fire, flood and other events have caused death and destruction in countries across the globe in past decades. This highlights the importance of disaster mitigation, resilience and recovery. In Australia, some communities are still recovering from the most recent fire and flood events while the memory of past events is declining over time.

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (Attorney General's Department 2011) outlines an expectation of a level of capacity within communities that anticipates being 'self-reliant and prepared'.

There is a lack of any detail about how this capacity is realised in practice at the local level. This lack of clarity seriously weakens the intent of these aspirations and presents a major challenge to communities to deal with events. This situation places added burden on the emergency management system and its related agencies.

There is little doubt that resilience is actively being developed in some locations, particularly in rural areas where populations are smaller and the fabric of the community is often strong.

Extract from a paper presented at the Australia and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management conference 2020

1 Introduction

An Emergency is defined as:

The actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria or endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing:

- an earthquake, flood, windstorm or other natural event; and
- a fire; and
- an explosion; and
- a road accident or any other accident; and
- a plague or an epidemic; and
- a warlike act, whether directed at Victoria or a part of Victoria or any other State or Territory of the Commonwealth; and
- a hi-jack, siege or riot; and
- a disruption to an essential service.

1.1 The Benalla Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP)

The nationally agreed principles for emergency management planning underpin the Benalla MEMP. This MEMP should be considered in the context of both the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) and the Hume Regional Emergency Management Plan (REMP).

- Emergency planning is risk informed. Planning is based on a risk management study.
- Emergency planning reduces unknowns. Planning increases understanding of risks, vulnerabilities, and treatment options across the social, built, economic, and natural environments.
- Emergency planning is collaborative and inclusive. Planning involves consultation and engagement with those affected by the plan.
- Emergency planning is strategic. Planning develops strategic objectives, relationships, and networks.
- Emergency planning is solutions oriented. Planning develops agreed approaches to managing risks and consequences.
- Emergency planning is iterative. Learning from each step informs next steps.
- Emergency planning enables adaptive capacity. Planning develops frameworks that provide a base on which to build flexible and adaptive solutions.
- Emergency planning is a shared responsibility. Planning documents actions to be undertaken by a wide range of people/entities.

1.2 Authority for the Benalla Municipal Emergency Management Plan

In 2020, the *Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018* (EMLA Act 2018) amended the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (EM Act 2013) to provide for new integrated arrangements for emergency management planning in Victoria at the state, regional and municipal levels and create an obligation for a Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) to be established in each of the municipal districts of Victoria.

The MEMPC is no longer solely a Council committee but is a multi-agency collaborative group whose members bring organisation, industry and/or personal expertise to the task of emergency management planning for the municipal district.

Additional Community feedback on the MEMP has been sought through the inclusion of the Mayor of Benalla Rural City and Three Community and Industry representatives on the MEMPC.

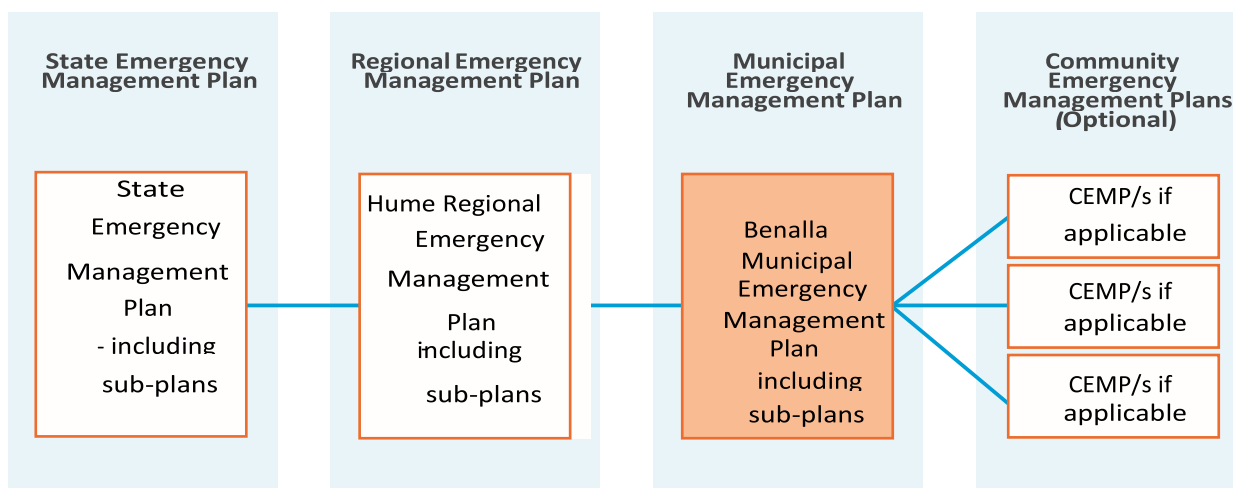
This MEMPC operates under a Terms of Reference (TOR) which is available as a separate document obtainable from BRCC.

The plan has been prepared in accordance with and complies with the requirements of the EM Act 2013 including having regard to the guidelines issued under section 77, Guidelines for Preparing State, Regional and Municipal Emergency Management Plans.

1.3 Victoria's emergency management planning framework

The Benalla REMP supports holistic and coordinated emergency management arrangements within the region. To the extent possible, this plan does not conflict with or duplicate other in-force emergency management plans that exist. It is consistent with and contextualises the SEMP and REMP for the Hume Region.

This MEMP should be read in conjunction with the SEMP and the Hume Region REMP.



1.4 Planning context

The reforms within the EMLA Act 2018 brings consistency to state, regional and municipal plans. Each municipal district is required to have a Municipal Emergency Management Plan that is consistent with the relevant Regional Emergency Management Plan and the State Emergency Management Plan. The MEMP is a subordinate plan to the REMP and the REMP is a subordinate plan to the SEMP.

The MEMP document only duplicates when and where necessary appropriate elements of the SEMP or REMP and other sub and complimentary plans to the level needed to ensure it can be understood when read as a stand-alone document by users including agencies and the broader community. The MEMP

provides specific information tailored to the municipality's context and risks and is supported in this by sub and complementary plans containing additional operational details.

Under the EMLA Act 2018 it is the multi-agency MEMPC of which Council is just one member that must prepare and maintain a MEMP. The responsibility to approve the MEMP now sits with the Regional Emergency Management Team.

Most emergencies in Benalla municipality including road hazards, house fires and traffic accidents are routinely controlled at the local Incident level with local resources and without broader consequences, additional agency involvement or communications needs. However, some emergencies have implications beyond the local incident level and do require specific actions, they need more resources, have greater consequences and recovery needs or need messages sent to broader groups of people. In these cases, regional, state or area of operation arrangements may be enacted to support the incident.

This MEMP is guided and informed by local and municipal risks and considers existing municipal emergency management planning arrangements within Benalla municipality and any other opportunities that occur.

The MEMP outlines the mitigation, response and recovery arrangements for managing emergencies which may occur within Benalla municipality. The plan addresses and capitalises on opportunities that exist to enhance emergency management planning outcomes and sustain or improve capability and capacity within Benalla municipality. It also considers any existing community emergency management plans that may be in place, for example, Community Resilience groups detailed in CFA prepared Complementary Plans.

A consideration of planning at all levels includes developing a holistic planning landscape to mitigate, plan and prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. To the extent reasonable this plan does not conflict with or duplicate other in-force emergency management plans.

The State Emergency Management Priorities underpin and guide all decisions during a response to any emergency. The State Emergency Management Plan priorities are intrinsic to this plan and are as follows.

- **Protection and preservation of life and relief of suffering is paramount.**
- **Safety of emergency response personnel.**
- **Safety of community members including vulnerable community members and visitors.**
- **Issuing of community information and community warnings detailing incident information that is timely, relevant and tailored to assist community members make informed decisions about their safety.**
- **Protection of critical infrastructure and community assets that underpin community resilience.**
- **Protection of residential properties as places of primary residence.**
- **Protection of assets supporting individual livelihoods and economic production that supports individual and community financial sustainability.**
- **Protection of environmental and conservation assets that considers the cultural, biodiversity, and social values of the environment.**

The MEMPC has the power to do all things necessary or convenient in connection with the performance of its functions. However, it cannot direct any member agency or other group to do anything or undertake any action.

The MEMPC can establish ongoing sub-committees or time limited working groups to investigate or address specific issues or undertake key tasks.

1.5 Membership of the MEMPC

As required by Section 59A of the EM Act 2013, representatives require nomination from within their relevant agency to participate as a core member on the MEMPC, as outlined in the table below.

Agency Name*	Primary role/s	Nomination made by:
Benalla Rural City	Response, Relief, Recovery	CEO
Victoria Police	Response, Relief	Commissioner of Police
Country Fire Authority	Response	Agency
Ambulance Victoria	Response, Relief	Department of Health
State Emergency Service	Response,	Agency
Australian Red Cross	Relief, Recovery	Agency
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Relief, Recovery	Agency
Department of Health	Relief, Recovery	Agency
Dept. of Environment, Land, Water and Housing	Response, Relief, Recovery	Agency
Emergency Recovery Victoria	Relief, Recovery	Agency
Agriculture Victoria	Response, Relief, Recovery	Agency

*The MEMPC also includes representatives from the Community and Thales and Nioa industries.

*The MEMPC ensures its commitment to a community voice in the MEMP process and plan development through the mayor's presence on the MEMPC and also an independent community representative to ensure a community values perspective in terms of emergency management mitigation, response and recovery.

See section 3 for more details of member organisations roles in emergencies.

Each of the representatives is a full voting member of the MEMPC as detailed in the MEMPC ToR. People with specialist skills invited to participate on Sub Plan or Complementary Plan committees will not be eligible to vote unless they are also a full committee representative as above.

The relevant agency will advise the MEMPC chair in writing of any formal changes to their nominated representative. This relates to a permanent change of membership and does not relate to attendance as a proxy. MEMPC current contact lists are maintained by the chair of the MEMPC.

It is recognised some additional agencies or individuals may be needed to add subject matter expertise to a specific project or issue the MEMPC is working on. An invitation to participate in a sub-committee or working group may be an appropriate strategy for these individuals. Members of sub-committees or working groups do not have voting rights unless they are also members of the MEMPC.

1.6 Aim and objectives of the MEMP

The aim of this MEMP is to outline the mitigation (before), response, (during) and recovery (after) arrangements for managing emergencies which may occur within the Benalla municipal area.

The economic and social effects of emergencies including loss of life, destruction of property and dislocation of communities can be significant. However, efficient planning for the use of resources in preventative (risk management) activities, in the response to emergencies and towards the relief and recovery of affected communities and environments, along with a resilient community, can significantly lessen the harmful effects of emergencies.

The Benalla MEMP aims to:

- Reduce the likelihood of emergencies, their effect on and consequences for communities.
- Ensure a comprehensive, integrated approach to emergency management in Benalla Rural City Council.
- Promote community resilience in relation to emergencies.
- Promote interoperability and integration of emergency management systems.

The MEMP is prepared within the context of the objectives of the *EM Act 2013* to:

- Foster a sustainable and efficient emergency management system that minimises the likelihood of, effects of, or consequences of emergencies.
- Establish efficient governance arrangements that clarify the roles and responsibilities of agencies and facilitate co-operation between agencies.
- Implement an “all communities - all emergencies” approach to emergency management, reinforcing that communities are at the centre of decision-making in all arrangements for managing emergencies, regardless of the form of emergency and,
- Establish integrated arrangements for emergency management planning in Benalla Municipality and Victoria.

The key objectives of this MEMP are to:

- Prepare and implement measures to prevent if possible or reduce the causes or effects of emergencies
- Manage arrangements for the utilisation and implementation of agency resources in response to emergencies
- Manage support that may be provided to or from adjoining municipalities
- Assist the affected community to recover following an emergency, and
- Complement other local, regional, and state planning arrangements.

When required, sub-committees of the MEMPC will be formed to review existing or to prepare new sub and complimentary plans. These sub-committees will be built around the knowledge holders of each specific risk. (As an example, on behalf of the MEMPC, committee representatives from Council, CFA, and DELWP may be tasked with the preparation of a review or a new Municipal Fire Management Sub-Plan.)

Each sub-committee may also decide to form working groups utilising resources (personnel) outside of the MEMPC membership.

1.7 Sub-plans

The MEMPC will determine if a sub-plan is required to detail more specific or complex operational arrangements that either enhance or contextualise this Plan. All sub-plans are multi-agency plans and may be hazard specific where the consequences are likely to be significant.

The current Benalla MEMP Sub-Plans are:

- Flood Response sub-plan
- Relief and Recovery sub-plan
- Fire sub-plan

Planning for these risks will be led by the recognised control agency for that emergency.

These risks are identified through the Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) process

This MEMP should not seek to duplicate plans or arrangements that are in effect beyond that needed for clarity and understanding. Instead, it will clearly identify the co-ordination arrangements that will be applied when the sub-plan or complimentary plan is implemented and a multi-agency response is required.

All sub-plans to this Plan are subject to the same preparation, consultation, assurance, approval, and publication requirements as this Plan, as outlined in Part 6A of the EM Act 2013.

Agencies with roles or responsibilities in a sub-plan must act in accordance with the plan (EM Act 2013 s60AK).

1.8 Complementary plans and Community Emergency Management Plans

Complementary plans are prepared by industry/sectors or agencies for emergencies that do not fall within Part 6A of the EM Act 2013. They may be prepared under other legislation, governance, or statutory requirements for a specific purpose.

Complementary plans do not form an actual part of the Benalla MEMP and are not subject to approval, consultation, and other requirements under the EM Act 2013.

Benalla MEMP Complementary plans include:

- Pandemic Plan
- Heatwave Plan
- Animal Welfare Plan

The risks that form the basis of these complementary plans are identified through the CERA process (see following CERA section 5 and CERA related appendices to this plan.)

Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs) are those emergency management or resilience plans developed for and/or by a specific community. The development of Community plans allows members of a community to participate in decision making processes that affect them directly, and to foster the development of relationships across the Emergency Management Sector.

The excellent Emergency plans developed by Nioa and Thales may be considered as CEMPs.

Agencies within the MEMPC, particularly CFA and VICSES have regional staff who specialise in community engagement. Through actions centred around capacity, collaboration and connection, Community education/resilience staff can work with the community to identify their own capacities and existing resources to mitigate, respond to and recover from disasters.

Any new CEMPs along with any feedback from broader public consultation will be incorporated into future reviews of this Municipal Emergency Management Plan. The Benalla City Council website provides an overview of the townships in the municipality, composed by community members, see link: [Benalla Township Overview](#)

1.9 Plan exercise and review

To ensure the MEMP provides for a current integrated, co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to emergency management and is effective, it will be reviewed at least every three years or more frequently as required. To ensure a continuous improvement process, an exercise or exercises will be performed during the three-year planning cycle. An exercise schedule will be developed and will include a description of the type of exercise, participants debrief and record lessons learnt.

During the development of this plan to date three exercises have been held:

Date	Recovery phase exercised	Agency
October 2020	Relief and Recovery - Flood	BRCC, Police, SES
May 2022	Response – Dam Wall - Flood	DELWP, BRCC, SES, Police
June 2022	Response – Accident – Winton Raceway	Police, CFA, SES, BRCC

The MEMPC shall make amendments to the MEMP or sub-plan in the relevant amendments section if lessons learnt from exercises have identified shortcomings or omissions in the existing plan.

Urgent updates of this plan are permitted if there is identified a significant risk that life or property may be endangered if the plan is not updated (EM Act 2013 s60AM). Urgent updates will come into effect when published on the Benalla Rural City Council website and remain in force for a maximum period of three months.

This MEMP becomes current at the time of publication and remains in effect until modified, superseded or withdrawn. This version of the plan will be reviewed not later than August 2025.

1.10 Shared responsibility through the SEMP

In emergency management, shared responsibility refers to the collective obligations and accountabilities held by a range of agencies and actors. A commitment to shared responsibility recognises that no single agency or actor can be responsible for all aspects of emergency mitigation, preparedness, response or recovery. Individuals, communities, businesses, all levels of government and the not-for-profit sector all have a role to play in preparation, response, recovery and in developing community resilience to disaster events.

Communities are networks of people defined by a common characteristic. Every Victorian belongs to some or many communities, each with its own features and responsibilities for its members. For example, an individual could have responsibilities to their household, their workplace and a local sporting club; a business owner has responsibilities to their employees and customers. People may be members of a school community, a cultural or religious community.

Shared responsibility paves the way for more resilient communities that are engaged, informed and involved. Appropriately supported and resilient communities recover more quickly and are better placed to respond to and recover from subsequent emergencies. By sharing responsibility for our collective vulnerabilities, we can minimise the impacts of disasters and build safer communities.

Victoria's shared responsibility approach recognises that communities:

- Are best placed to understand and manage their own risks and drive preparedness, response and recovery, including through their fundamentally important volunteer contribution.
- Should be empowered with the information, capabilities and opportunities to make decisions and work with agencies for better emergency management outcomes.
- Have networks and relationships that help agencies and communities identify the risks that a community faces, assess the vulnerability of the community to those risks and identify options to protect the values of most importance to them.

1.11 MEMP assurance

From 1 December 2020, MEMPC's are required to complete a 20-point Statement of Assurance (self-assurance checklist) and prepare a Certificate (certificate of assurance)

MEMPs and MEMP sub-plans shall be presented to their respective REMPC for approval.

The Statement of Assurance verifies that the plan or sub-plan has been prepared in accordance with the EM Act 2013 (the Act; as amended by the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018) and with due regard to the Minister's Guidelines for Preparing State, Regional and MEMPs, issued under section 77 of the Act (Section 60AC).

The new arrangements require that each MEMP is assured on at least a three-year basis. Similarly, sub-plans will go through the same process but can proceed through the assurance process separately to the MEMP.

The Statement of Assurance consists of:

- An assurance checklist completed by the MEMPC to ensure all requirements from the Act have been met.
- A certificate of assurance signed by the MEMPC's chair on behalf of the MEMPC to confirm that the plan is compliant with the Act.

The previous MEMP was last audited on 30th August 2019 and is to be replaced with this plan by 30 August 2022.

2 Benalla Rural City and its characteristics

Benalla is located about 200 kilometres north-east of Melbourne in the state of Victoria.

It is approximately 2,400 square kilometres in size and comprises mostly flat grazing land which rises to the south and east into the low hills around Lurg, Tatong and Warrenbayne, then mountain ranges including Mt Samaria and the northern end of the Strathbogie Ranges

These Benalla land types are all fire prone. The flat grazing and township lands are also flood prone.

Features of the Rural City include Lake Benalla, Reef Hills State Park, the internationally significant Winton Wetlands and part of Mount Samaria State Park, 30% of the municipality is Crown Land and approximately 15% is contained in parks and reserves.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, Benalla Rural City Council and Hancock Victorian Plantations are major land managers in the area.

The Broken River traverses the municipality, running generally north from the municipal boundary with Mansfield Shire Council at Lake Nillahcootie until it reaches the township of Benalla. The Broken River then continues to flow generally westerly towards Shepparton before finally draining into the Goulburn River.

The Broken River and its tributaries combined with the flat terrain contribute significantly to flood risks in Benalla.

The population estimate for Benalla Rural City as of the 30 June 2020 is 14,137. Since the previous year the population has grown by 0.73%. By comparison the average population growth in regional Victoria over the same time was 1.30%. Population growth in Benalla is therefore around half of the regional average for Victoria.

Comparing to municipalities across Victoria, Benalla has an older population than the Victorian average, having a larger:

- percentage of people aged 85 and over 4.7% (compared to 2.2 per cent across Victoria)
- percentage of people aged 80 to 84 3.9% (compared to 2.0 per cent across Victoria)
- percentage of people aged 75 to 79 5.2% (compared to 2.8 per cent across Victoria)
- percentage of people aged 70 to 74 6.2% (compared to 2.7 per cent across Victoria).

In 2016, 947 people (or 6.8% of the population) in Benalla Rural City reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. Most of these people do not fall within the VPE policy definition of a vulnerable person

The 2020 census was delayed until 2021 due to Covid 19 related issues. At the time of writing full data is still not yet available. The Benalla 2016 population data can be found here:

https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20203#householdcomposition

The following table summarises the Benalla demographic:

Demographic	Geographic	Socioeconomic	Comments
Elderly	3 Aged Care facilities		20% of the population are aged 70 years and over.
Children/Youth	4 Pre-schools 13 Primary schools 2 Secondary schools		Six primary schools are located in rural communities
People with disabilities	Central Access Learning Campuses		CAL operates programs from 5 locations within the Benalla Rural City
Socially Disadvantaged		High unemployment	SEIFA: Benalla is one of the most disadvantaged Municipalities in Vic.*

***SEIFA** is widely used by state and federal governments, and other agencies looking at ranking areas and targeting services to the most disadvantaged. When you are dealing with a range of areas and need to allocate scarce resources to those communities likely to need it most, it is invaluable to be able to sort areas based on a range of characteristics into one list. The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for Benalla Rural City is **951** indicating it is one of the most disadvantaged Municipalities in Victoria.

Benalla municipality has an airfield which is heavily utilised by Gliders and their tug aircraft in addition to general aviation. There have been several aviation crashes in recent decades.

The Municipality is traversed by the Hume Freeway, and a network of roads and rail lines, all carrying substantial traffic. Road and Transport accidents are a recognised emergency issue.

Munitions manufacturers Thales and Nioa operate significant manufacturing operations at a site approximately 5 kilometres from the outskirts of Benalla township. These sites are classified as Major Hazard Facilities. Fire and floods are of considerable concern to these sites.

Benalla Rural City relies heavily on agriculture, forestry and fishing. These industries alone employ over five hundred people, a similar number in manufacturing and a small mining/quarrying workforce.

Benalla Rural City also encompasses the small settlements of Thoona, Devenish, Goorambat, Winton, Baddaginnie, Swanpool, Tatong and surrounding rural areas.

Nearby attractions include wineries, Winton raceway, alpine resorts and historical attractions. This is relevant to the MEMP as the visitors to these attractions may have limited knowledge of the area.

Major events likely to attract numbers of people include the Benalla Festival and Winton Raceway.

The catchment area of the Broken River upstream of the Benalla is around 1,450km² (145,000 hectares). The major tributary of the Broken River upstream of Benalla is Holland Creek which has a catchment area of 540km². Ryans Creek is the major tributary of Holland Creek with a catchment area of 230km². Moonee Creek outfalls into the Broken River approximately 18km upstream of Benalla and has a catchment area of 190km². Lake Nillahcootie is located on the Broken River 36km upstream of Benalla. It has a catchment area of 420km². Ground surface levels at Benalla are around 170m AHD. The highest point in the catchment is Bald Hill located 25km east of Mansfield which has an elevation of 1200m AHD.

Approximately 50 percent of the catchment has been cleared of dense timber. The predominant land use in the cleared portions of the catchment is livestock grazing. The mildly sloping areas between Benalla, Swanpool and Tatong are generally used for agricultural farming purposes. The upper catchment areas remain covered with medium to dense forest. The valleys are much steeper in the upper catchment. Pine plantations have been established within a number of the State Forest areas.

Benalla itself has approximately 8 km² of urban development which is evenly divided between the east and west banks of the Broken River. There are two road bridge crossings of the Broken River in Benalla (Bridge Street and Ackerly Avenue) and a single railway bridge crossing for the Melbourne – Sydney railway line. The Hume freeway which bypasses Benalla included construction of additional bridge crossings 3km upstream of Benalla. The Tatong Road Bridge crosses Holland Creek 500 m upstream of the Broken River confluence. A further bridge is located on the Holland Creek at the Hume Freeway. The floodplain at Benalla is very flat with surface grades typically around 0.1%

2.1 Traditional Owners

The area of Benalla municipality includes both Yorta Yorta and Taungurung Country. The people of the Yorta Yorta Nation are comprised of 8 different clan groups, where the Yorta Yorta language is spoken by all of the Yorta Yorta clans, including the Kailtheban, Wollithiga, Moira, Ulupna, Bangerang, Kwat Kwat, Yalaba Yalaba and Ngurai-illiam-Wurrung clans. The Taungurung Nation, also spelt *Daung Wurrung*, consists of nine clans speaking the [Taungurung language](#) and are part of the [Kulin](#) alliance of [indigenous Australians](#).^[1] Taungurung Country is north of, and closely associated with the Woiwurrung speaking Wurundjeri people. Benalla Rural Council has identified the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as part of its Council Plan. The MEMPC will ensure emergency management is considered in the development of the RAP.

2.2 Vulnerable people in the Benalla community

A key disaster mitigation planning consideration is identifying and preparing for the needs of vulnerable individuals and groups in the community, in particular seniors, children and people with disabilities, people on low incomes, socially disadvantaged and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities (CALD)

The [Vulnerable People in Emergencies \(VPE\) Policy](#) was developed by DFFH in response to recommendations from the 2010 Royal Bushfire Commission.

The VPE policy definition of a vulnerable person is:

Someone living in the community who is: frail, and/or physically or cognitively impaired; and unable to comprehend warnings and directions and/or respond to emergency situations.

Health and Human Services Emergency Management 2012, p. 3

The policy intends to improve the safety of vulnerable people in emergencies, through supporting:

- Emergency planning with and for vulnerable people.
- Developing local lists of facilities where vulnerable people may be located.
- Developing local lists of vulnerable people (Vulnerable Persons Registers) who may need consideration (tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate) in an emergency and make these lists available to those with responsibility for helping vulnerable residents evacuate.

3.0 Responsibilities and roles of agencies.

An agency that has a role or responsibility under this MEMP must act in accordance with this plan.

The State Emergency Management Plan and the Region Emergency Management Plan outline agreed agency roles and responsibilities, noting that existing duties, functions, power, responsibilities or obligations conferred on an agency by law, licence, agreement or arrangement prevail to the extent of any inconsistency with this plan (EM Act 2013 s60A-K).

The roles and responsibilities outlined in this plan are specific to the region and are in addition to, or variations on, what is outlined in the SEMP and the REMP. In the case of municipal-specific modifications, these are clearly identified as modifications.

All agencies with responsibilities under the MEMP should provide written confirmation of their capability and commitment to meet their obligations. This can be evidenced by their endorsement of the draft MEMP, including revisions, before it is presented to the REMP for consideration.

This plan details emergency management agency roles and responsibilities for: mitigation, response, relief and recovery. It also maps agency roles for core capabilities and critical tasks under the Victorian Preparedness Framework (VPF) for the management of major emergencies.

The Agencies with incident, emergency or disaster recovery responsibilities and their commonly performed roles are listed below. Note: the following list of Agencies, their roles and responsibilities is not exhaustive and may change over time.

3.1 Victorian State Emergency Service (SES)

Victoria State Emergency Service (SES) is a highly capable and well-trained volunteer-based organisation that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

SES is the control agency for storm, flood, earthquake, Tsunami and landslide throughout Victoria, and provides the largest road rescue network in Australia.

SES provides emergency assistance to minimise the impact of emergencies and strengthen the community's capacity to plan, respond and recover, when emergencies occur.

SES has a modern well-equipped unit with an office and facility in Benalla including the North-East Regional office with a level 1 ICC.

[Home | Victoria State Emergency Service \(ses.vic.gov.au\)](https://ses.vic.gov.au)

[Emergency management & training \(ses.vic.gov.au\)](https://ses.vic.gov.au)

3.2 Benalla Rural City Council (BRCC)

Council is responsible for managing and coordinating municipal resources including its staff for responding to and recovering from emergencies. Municipal resources include those owned by the council and those under its control if sourced from other agencies. As the closest level of government to the community Council's access to specialised local knowledge about the environmental and demographic features of its districts is invaluable in emergency management.

Council will manage the numerous coordination tasks associated with the delivery of timely, well targeted, recovery activities and services. If the State determines this is required (based on an assessment of the impact of the emergency) this will include the provision of case worker services to facilitate individual and family recovery.

A further key element and high priority is providing coordination within the many departments of Council, the wider community and across agencies - including facilitation of community referral to existing Council and other services where appropriate.

Examples of likely Council involvement in emergency recovery include:

- provision of information services to affected communities, using e.g. information lines, newsletters, community meetings and websites.
 - formation and leadership to support the Municipal Recovery Committee.
 - post-impact assessment — gathering and processing of information.
 - survey and determination regarding occupancy of damaged buildings.
 - environmental health management — including food and sanitation safety, vector control, such as removing dead animals (domestic, native or feral) from waterways.
 - oversight and inspection of rebuilding/redevelopment.
 - provision and management of community development services.
 - provision and/or coordination of volunteer helpers.
 - provision of personal support services, e.g. counselling, advocacy.
 - facilitation of access to professional services and support such as legal, planning, insurance, building, utilities and material aid.
 - coordination, support, safety management and advice of clean-up activities, including disposal of dead animals (domestic, native and feral); fencing, waste and debris removal.
 - Support provision/coordination of temporary accommodation.
 - repair/restoration of infrastructure including roads, bridges, sporting facilities, public amenities.
 - provision and staffing of Emergency Relief / Recovery / Information Centre(s). Council could initially staff a centre for around 48 hours (6 x 8 hr shifts) before seeking support under the Municipal Emergency Resource sharing protocol to which Council is a signatory.
- and
- Management of stray or wandering stock.

Council will support Community Recovery Committees - the key local groups that will provide a focus for identifying needs, planning local activities and communication. The Council will ensure that the Community Recovery Committees are representative of each local impacted community, inclusive of existing leadership groups and that planning is consistent of existing local priorities. Maintaining strong links between existing township associations and the Community Recovery Committee is vital. The committees will be supported to encourage participation by affected people and to develop the capacity to provide and coordinate all required local action.

[Home - Benalla Rural City](#)

3.3 The Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

DFFH plays a major role in Emergency Management which includes:

- providing immediate financial support to the affected community members in accordance with the guidelines for Personal Hardship Assistance Program.
- assisting agencies and municipal councils in providing services effectively by responding to and anticipating requests for additional support.
- ensuring that an assessment of needs is conducted and,
- ensuring that appropriate services are provided.

DFFH may also, in some circumstances, provide management expertise, advice, support, and additional resources to municipal councils and community recovery committees for specific activities.

[Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria | About \(dffb.vic.gov.au\)](http://dffb.vic.gov.au)

3.4 Victoria Police

In addition to their lead role in emergency response, Victoria Police plays a significant role in emergency co-ordination. Support is provided in conjunction with response and recovery agencies, in particular:

- appointing a Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC).
- Appointing a Senior Police Liaison Officer (SPLO) (*EM Act 2013 s40B(1)*)
 - Functions include Coordination and provide advice to the EMC about regional and municipal emergency response and recovery coordination and other police matters.
 - Be the liaison channel with the RERC and MERC Role.
 - Provide advice to the EMC about but not exclusively: Regional and municipal emergency response coordination - the likelihood of situations escalating into major emergencies - the effectiveness of control structures - the provision of community information and warnings - the management of significant risks and consequences - the provision of relief services to the affected community - the cooperation of agencies - the supply of resources - the operation of the REMT and IEMT - the declaration of emergency areas - other police matters
 - Deal with requests to or from RERCs and MERCs.
 - The EMC must take the SPLO's advice into account for coordination functions relating to regional or municipal response.
- ensuring an effective interface between response and recovery activities.
- provision of support within the affected community in conjunction with recovery agencies.

<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/sempr/roles-and-responsibilities/role-statements/vicpol>

3.5 Ambulance Victoria

In addition to their lead role in emergency response, Ambulance Victoria also plays a significant role in emergency recovery.

Support is provided in conjunction with response and recovery agencies, in particular:

- provision of personnel to respond to medical needs.
- dissemination of public information.
- access to communications.
- provide appropriate pre-hospital leadership, skills and equipment through planning for various health emergencies, including mass casualty incidents.
- active participation and representation in emergency management forums and exercises to maintain a high level of preparedness for all emergencies, including mass casualty incidents.
- promote community resilience through community education programs
- support other agencies tasked with recovery, where appropriate.

[Ambulance Victoria Home - Ambulance Victoria](#)

3.6 Australian Red Cross

Australian Red Cross is a support agency to DFFH for emergency relief coordination which includes:

- provision of Personal Support to individuals, families and communities for relief and recovery including catering, emotional support, information, practical assistance and referrals in relief and recovery centres, at community events or through outreach visits
- delivery of Personal Support outreach visits, in partnership with local government, DFFH and other recovery agencies
- where required, Red Cross collects donations for state-wide public appeals.

[Role statement - Australian Red Cross | Emergency Management Victoria \(emv.vic.gov.au\)](#)

3.7 St John Ambulance Australia (Victoria)

St John Ambulance operates services in all states and territories and is dedicated to caring for life in the community, providing a capable and professional first aid service at community and public events, and assistance during national disaster relief activities. St John Ambulance Australia provides first aid in emergencies under Victoria's Emergency Management Arrangements.

[Emergency Response - St John Medical Services](#)

3.8 The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES) aims to provide practical support, hope and encouragement to victims, relatives and official workers during emergencies and disasters. The Salvation Army's main role in times of crisis is the provision of financial assistance, personal support, food, material aid and/or temporary accommodation as available.

[Salvation Army Emergency Services prepared to respond | The Salvation Army Australia](#)

3.9 Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR)

DJPR is the control agency for:

- biosecurity – exotic animal and plant disease outbreaks
- invasive plant and animal incursions, including established pests (eg locusts, plagues)
- Chemical contamination of livestock or agricultural produce
- DJPR is the lead support agency for relief and recovery for:
- Animal welfare – livestock and companion animals. (Wildlife is under DELWP.) Animal Health and Welfare staff Officers are based in Benalla. Ph: (03) 5761 1604.
- Information collection for rural landholders – rapid impact assessments for farmers
- Food and grocery supply logistics, telecommunication assets and supply
- Tourism, small business, local government, regional development.

Links: <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/about-us/overview/responsibilities-and-functions/emergency-functions>

3.10 Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV)

Emergency Recovery Victoria is a new, permanent, and comprehensive recovery entity being formed from the former Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) in late 2022.

ERV works with Council and emergency management sector partners to support local communities to plan for and recover from disasters. ERV provide recovery coordination in partnership with the lead agencies and organisations under five pillars:

- Natural Environment
- Social Wellbeing
- Buildings
- Economy
- Aboriginal Culture and Healing

With a regional presence across the state, ERV supports local governments impacted by emergencies to coordinate and deliver services at the local level.

[Role statement - Bushfire Recovery Victoria | Emergency Management Victoria \(emv.vic.gov.au\)](#)

3.11 Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

- DELWP is the control agency for all fires in state forests, national parks and protected public land.
- DELWP is the control agency for disruptions to essential services (electricity, natural gas and petroleum and liquid fuels).
- DELWP is the control agency for dam safety emergencies in Victoria, blue-green algae blooms, disruption to water and wastewater services and non-hazardous pollution of inland waters.
- DELWP is the control agency for wildlife welfare arising from an emergency event and wildlife affected by marine and freshwater pollution
- DELWP is responsible for recovery of all issues on public land including restoration of assets such as roads and bridges, and natural values including soil, water, flora and fauna

[Our role in emergencies \(delwp.vic.gov.au\)](#)

3.12 Environment Protection Authority (EPA)

The Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) is the State of Victoria's environmental regulator. Its role is to be both an effective environmental regulator and an influential authority on environmental impacts. EPA's vision is for a healthy environment that supports a livable and prosperous Victoria.

The Environment Protection Authority's role includes enforcing the *Environment Protection Act 1970*; participation in the training of external agencies in the management of hazardous materials incidents; license and inspect industrial facilities; track prescribed wastes from generation to disposal; and undertake legal proceedings as appropriate.

During emergency recovery the EPA will assess environmental impacts of emergencies, ensure that appropriate disposal methods are adopted, advise affected people on the properties and environmental impacts of hazardous materials.

[Emergency information | Environment Protection Authority Victoria \(epa.vic.gov.au\)](https://epa.vic.gov.au)

3.13 The Department of Health (DH)

DH plays a critical role in the Victorian health system and is responsible for shaping it to meet the health needs of Victorians into the future.

The Department of Health is responsible for the Health and Ambulance Services, Mental Health and Aging portfolios.

The department plays a key role within the emergency management sector, performing the role of the control agencies for human health emergencies and the coordination of the health response in all emergencies.

The department plays a role as a support agency, assisting other control agencies in all three classes of emergencies.

3.14 Australian Government Department of Human Services

The department's principal role in a disaster event is maintenance of the Australian Government's social security safety net for all Australians through:

- continuity of Commonwealth payments and services for existing customers
 - provision of information and advice about Commonwealth payments and services for affected Australians.
- The Department also delivers additional Australian Government assistance (payments and services) when requested by the Commonwealth, including facilitating the delivery of the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment or ex-Gratia assistance when activated.

The Australian Government Department of Human Services may also provide the following services:

- participation in the operation of community recovery centres
- participation in outreach services teams
- provision of personal support and case management services
- participation in the provision of reception services at International Airports
- provision of information on Commonwealth Department of Human Services payment and services to members of the State Community Recovery Committee
- contribution of information to the State Community Recovery Committee on the scale and impact of the disaster on individuals and Victorian communities

- as appropriate, have staff available with specialist skills to work with disaster affected individuals and communities. For example, Social Workers or Indigenous Service Officers.

The department may also deliver surge assistance such as the National Emergency Call Centre overflow arrangement on behalf of the Victorian Government on a cost recovery basis, under a separate agreement.

Note: Any emergency relief/recovery activities undertaken by the Australian Government Department of Human Services are subject to authorisation from the Secretary or delegate. The Australian Government Department of Human Services will seek cost recovery for activities it undertakes on behalf of another agency or department and such arrangements need to be documented in a formal agreement.

Local resources including privately owned resources must be fully committed before Commonwealth assistance is sought.

[Emergency health management | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

3.15 Country Fire Authority (CFA)

CFA provides state-wide fire and related emergency co-ordination.

- Wildfire suppression.
- Structural fire suppression.
- Transport related fire suppression.
- Road Rescue.
- Technical rescue, such as high angle, trench and mine operations.
- Hazardous materials transportation and storage incidents.
- Working with Forestry Industry brigades.
- Other Emergency activities including flood assistance.

CFA is also involved in a range of non-emergency activities

- Community awareness, education and safety programs.
- Fire safety input planning for major community risks.
- Fire prevention and planning.
- Land use planning advice at Municipal level.
- Technical services including building code related inspections, post incident analysis and fire investigation.
- Vegetation management.
- Planned burning.
- Sustainable fire management.

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/>

3.16 Agriculture Victoria (A.V)

- Primary agency for welfare of livestock and companion animals
- All hazards, all species excluding wildlife (which are managed by DELWP)
- Coordination of animal welfare agencies

[Search | Agriculture Victoria](#)

3.17 Other Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Volunteer Groups

NGOs and volunteer groups deliver response and recovery activities within the limit of their means. NGOs and volunteer groups may self-nominate and fund the provision of services to support a control agency in response or as part of recovery co-ordination.

Formal volunteers are usually linked or associated with an existing agency or organisation eg SES or CFA

3.18 Spontaneous Volunteers

'Spontaneous volunteers' are informal volunteers who respond of their own volition to a disaster event. Spontaneous volunteers can be immeasurably valuable at certain times in an emergency, but large numbers of well-intentioned but potentially poorly trained, poorly prepared or ill-equipped people converging on a disaster site can create a significant additional draw on the resources of the impacted community.

During an Incident, the MEMO will consult with the MRM on whether to use volunteers and whether they should be:

- engaged directly by Council or another agency.
- referred to the [Volunteering Victoria Emergency Volunteer Register](#) for later possible engagement.

4 Financial considerations for Agencies and N.G.O.s

The Emergency Response Co-ordinator may be an intermediary in sourcing resources for agencies. Victoria's Natural Disaster Financial Assistance (NDFA) scheme is available to eligible agencies to relieve some of the financial burden that can be experienced following an eligible disaster (such as a bushfire or flood) or terrorist act, in accordance with the Australian Government's Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

The DRFA is a standing, cost-sharing arrangement between the Commonwealth and states and territories for various pre-agreed relief and recovery measures, subject to the state meeting particular financial thresholds. The arrangements help to support relief and recovery efforts undertaken immediately before, during and after an eligible disaster. The arrangements are intended to complement other strategies including insurance and are only available to eligible undertakings including Council.

The DRFA provide assistance for individuals (such as for emergency food, clothing and temporary accommodation), for the repair and reconstruction of damaged essential public assets, for counter disaster operations, and for assistance to small businesses and primary producers. They also provide holistic, longer-term recovery through community recovery packages for communities and businesses. The amount of Commonwealth financial assistance is worked out on thresholds calculated by the Australian Government.

Agencies are responsible for the costs of mitigation activities they carry out to fulfil their own responsibilities.

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department provides funding under the National Partnership on Disaster Risk Reduction to support disaster mitigation and resilience projects which are prioritised by the states in accordance with their respective state-wide natural disaster risk assessments. States are responsible for securing matched funding, which may include third-party and in-kind contributions. Each year, the Commonwealth provides up to 50% of the total cost of the approved program up to a set amount.

<https://www.disasterassist.gov.au/Documents/Fact-sheets/NDRRA-Factsheet.pdf>

In Victoria, National Partnership on Disaster Risk Reduction funds are applied towards the disaster risk reduction initiatives program. The program funds initiatives focused on outcomes to support one of three themes - climate change adaptation and risk reduction; designing for risk and resilience in infrastructure; and managing local and regional risks and building resilience.

The relevant agency and organisations should advance investment prioritisation through their respective budget bid processes and use the outcomes of these processes to further develop decision-making. Mitigation activities should complement existing programs or contribute to new initiatives and can include but are not limited to:

- Planning and regulation, such as formulation and implementation of policy and procedures;
- Infrastructure projects, such as building and/ or maintenance of structural works and infrastructure; and,
- Education and awareness, including the delivery of related programs such as training, engagement and other activities to build community preparedness and resilience.

State agencies involved in emergency response and recovery activities as part of their normal activities will initially fund them from within their budgets including for supplies (such as catering) purchased from contractors or volunteer agencies.

For major emergencies, some funding supplementation may be required from the Department of Treasury and Finance. This would be the subject of a government decision at the time, in the context of the agency's budget position.

NGOs and volunteer groups deliver response and recovery activities within the limit of their means. NGOs and volunteer groups may self-nominate and fund the provision of services to support a control agency in response or as part of recovery co-ordination.

Where an NGO or volunteer group expends extraordinary funds providing response or recovery activities to the extent that it seeks financial reimbursement, it should notify the agency to which it is providing services, at the earliest possible opportunity, preferably before deployment commences so funding sources can be determined.

Local resources including privately owned resources must be fully committed before Commonwealth assistance is sought. There is no charge for Australian Defence Force resources used to save human life, alleviate suffering or prevent the extensive loss of animals or property.

Private organisations that provide resources for emergency response or recovery activities would expect to be paid by the agency using the resources.

For eligible relief and recovery expenditure to be reimbursed, local councils are required to advise DTF as soon as practically possible after a disaster that they have incurred or expect to incur these types of costs to ensure that the event is notified to the Commonwealth as an eligible natural disaster under the NDRRA. Refer to the EMV fact sheet: <https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/publications/relief-and-recovery-activities-guidance-for-local-councils>

EMV has developed a fact sheet that covers the post emergency government financial assistance measures <https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/publications/fact-sheet-financial-arrangements-government-post-emergency-assistance-measures>

The fact sheet covers assistance measures for:

- Individual human need
- Residential and community re-establishment
- Community safety/health
- Economic recovery
- State Government assistance to municipal councils
- Commonwealth Government assistance to people/municipal councils

4.1 Emergency Financial Assistance

Emergency financial assistance is intended to help eligible individuals meet their essential and immediate needs in a dignified manner. DFFH is responsible for administering emergency relief payments through the Personal Hardship Assistance Program.

<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/personal-hardship-assistance-program>

4.2 Donations

Following emergencies which have a significant impact on communities, there is often a generous and well-meaning desire by the broader community to donate goods or volunteer their time to affected people. While this can have benefits, it can also be a significant management issue. As per the *National guidelines for managing donated goods*, monetary donations are very much preferred over donated goods. Material donations should be discouraged.

<https://paperzz.com/doc/9393200/national-guidelines-for-managing-donated-goods>

Financial donations provide choice; can more accurately target needs; and help circulate money in affected communities – which in turn stimulates local economic recovery.

5 Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA)

The Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) tool was developed by the Victorian State Emergency Service (SES) and is widely used in Victoria.

CERA is a process which aims to identify and then reduce risks within a community. This can be done by identifying the risks that a community faces, assessing the vulnerability of the community to those risks and providing options to prepare for, reduce or eliminate the risks. Emergencies of some kind or another occur regularly within a municipality. The aim of emergency risk management is to promote public safety and reduce the impact of these emergencies.

The CERA process was used in the preparation of this MEMP.

CERA provides a framework for considering and improving the safety and resilience of their community from hazards and emergencies that aligns with the ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management Standard.

The CERA approach aims to understand the likely impacts of a range of emergency scenarios upon community assets, values and functions. CERA provides an opportunity for multiple community impacts and consequences to be considered enabling collaborative risk treatment plans and emergency preparedness measures to be prepared.

The CERA assessment tool assists in identifying and describing hazards and assesses impacts and consequences based upon the vulnerability or exposure of the community or its functions.

The risk identification and analysis regime carried out in CERA aligns with the ISO31000 standard.

Risk Analysis = Consequence x Likelihood.

The ISO 31000 standard emphasises the need to establish and manage the risk to the objectives set during the plan development process. During the preparation of this plan, a risk analysis was carried out to identify potential natural and manufactured hazards within the municipality. The history of occurrence and the nature of each hazard, especially community vulnerability, have been considered during the analysis process. Due to ongoing changes of seasonal conditions, community development and public attitudes, the rating of the identified threats may vary over a period of time.

No one agency can or does control all the risks associated with an emergency or disaster. It is the community that collectively owns the risks associated with its area.

The Benalla MEMPC acknowledges the strong input of the SES in developing its CERA assessment based upon the principles of risk management and founded upon the experience and knowledge of those people who live and work within the municipality.

A hazard analysis and risk assessment of perceived threats to the municipality will be regularly conducted by the MEMPC.

[Community Emergency Risk Assessment \(CERA\)](#)

The following terms are used in the CERA risk assessment process.

Hazards

Hazardous events (hazards) can be either naturally occurring, such as earthquakes, tropical cyclones or coastal erosion or they can be human-made, such as water pollution or terrorist attack. In addition, events can be sudden as in the case of an earthquake, or they can occur and develop over time as in the case for environmental hazards such as drought.

Exposure

Exposure refers to the inventory of elements in an area in which hazard events can occur. Hence, if population and economic resources were not located in (exposed to) potentially dangerous settings, no problem of disaster risk would exist.

While the literature and common usage often mistakenly combine exposure and vulnerability, they are distinct. Exposure is a necessary, but not sufficient, determinant of risk. It is possible to be exposed but not vulnerable (for example, by living in a floodplain but having sufficient means to modify building structure and behaviour to mitigate potential loss). However, to be vulnerable to an extreme event, it is necessary to also be exposed.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability refers to the propensity of exposed elements such as human beings, their livelihoods, and assets to suffer adverse effects when affected by hazard events. Vulnerability is related to predisposition, susceptibilities, fragilities, weaknesses, deficiencies, or lack of capacities that favour adverse effects on the exposed elements.

Vulnerability can be seen as situation-specific, interacting with a hazard event to generate risk. Vulnerability to financial crisis, for example, does not infer vulnerability to climate change or natural hazards.

It is important to note exposure and vulnerability change over time. It will therefore be critical to periodically revisit the assumptions made about them.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.

Resilience means the ability to “spring back from” a shock. The resilience of a community in respect to potential hazard events is determined by the degree to which the community has the necessary resources and is capable of organising itself both prior to and during times of need.

5.1 CERA process in the Benalla municipality

Region	Municipality	Hazard category	Emergency hazard	Rating confidence	Residual Risk Rating
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Natural Disasters	Bushfire/ Grassfire	Medium	High
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Natural Disasters	Flood	Medium	High
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Natural Disasters	Extreme Temperatures (heat and cold)	High	Medium
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Transport	Transport accident- Aircraft	High	Medium
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Transport	Transport Incident- Road	High	High
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Infrastructure	Essential Services Disruption	High	Medium
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Biological	Human disease (pandemic)	Medium	High
Hume (North East)	Benalla Rural City	Biological	Emergency Animal Disease	High	Low

5.2 CERA Treatment plans

The information gathered within the CERA process for Benalla provides the data required for broadly assessing each emergency risk and determining the priority, type and level of responsive action. It helps inform the level and type of action to be taken relative to each risk and influences the development of a treatment plan. The actions can be roughly grouped into two areas.

Improve controls

Generally, if a risk has a high residual consequence rating and a high control effectiveness rating (current controls are assessed as being ineffective), then action should be taken to review and improve controls.

Monitor controls

Conversely, if a risk has a high residual consequence rating and a low control effectiveness (current controls are assessed as having good effect on the risk), then action should be taken to monitor and validate the effectiveness of current controls.

Based on the outcome of the CERA and evaluation, the MEMPC now has a platform to select and prioritise the risk treatment activities. Once existing controls have been identified, potential opportunities to improve controls can be discussed and documented. These opportunities will serve as a starting point in developing and accessing risk treatment options.

There is no template for the progression of treatment strategies as it is dependent upon the needs of the MEMPC. The responsibility for treatment of risks is shared by all agencies. Treatment of specific

risks for the municipal district is not the sole responsibility of the Municipal Council. Many risk treatments will be carried out in the context of state-wide programs or policies.

Actions should be allocated to accountable individuals or groups and assigned a target date for completion. In some cases, the group might determine that additional, in-depth analysis is required before an adequate assessment can be made and actions defined.

The MEMPC should routinely review the status of risk treatments and collaborate with other municipalities and/ or state agencies in enhancing preparedness, response and recovery capabilities across key risk scenarios, etc.

The major risks as shown in the CERA table for Benalla are Floods and Fires. There is also potential for transport accidents, changing weather conditions including heatwaves, droughts and extreme weather occurrences, animal disease outbreaks and importantly, Pandemics, including the current Covid 19.

5.3 Major Hazard Facilities in the Benalla MEMP area

Major hazard facilities are industrial sites that store, handle or process large quantities of chemical and dangerous goods. To obtain a licence to operate a major hazard facility, operators are required to submit a safety case to a relevant regulatory authority that sets out how the facility will be operated safely and describes detailed emergency planning arrangements. Operators of major hazard facilities work closely with agencies to review and test the emergency management plans and arrangements on an annual basis.

Thales Australia and Nioa undertake manufacturing operations at a Commonwealth owned facility within the Benalla Rural City Local Government Area. Australian Munitions, a business owned by Thales is licenced to operate a Major Hazard Facility. Both Australian Munitions and Nioa have carefully developed and implemented comprehensive Emergency Plans as Complementary Plans to the MEMP. The Australian Munitions Emergency Plan is the overriding facility plan and has been prepared in conjunction with and has been agreed to by Emergency Services and Local Government Authorities. A copy of the current Australian Munitions plan is provided to each agency.

The facility has its own well resourced fire fighting capability with trained staff onsite.

Extensive vegetation controls, water and fire suppression systems are in place.

In the interest of Fire-fighter Safety, a minimum 460 metre Firefighting Restriction Zone has been established on the Facility outside the facility security fence (*identified by RED markers*). This Zone was established to prohibit the fighting of grass fires in the area until permission is received from Australian Munitions (*Thales*).

6. Crisisworks

Crisisworks is the online emergency management system used by Councils for emergency management. It has both impact assessment and recovery modules that will assist to administer data and case management during recovery.

The impact assessment module may be used to input data in the field via phones or tablets as required. The module does not require internet access but an application is required to be downloaded to a device before it is used in the field.

Council teams will conduct the early Secondary Impact Assessments with a staff member dedicated to administration of the data to Crisisworks.

7. Benalla and fire

Benalla and the North-East of Victoria is subject to a fire season during the summer months. Depending on prevailing conditions fires may also occur outside the summer months.

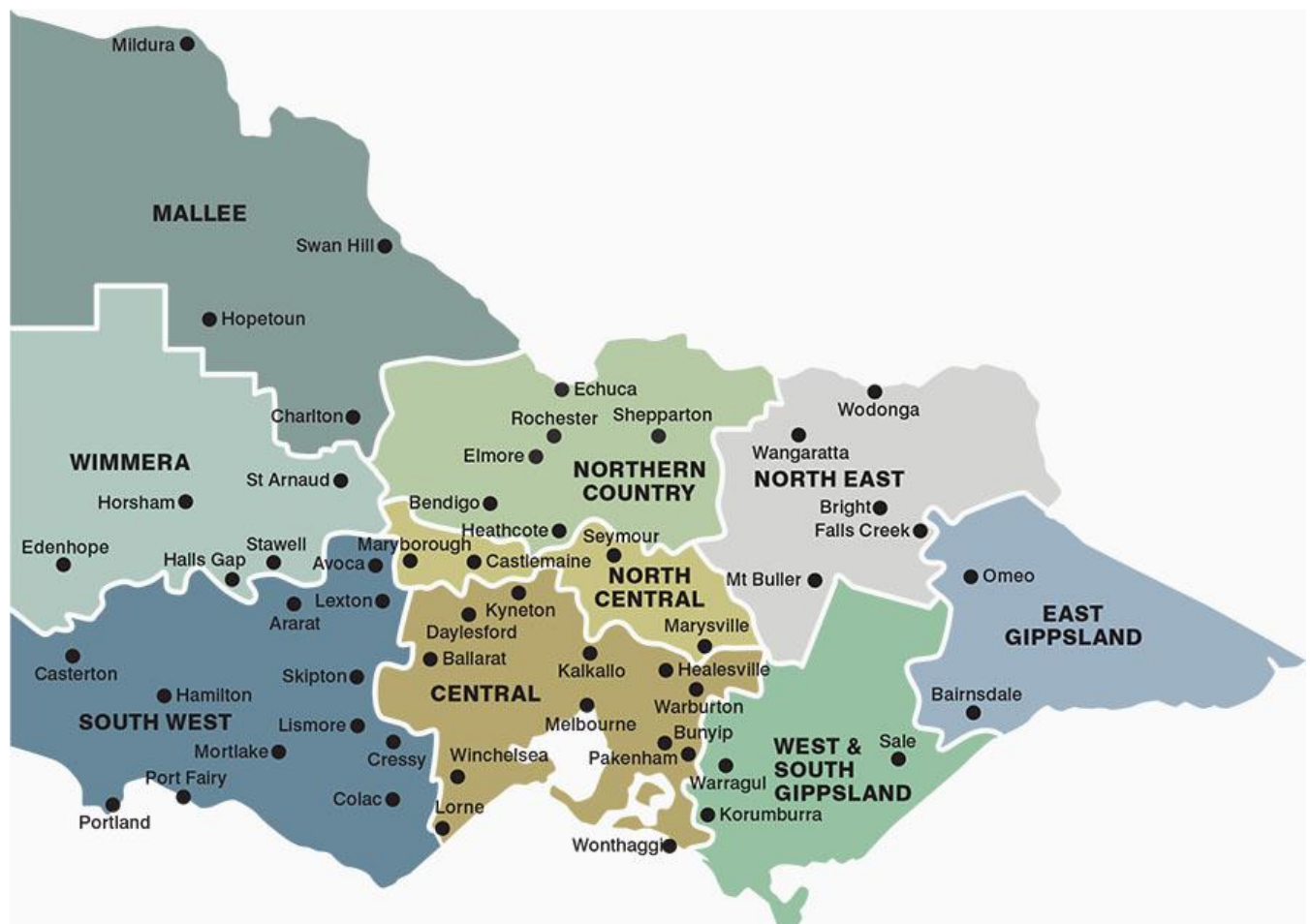
Significant fires have been a factor in the Benalla area for decades. On 5 February 1952, a fire that originated on the Hume Highway near Benalla burned over 100,000 hectares and killed several people.

More recent significant bushfires include the Stewarton – Lake Rowan Fire in 2014 and the Tatong bushfire in 2007 which was part of the larger fire complex, the Great Divide North fire. The Stewarton-Lake Rowan fire impacted over 5,710 hectares and resulted in widespread loss of stock, fences, sheds and other farm infrastructure.

The Tatong fire burnt over 33,000 hectares and losses included three homes, rural buildings, 231 kilometres of fence and livestock. Losses of over 1,100 hectares of pine plantations also occurred.

7.1 The Fire Behaviour Index

Benalla is in the Victorian North-East Fire zone (see map below)



The Fire Behaviour Index (FBI) system is based on predicted fire behaviour assessed via a fuel state editor, a fire danger calculation engine, a seasonal outlook viewer and a fire danger viewer to determine the Fire Behaviour Index. It is an Australia wide system which is modelled around a 'four-tiered warning' system, excluding two very low risk levels (0-6 and 6-12). It is based around nine broadly occurring Australian fuel types of which three, Forest, Grassland and Grassy Woodland are common in the Benalla Municipality.

The Fire Behaviour Index (FBI):

- Ensures consistency across all states in Australia
- Is based on the latest scientific research
- Has Four ratings categories in the framework
- Has Eight fuel categories for fire behaviour
- Provides more accurate prediction and communication of fire danger
- Simplifies the call to action
- Gives improved ability to collect and analyse relevant data

7.2 What does the Fire Behaviour Index mean for Benalla?

Any fire burning in the open can cause serious injury or death in certain conditions if you and your asset are unprepared (e.g., a fire burning in dry and cured grass adjacent to a timber building, even in mild conditions). An asset may be a building including a residence, a significant structure or a public utility like a power sub-station.

Fires burn faster, hotter and higher when burning uphill and/or in windier conditions. Fires burn slower and lower when burning in damp conditions, downhill, into the wind or in still conditions.

The Benalla municipality is dominated by Forests, Grassy Woodland and Grassland fuel types, all of which readily burn in the right conditions. Fine fuels including grasses dry out quickly and can readily sustain fires even within a day or two of significant rainfall.

There is an exception to fires assessed under the Fire Behaviour Index. Each year in the Benalla municipality we encounter numerous spontaneous combustion haystack fires. These can occur regardless of the FBI level or prevailing temperatures and can occur even in the mildest weather conditions. They can happen within a few weeks or months of hay being baled and then tightly stacked. Spontaneous combustion occurs when moist hay heats up due to a combination of natural microbial and chemical reactions.

7.3 Fire Behaviour Index ratings

- 0 - 6 Typically fires burning under these conditions will self-extinguish, i.e they will go out naturally
- 6-12 Fires burning in this range may stay alight by day. They may self-extinguish overnight or on moving into damp or low fuel areas. When the FBI is in this range Burns can be conducted by landholders, CFA and Forest Fire Management (FFM) which incorporates DELWP, Parks Victoria, Vic Forests & Melbourne Water.

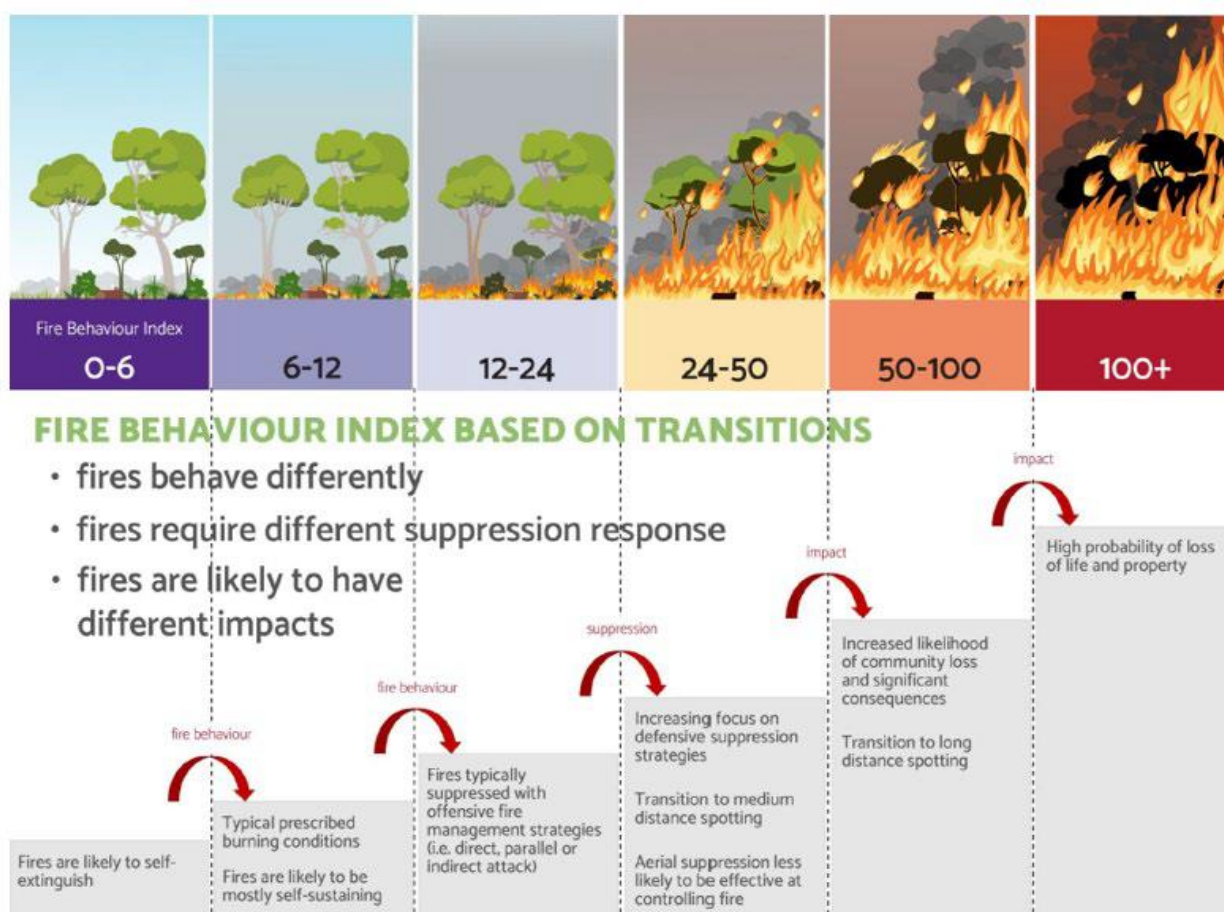
Note: These first two ratings do not appear on roadside advisory signage

- 12-24 Moderate Fire behaviour. Fires burning in these conditions can usually be successfully attacked and extinguished by experienced and well-equipped fire fighters. Aerial and mechanical suppression is usually effective in assisting fire fighters to control and put out fires. Houses and sheds that are well prepared in advance will usually survive.
- 24-50 High Fire behaviour. Fires burning in these conditions will be difficult to control. Long range 'spotting' can be expected to occur well in front of the fire. Even experienced and well-equipped fire fighters with aerial support will experience difficulty in directly fighting fires under these conditions.
Expect to see and hear reports of fire fighters backburning off pre-prepared fire advantages. These might be roads, tracks, fire breaks, even streams. The wildfire then reaches an area that has already been burned or cleared and there is no fine fuel remaining to burn again.
Under these conditions Fire agencies will be engaging in an asset protection approach rather than directly attacking a fire. Assets are Houses and other buildings, public utilities including power and sub stations and similar structures. Assets that are well pre-prepared will stand a chance of survival.

50-100 Extreme Fire behaviour. Fires will be incredibly difficult to control even with the best coordinated ground and aerial firefighting resources. Fire and Emergency services will be concentrating on moving people rapidly away from at risk areas. Media including TV, Radio, online services including the excellent EMV website <https://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/> and fire agencies will strongly advise people to activate their fire plans and leave the area before the fire approaches.

- Do not wait to be told to evacuate.
- Do not rely on fire fighters arriving at your home in time to save you or your house and pets.
- Under these conditions there will be more assets at risk then there are fire trucks or helicopters available.

100+ Fires burning under these conditions are incredibly dangerous. Fires can travel very fast and 'spot' even many kilometres ahead. Loss of life and major losses of assets are highly likely to occur. Fire and Emergency Agencies will be unable to control the fire to any significant extent and may be able to undertake only minimal asset protection if at all. Activate your fire plan immediately. Having your essentials packed and leaving the night before is the best action.



7.4 Victorian Fire Risk Register (VFRR)

The VFRR-B (bushfire) is used to identify and address bushfire risks within municipal districts. <https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au/>

The VFRR-B is reviewed regularly as determined by the CFA or as required. Risk identification is ongoing as the municipality conditions change.

The VFRR-B is a systematic process that helps to identify assets at risk from bushfire, assesses the level of risk to these assets and highlights the treatments currently in place along with the responsible agencies for implementing these strategies. Outputs from the VFRR-B inform and support this plan and the Fire Management Sub Plan.

The assets of the VFRR-B are divided into four classes: human settlement, economic, environmental, and cultural heritage.



Photo: Aerial fire suppression, Benalla locality 2021

8.0 Benalla and floods

The Benalla Rural City municipality, including the township of Benalla is very vulnerable to flooding. The largest recorded flood event was in October 1993 with smaller flood events occurring more recently in 2011 and 2012. Other historically significant flood events have occurred in 1974, 1975 and 1981. The most recent flood events occurring after the Benalla Weir and Lake Benalla were constructed in the early 1970s.

Floods can occur at any time after significant rainfall but broadly appear more likely to occur during prolonged and wetter La Nina weather conditions which have filled catchments and soils to capacity. The 1993 flood event resulted in significant impacts to farms in the area with the loss of 250 kilometres of fencing, 4,450 sheep, 232 cattle and 200 poultry.

Despite recent and comprehensive risk assessments being undertaken no cost-effective works have been identified which would substantially mitigate the flood risks to the Benalla township.

The Broken River traverses the municipality, running north from the Council boundary with Mansfield Shire Council until it reaches the township of Benalla. The Broken River then continues west towards Shepparton before finally draining into the Goulburn River. The Broken River and its main tributaries Holland Creek and Blind Creek combined with flat terrain contribute significantly to flood risks in Benalla.

A major flood predictive model was prepared by CARDNO, a professional infrastructure and environmental services company, in 2016. There have not been significant construction or flood mitigation works since that time, so the modelling is anticipated to be still current. A word document giving a broad and generalised outline of potential flooding impacts based off the CARDNO modelling has also been prepared and is held by BRCCs Emergency Management Co-ordinator.



Benalla's main street and retail complex, Bridge Street East. October 1993 Flood

9.0 Preparedness / Mitigation (**BEFORE an Incident**)

Planning for response, relief and recovery at the regional level is required because many emergencies traverse municipal boundaries and because many services provided by state government agencies are administered and delivered at a regional level.

At a local level, communication of identified risks across municipal boundaries take place through provision of MEMP plans to municipalities that border the Benalla Municipality. Every opportunity will be taken to include bordering shires with MEMP exercises and to contact those municipalities if new risks are identified that might impact them.

9.1 The Municipal Emergency Resource sharing protocol.

The MAV has developed a protocol for inter-council emergency management resource sharing. The protocol is intended to clarify operational, insurance and reimbursement issues that may arise through municipal resource-sharing arrangements.

Benalla Rural City Council has adopted the protocol. It is not intended to inhibit or diminish the effectiveness of any other existing inter-council resource sharing arrangement.

Any control agency requiring municipal support will request that support through the Municipal Emergency Response Co-ordinator who will pass on all requirements to the MRM and/or MEMO.

BRCCs neighbouring municipalities are also signatories to the Protocol although it must be noted that their resources may also be stretched if they are affected by a cross-border incident.

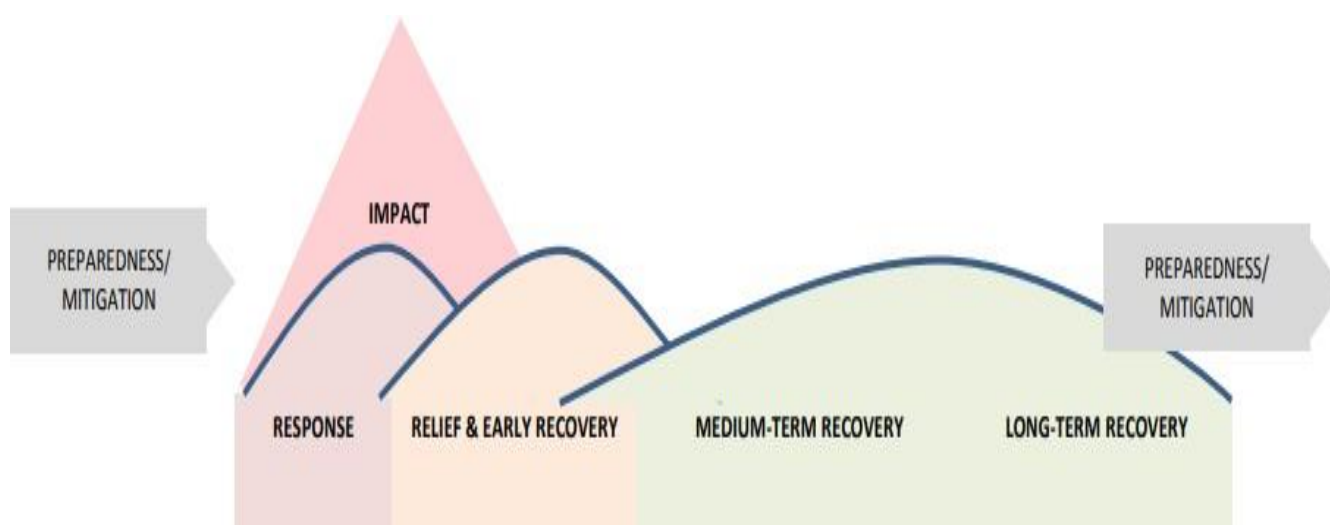
Council must be prepared, as far as possible, to support neighbouring municipalities who have been affected by a major event and have found themselves running short of resources. This is most likely to be adjoining Municipalities but could also be any of the municipalities in North-East Victoria or across the State depending on the situation.

As the effects of an emergency escalate, or the resource requirements outstrip what is available locally, regional, state and Commonwealth resources may be activated.

<https://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/emergency-management/protocol-for-inter-council-resource-sharing>

9.2 The planning cycle:

Preparedness/Mitigation–Response–Relief–Recovery–Preparedness/Mitigation



9.3 Mitigation arrangements

Mitigation is the action taken to eliminate or reduce the incidence or severity of emergencies in advance and to minimise their effects on occurrence.

The MEMP includes the mitigation activities and co-ordination arrangements of agencies that are intended to eliminate or reduce the incidence or severity of emergencies and minimise their effects on and consequences for communities. Internal and external to the emergency management sector agencies contribute to the mitigation of emergencies as part of their business-as-usual functions. Following the CERA review agencies will initiate mitigation strategies by:

- Formulating and implementing policy and regulation (such as land-use planning and building regulations, and floodplain management);
- Building, operating and maintaining emergency related infrastructure.
- Promoting and encouraging financial resilience to emergencies through home and contents insurance
- Encouraging Community engagement to build resilience to and awareness of risks and promote positive protective actions.

Emergency planning considerations to mitigate an incident, emergency or disaster event in regard to service providers, stakeholders and communities may include as outlined in the following table.

Theme	Task
Build community capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Community Recovery Committee Terms of Reference. ▪ Increase community awareness of the need for and potential roles of volunteers during disaster recovery. ▪ Effective engagement with volunteer organisations with roles during and after emergencies including Red Cross, Rotary and Lions Clubs. ▪ Build volunteer numbers and disaster recovery capacity.
Develop Community pre-warning and/or early warning systems to alert for a potential flood/fire emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with SES, GM Water, BOM and other agencies to develop, install and monitor pre-warning systems including 'catchment loading' soil profile alerts for potential floods. ▪ Cooperate with CFA, SES and other agencies to support widescale alert systems and encourage community familiarity with the soon to be introduced Fire Behaviour Index to warn of extreme fire weather events.
Educate the community regarding the likely impacts and social dislocation in event of a disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build community resilience through disaster recovery education activities in community – for example, where to go and what to do following a disaster, how pets and larger animals/farm animals may be affected and how they might be catered for. ▪ Build on successful collaborative community fire education programs such as 'the fire expo' and 'the Red Bucket' distribution in the Goomalibee area, where a red bucket of information was dropped off in a door-knock to 300 residences informing them there was little likelihood of a fire truck coming to their property in the event of a bushfire. ▪ Educate communities on the desirability of donating money rather than second-hand goods during disaster recovery – have communication messages ready for distribution prior to the disaster. ▪ Build community understanding of risks and issues which may need to be managed during disaster recovery. ▪ Encourage and support disaster planning at a community and a household level (in conjunction with response and recovery agencies). ▪ Educate communities regarding safe areas, access and egress, safe routes and agency disaster recovery roles. ▪ Identify vulnerable people and communities, identify their level of planning regarding their own needs and work closely with service providers to provide appropriate information and support to vulnerable people. ▪ Work with providers of care services to vulnerable people to inform about their options during disasters and have and review emergency management plans as required.

Community Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate options to provide Satellite Communications hubs to be strategically located around the BRCC to enable community members to stay in touch with families if conventional landline and mobile phone tower communications are unavailable or damaged by an emergency.
Strengthen community connection and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and support the establishment and strengthening of community organisations and networks, such as ratepayer or progress associations, community hall committees, service clubs. Build communication and engagement channels with communities – including development of networks of key community contact people. Increase awareness of disaster recovery structures along with council and other disaster recovery contact numbers and contact details. Build Councils credibility as a competent and trustworthy source of information, expertise and management during disaster recovery. Develop and implement engagement strategies with vulnerable and specific community groups. Identify important and valued community resources and assets which require focus during disaster recovery. Establish measurement criteria and processes to monitor and evaluate disaster recovery performance and outcomes
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop capacity for leadership in response and recovery roles and collaboration with a wide section of service provider and community interests.
Identify and connect with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, confirm and maintain current contact arrangements, availability and venue and resources information. Be mindful of any informal (i.e. not Council or 'service provider sanctioned') networks which are likely to appear during a disaster. Include non-emergency networks such as housing/accommodation and welfare. Ensure relevant municipal information is available on the Emergency Management Victoria Portal or a similar information sharing system and that stakeholders have access. Work with relevant stakeholders to build community capacity pre-emergency and ensure effective communications in the event of an emergency
Ensure clarity of roles and functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train, develop and exercise across multi-agency personnel.
Understand 'community led'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop service provider and stakeholder capacity to understand the importance of and support 'community led' recovery (including use of the evidence base which demonstrates improved outcomes from community led recovery).

Plan for the management and support of volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and build relationships with volunteer groups who can be called upon or are likely to self-activate. ▪ Build capacity to respond to and manage spontaneous volunteers – including use of programs such as ‘Managing Spontaneous Volunteers’ available through Volunteering Victoria. ▪ Build capacity to manage external and/or out of community groups such as ‘BlazeAid’ and the Benalla based, ‘Uniting Church Fencing Team.’ ▪ Develop and practice processes to manage spontaneous volunteers.
Build capacity to coordinate outreach and multi-agency activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elicit detail from service providers and other Government services of their Emergency Management Plans ▪ Develop and practice processes to effectively understand, manage and support outreach staff volunteers and multi-agency events. ▪ Work with other stakeholders to improve communication systems and processes to increase access to and coverage of disaster recovery communication.
Identify and plan for emergency management locations and venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nominate and communicate widely, where relief and recovery centres and/or activities will be located. ▪ Develop appropriate facilities that can be managed and funded within Agency capacity.
Identify and support service provider networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively participate in the development of service provider and other stakeholder disaster recovery planning activities. ▪ Facilitate the formation and ongoing maintenance of service provider networks that may assist during disaster recovery.
Build service provider and stakeholder capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contribute to and model common disaster recovery language, terminology and definitions. ▪ Work collaboratively with service providers to effectively identify and understand community demographics and the needs of vulnerable people. ▪ Build service provider and stakeholder knowledge and understanding of the interface between lead response agency roles and disaster recovery roles. ▪ Facilitate exercises, communication and capacity building with service providers and key stakeholders. ▪ Seek agreement with other providers on what information can be shared between agencies in terms of Privacy considerations.
Develop and maintain a roster of appropriately trained agency staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain and update agency staff rosters including training, competency and availability.

9.4 What can the Benalla community do to prepare for an Incident

The ability of a community to respond to an emergency situation and recover from the impacts of an emergency, will depend on the attitude and resilience of an affected community.

The [EMV Community Resilience Framework](#) states that at the heart of the Framework are seven resilient community characteristics:

- Connected, inclusive and empowered
- Sustainable built and natural environment
- Reflective and aware
- Culturally rich and vibrant
- Safe and well
- Dynamic and diverse local economy
- Democratic and engaged.

Communities are becoming more aware of and wanting to participate in community led emergency planning. Evidence from previous emergencies elsewhere has shown that communities that plan and manage their own needs before, during and after an emergency recover more quickly and suffer less long-term effects.

Fire:

A well thought out bushfire survival plan can help if you live or holiday in high-risk bushfire areas of Victoria. Further information on how to prepare for bushfires can be found at the CFA website.

You don't have to live near bush to be at risk of fire as grassfire can be just as dangerous as bushfire. See further CFA information on what to do if you live close to grass in a rural area or where the townships meet grasslands.

Another option for the community to prepare is through the Community Fireguard program run by the CFA. This is available for residents in high-risk bush or grass fire areas, and is designed to help you:

- plan for a range of scenarios.
- make informed decisions when it counts;
- maintain a fire smart house and garden.
- work together with your community to reduce everyone's bushfire risk.

Flood and storm:

The VICSES website contains the information on how to plan for storms and severe weather:

Plan for what you will do and take with you if you need to evacuate before a flood or storm hits.

Find out how to prepare your home and/or workplace and consider the advice below

Before a storm hits: Park your car undercover and away from trees. Clean your gutters, downpipes and drains to ensure they are not blocked

Check that loose items such as outdoor furniture, umbrellas and trampolines are safely secured

If leaving, be alert - You may encounter dangerous road conditions when driving, including low visibility, fallen and damaged trees and powerlines. Avoid travelling in a storm or flood if possible.

If staying, be prepared - You may be isolated for an extended time. Make sure you have essential supplies prepared to last for at least three to five days, including food, drinking water, medications and pet food.

Stay informed – monitor weather warnings and forecasts at the Bureau of Meteorology website, and warnings through the VicEmergency app, website, and hotline (1800 226 226)

Heatwave:

To prepare for a heatwave, the following can be undertaken before the weather gets too hot:

Look at the things you can do to make your home cooler, like installing awnings or shade cloths

Check fans and air-conditioners are clean and working well. A clean fan helps keep ventilation fresh

Stock up on food, water and medicines and put ice blocks and packs in the freezer

Store medicines safely at the recommended temperature

Check on neighbours or people you know to be isolated or otherwise vulnerable

Remember your pets and livestock too.

Further information can be found at: Planning for extreme heat and heatwaves link:

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/environmental-health/planning-for-extreme-heat-and-heatwaves>

The Australian Red Cross website also has further information on how to prepare for a heatwave.

You can subscribe to heat health alerts.

Pandemic:

Individuals can do the following when preparing for pandemics such as COVID-19

- Practise good personal hygiene
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap
- Stay home from work and education settings if you're feeling unwell
- Follow advice from the health/ medical sector
- Seek medical attention when required
- Seek advice from Council's EHO.
- If your condition worsens contact your GP or a health professional. If you become very unwell and are having trouble breathing contact triple zero, you may need to be admitted to hospital.

Biosecurity:

Early detection and reporting of all suspect Emergency Animal Diseases (EADs) is essential in preventing the establishment and spread of disease.

All suspected EADs must be reported immediately by calling the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888. Establish good farm biosecurity systems

As the control agency for biosecurity emergencies, Agriculture Victoria manages emergency animal disease outbreaks within Victoria and works with national partners from industry and government through the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).

9.5 Emergency preparedness

Preparedness includes the activities of emergency management sector agencies to prepare for and reduce the effects of emergencies by having plans and capacity for response, relief and recovery.

All agencies involved with mitigation planning are to consider their communities to ensure local contexts inform mitigation activities. Actions should seek to build effective partnerships and mitigation strategies must be built to address known and emerging risks from a consequence management perspective.

The MEMPC undertakes regular and comprehensive emergency risk assessments to better understand and manage the risk profile for Benalla based on likelihood and consequences.

A key component of preparedness is that all agencies have sufficient staff who are well trained, prepared and equipped to perform their roles.

10. Emergency Response (**DURING an Incident**)

The Victorian State Emergency Management Plan describes emergency response as:

The actions taken immediately before, during and in the first period after an emergency to reduce the effect and consequences of emergencies on people, their livelihood and wellbeing, property and the environment and to meet basic human needs.

Response arrangements are largely hazard-based, and control agencies are responsible for developing and maintaining hazard-specific response plans, either as Sub-plans or Complementary Plans to this MEMP.

These plans include arrangements for readiness, the establishment of control, incident management systems, control, relief, escalation and de-escalation. They also include arrangements for communications, co-ordination, consequence management and community connections. The response phase includes the actions taken immediately before (readiness), during and in the first period after an emergency (which incorporates both relief and early recovery). This includes activities to combat the emergency, the delivery of rescue services and the provision of immediate relief to support the essential needs of people directly affected by an emergency.

The emergency response concept provides the mechanism for the build-up of appropriate resources to cope with emergencies in Benalla. It also provides for requests for physical assistance from the Commonwealth when state resources have been exhausted.

Minor incidents are of local concern and will be responded to by appropriate agency staff. The appropriate agencies operational staff are available 24 hours a day to attend to minor or non-threatening incidents. Local Incidents may include trees on roads (Council), small grass fires (CFA), windstorm and minor flood (SES) and in these cases it is not necessary to contact the MEMO, MERC or to activate this MEMP.

The MEMPC plays a key role in the co-ordination of relief by partnering with agencies and organisations to develop and support community leadership in all relief and recovery activities. Community-led activities can generate ownership of decisions and result in more sustainable, higher quality and innovative outcomes.

For emergencies that are beyond local capabilities or when local resources are exhausted, the MEMP provides for further resources to be made available, firstly from neighbouring municipalities (by agreement through the Municipal Association of Victoria) and then, secondly on a state-wide basis.

In the event of an incident, emergency or disaster, the Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO) or deputy MEMO is to advise and brief the Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM) or deputy as soon as possible after the incident occurred, commenced or is likely to occur or commence.

If an Incident Control Centre (ICC) is established the Municipal Recovery Manager or delegate is a key member of the Municipal Emergency Management Coordination Group (MEMCG). The Municipal Emergency Management Group will be established within the MEMPC and is a key municipal decision-making group which includes the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator, Municipal Emergency Management Officer and Municipal Recovery Manager. Each of these positions are authorised through legislation or policy.

The nationally recognised disaster recovery principles that are fundamental for successful recovery involve:

- understanding the context of the emergency
- focusing on the consequences of the emergency
- recognising the complexity of the emergency
- being community focused and using community-led approaches
- ensuring coordination of all activities
- employing effective communication
- acknowledging and building agency and community capacity.

The activation of the Relief and Recovery sub-plan rests with the Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM). The MRM will determine the need to activate this plan, based on information received from the Municipal Emergency Management Officer or the Incident Controller and/or the MERC.

Response arrangements should be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity if the effects of emergencies are to be minimised. For this reason, several phases of activation have been identified.

Alert

Upon receipt of warning or information that an emergency may occur or affect the relevant area of responsibility, the organisation must be alerted to ensure its readiness to act if called upon. Some of the activities that should be considered in this phase are:

- Warning for key personnel.
- Testing of communications arrangements; and,
- Establish flow of information between municipality and control/support agencies.

Standby

As the threat or the effects of the emergency become imminent, members of the relevant organisation of sections are placed on standby, thus being ready to move immediately if they are required. Some of the activities that should be considered in this phase are:

- Staff the respective emergency centres.
- Prepare equipment and personnel for immediate action; and,
- Identify assembly areas.
- Where an imminent threat from an incident, emergency or disaster is present, the MRM may identify and notify physical and human emergency recovery resources to be placed on standby for likely activation. This should include Council and other agency/organisation resources.

Emergencies sometimes require additional resources to ensure that the affected community is restored to normal functioning as efficiently as possible. Benalla Rural City Council is a signatory to the ***Municipal Association of Victoria's protocol for inter-council Emergency Management resource sharing***. The Protocol is intended to provide an agreement for local councils to be able to access additional emergency management resources when needed. This Document can be found in Councils shared 'Crisisworks' platform.

Action

This is the operational phase of the emergency when controlling and support agencies are committed to contain or control the emergency. Sometimes operations might necessitate moving to the “action phase” immediately without the “alert” and “standby” phases being implemented. For this reason, it is essential that all organisations that have a role in this plan be in a state of preparedness at all times. Some of the activities that should be considered in this phase are:

- Mobilise personnel/equipment as requested.
- Produce situation reports on regular basis for higher authorities.
- Request and deploy additional resources as required; and,
- Ensure casual emergency workers are registered.

Escalation

Relief and recovery coordination commences at the local level. Escalation (from local to regional to state) builds on existing local arrangements rather than replacing them. If assistance is required because capacity is exceeded, responsibility is retained at the local level, but aided by additional support.

Coordination and resourcing can be escalated from local to regional or state level:

- when requested because a single municipalities capability is exceeded, or
- where an incident, emergency or disaster has affected multiple municipalities in one region, or multiple regions within the state, or
- where an incident, emergency or disaster has a significant community-wide impact, in which case the Victorian Government may establish an event-specific relief or recovery coordination structure to oversee a whole-of sector response.

Each agency/organisation with responsibilities in this sub-plan is expected to recruit and train sufficient and appropriately skilled personnel to fulfil their role in this plan e.g. EMLOs.

Issues that must be considered when responding to a real or potential incident, emergency or disaster should include the following actions:

10.1 Command, Control and Coordination

Refer to the [SEMP](#) for more details on the following roles:

[Regional Emergency Response Coordinator \(RERC\)](#) - The VICPOL Regional Emergency Response Coordinator (RERC) for the Hume region is responsible for emergency response coordination at the regional level. The RERC’s primary function is to bring together agencies and resources within a region to support the response to emergencies.

[Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator \(MERC\)](#) - The VICPOL Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC) for Benalla is responsible for emergency response coordination at the municipal level. The MERC’s primary function is to bring together agencies and resources within a municipal district to support the response to emergencies.

[Incident Emergency Response Controller \(IERC\)](#) - The most senior VICPOL member at the scene of the emergency, or where control is being exercised at the incident level, is typically nominated as the VICPOL Incident Emergency Response Coordinator (IERC). Members of greater or lesser seniority

may be the IERC as the emergency escalates or deescalates. The primary function of the IERC is supervise the initial incident level response to an emergency and to ensure the appropriate response is in place

Command, Control and Coordination are familiar and traditional mechanisms in emergency and incident management. Emergency systems have been built on Command, Control and Coordination plus a supplementary focus on Consequence, Communication and Community Connection. The combination of these '**six C's**' is a modern approach to emergency management and an approach that is inclusive and community focused. It is also one that supports resilience in communities and in the EM sector.

Including Consequence, Communication and Community Connection into a well-established and tested emergency management system is central to everything we do in emergency management.

Control

The overall direction of response activities in an emergency, operating horizontally across agencies.

Command

The internal direction of personnel and resources of an agency, operating vertically within the agency.

Coordination

The bringing together of agencies and resources to ensure effective preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies.

Consequences

The management of the effect of emergencies on individuals, the community, infrastructure and the environment.

Communication

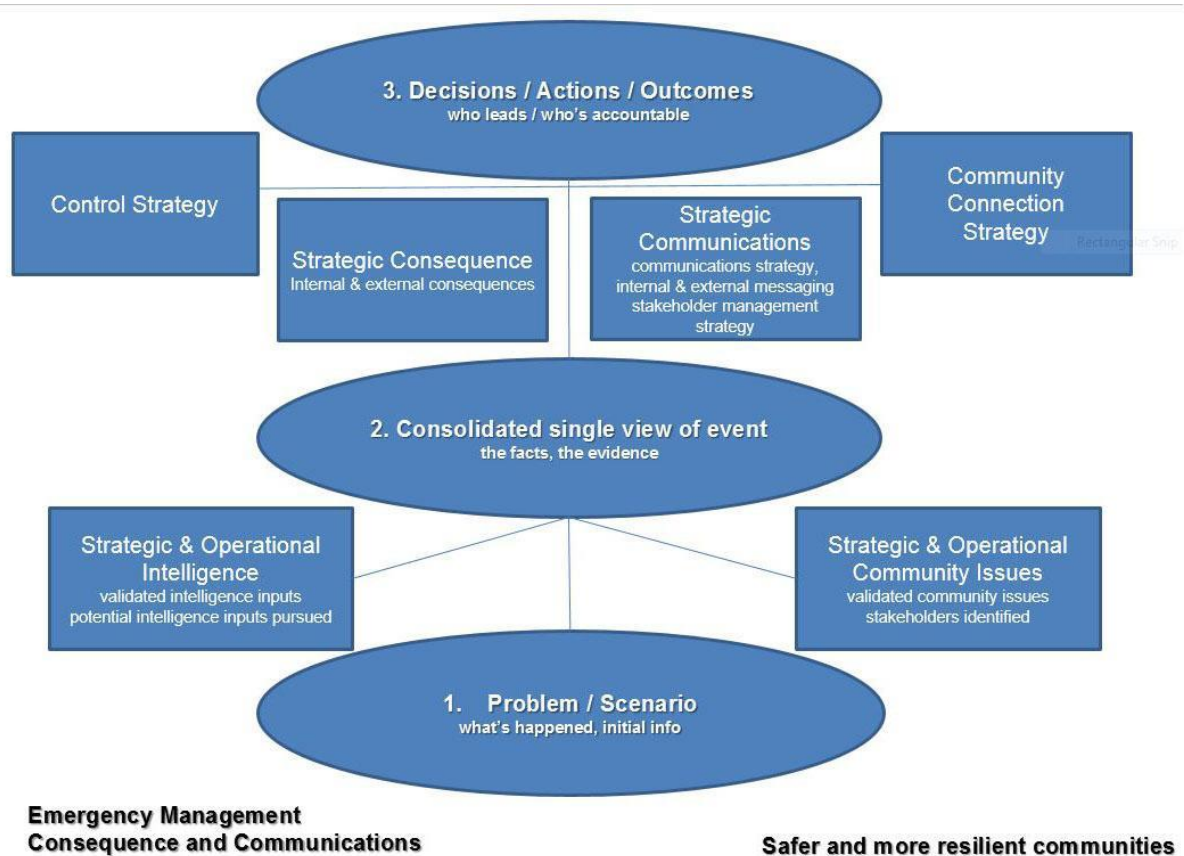
The engagement and provision of information across agencies and proactively with the community to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Community Connection

The understanding of and connecting with trusted networks, trusted leaders and all communities to support resilience and decision making.

Understanding the impact of an emergency, the consequences of the impact and how to reach and acknowledge the community connections before during and after an emergency is vital to building a sustainable emergency management system and one that recognises the central tenets of wellbeing, liveability, sustainability and viability for communities.

This approach is supported by the State Emergency Management Priorities which include "primacy of life" and issuing of information and warnings to communities as non-negotiables and a focus on protection of property, infrastructure, economics and environment assets and values.



These are important priorities provided to incident controllers and emergency management personnel in planning a response. They have developed from being control and response focussed to be applied to planning, mitigation, response and relief and recovery - Before, During, After.

The State EM Priorities frames what is important to individual communities.

The history of these priorities shows the change in the approach in emergency management to the "all communities all emergencies" focus. Over the past six years, the priorities have changed from originally being the "State Controller's Intent" in fire and flood to the State Strategic Control priorities to now the State Emergency Management Priorities - across the spectrum.

Safer and more resilient communities is the aim. How we recognise what is important to communities, the consequences of emergencies and work with those who can make a difference is fundamental.

10.2 Community engagement and communication

The United Nations (2005) describes community engagement as:

A two-way process by which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment; and by which governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes.

Community connection is the understanding of and connecting with trusted networks, trusted leaders and all communities to support resilience and decision-making.

Understanding the impact of an emergency, the consequences of the impact and how we reach in and acknowledge the community connections before, during and after an emergency, is vital to building a sustainable emergency management system and one that recognises the central tenets of wellbeing, liveability, sustainability and viability for communities.

As defined in the *EM Act 2013*, consequence management means “the co-ordination of agencies, including agencies who engage the skills and services of non-government organisations, which are responsible for managing or regulating services or infrastructure which is, or may be, affected by a major emergency”.

Consequence management occurs through the consideration of the wider ramifications of an emergency event. This approach moves the focus from a specific hazard, such as a fire or flood, to broader consequences affecting a community, regardless of hazard source.

10.3 Local response arrangements and responsible agencies

To ensure that roles and responsibilities are agreed, accurate and understood, consultation with agencies during the development of this MEMP has been conducted to provide clarity and reduce the potential for conflict when the plan is in operation. (refer to previous section 3 of this plan)

Specific functional roles and responsibilities for agencies are included in the SEMP. Agencies are recognised generally as being the following.

Control agency: Primary responsibility for responding to a specific form of emergency. Applies to response-related activity only. A Control Agency is the primary agency responsible for responding to a specified type of emergency. It is the responsibility of the Control Agency to formulate action plans for a given emergency in consultation with Support Agencies.

There are complex emergencies where a shared accountability across a number of agencies can occur. In these cases, there is a need for a single agency to be responsible for the collaborative response of all the agencies. For the purposes of consistency, the term **Control Agency** will be used to describe this lead agency role.

Where an emergency occurs that is not listed in the SEMP or where there is uncertainty in identifying a Control Agency, the Emergency Management Commissioner or relevant emergency response coordinator (RERC, MERC, or IERC) will determine the appropriate Control Agency.

The Control Agency may change as the emergency progresses or is clarified. The Control Agency is based on the major effect of the incident/event rather than the cause and control can be transferred when the major effect of the incident/event reduces, and another effect becomes more important.

- **Co-ordination agency:** Primary responsibility for bringing together resources to support the mitigation, response to, and recovery from emergencies. Municipal emergency response coordinators (MERCs) are appointed to undertake a co-ordination function at the municipal level (s40A).
- **Support agency:** Contributes capability and/ or capacity to an emergency management activity in conjunction with the control and/ or co-ordination agency (Across mitigation, response and recovery activities).
- **Relief lead agency:** Provides direct relief assistance to individuals, families and communities and/or indirect assistance by resupplying essential goods or services to isolated communities.
- **Recovery lead agency:** Leads the provision of services, personnel or material during the recovery phase.

10.4 Incident and Regional Control Centres (ICC)

Provision of Incident Control Centre (ICC) functions may in the first instance be conducted at the incident or from an appropriate agency office. As the incident develops the Emergency Response Coordinator may request activation of an identified ICC.

	Benalla Incident Control Centres	
District 22 HQ, Shepparton	SES	195 - 205 Numurkah Rd. Shepparton
District 23 HQ, Wangaratta ICC	CFA	1 Ely Street, Wangaratta
VICSES Hume Regional Office Benalla SES ICC	SES	64 Sydney Road, Benalla

10.5 Municipal emergency co-ordination

One of the key responsibilities of the MEMPC during an emergency is the coordination and provision of equipment and resources to support emergency agencies. Resources will be required from the very early stages of an emergency, right through to the completion of recovery and might include such things as:

- Traffic management equipment;
- Materials to absorb or contain spills or floods;
- Heavy equipment for moving materials and debris;
- Clearing of roads and drains; and,
- Transport of people at risk.
- Maintain local road network and support Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) during partial/full road closures

10.6 Road Closures

Victoria Police is responsible for traffic management in an emergency, in consultation with the control agency, the road manager and other expert advice such as Council.

Generally, the MEMO should be consulted before municipal roads are closed in an emergency. If this is not possible due to a threatening situation where lives are potentially at risk, the Incident Controller must notify the MEMO as soon as practicable that a Council Road has been closed. It is likely that Council and SES and possibly CFA depending on the incident, will assist with road closures through placing signage and assisting at traffic management points.

10.7 Co-ordination

Where activities are contracted out, the agency is still expected to be able to ensure a continuous emergency capacity is maintained. This expectation should be built into relevant contracts. The agency may wish to refer to council which is also in an excellent position to source local supplies and equipment through its day-to-day contacts and preferred contractors.

Most incidents are of local concern and can be coordinated from local municipal resources. However, when local resources are exhausted, the Emergency Response Plan provides for further resources to be made available, firstly from neighbouring municipalities and shires (on a regional basis) and then, secondly on a state-wide basis.

Relief is not the exclusive domain of any single agency. All agencies and organisations willing to participate have an important role to play. This recognises that relief must be a whole-of-government and a whole-of-community process.

In the event that local resources cannot be provided to meet support tasks needed, the request should be passed onto the Regional Emergency Response Co-ordinator via the Municipal Emergency Response Co-ordinator. If requested to activate a Emergency Relief Centre this will be coordinated by the Emergency Management Group, which will normally consist of the MEMO/MRM, Volunteers Coordinators, Risk Assessment Officer and others from within the Council staff. Other agencies and organisation will also operate out of the ERC.

11 Evacuation

The decision to evacuate a locality lies with the Incident Controller in consultation with the Victoria Police. Victoria Police are responsible for the coordination of evacuations in consultation with the relevant Control Agency.

Consideration must be given to the area which is to be evacuated and how the involved people at risk are to be relocated, the inherent dangers associated with an evacuation, the route to be followed, the means of transport and the location to which evacuees will be asked to attend.

VicPol maintains a series of evacuation maps and plans to support decision-making and facilitation of evacuation.

Once the decision to relocate people at risk has been made, the MEMO or MRM should be contacted to assist in the implementation of the evacuation/relocation. The MRM will provide advice regarding the most suitable Emergency Relief Centre location and other resources that may be required (e.g. public health, emergency relief considerations or requirements and special needs groups).

The Incident Controller/Control Agency develops and delivers the warning or recommendation to those affected of impending evacuation, including warnings of when it is too late to leave – the process of further disseminating this information to the community will be assisted by Council.

The MEMO is available to assist with:

- Victoria Police management of traffic flow including provision of information regarding road availability, capacity and safety
- Advice to RRV for road closure lists (public information)
- transport assistance
- potential staging areas or assembly points and other resources that may be required.

Refer to the following sections for a brief listing of Emergency Relief Centre locations.

These websites provide some valuable information

<https://vpr.crisisworks.com>

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare> <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/prepare/#fire/preparing-for-fires>

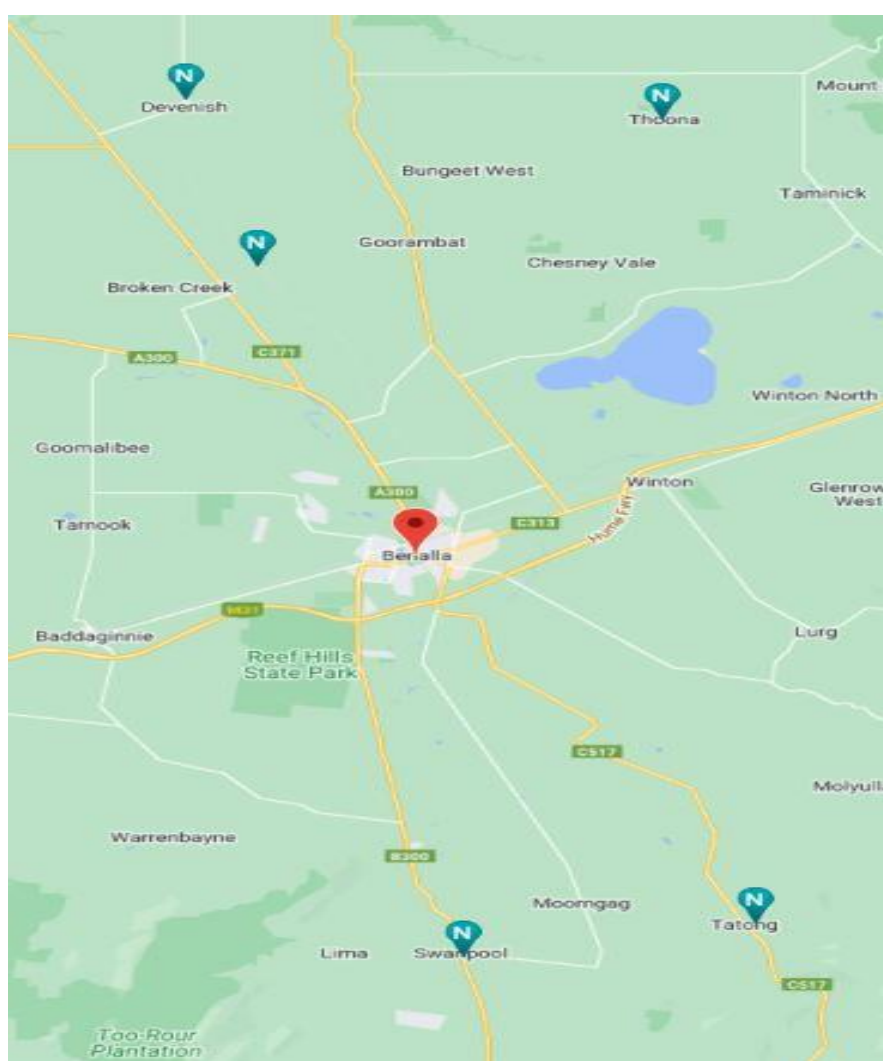
The law in Victoria enables the evacuation of people threatened by fire but does not support the compulsory evacuation of those with a pecuniary (Financial) interest in any property under threat.

12 Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs)

NSPs are not part of any shelter-in-place or evacuation strategies. They are places of last resort where other plans have failed or cannot be followed, where a persons' prospects of survival might be better than at other places but cannot be guaranteed.

An advantage of an NSP is that multiple agencies have awareness that people may be gathered there and assign it as a very high value asset to be defended wherever possible. The ability of agencies to respond to and defend a NSP is not guaranteed. NSPs are identified buildings or spaces within the community that might afford some protection from radiant heat, the biggest killer during bushfire. They are designated and signposted by the Council and meet the guidelines as assessed by the Country Fire Authority.

Benalla MEMPC and CFA have partnered to identify several NSPs in the Municipality. The process has identified the following locations as neighbourhood safer places. These places may not have any facilities. They are places people may evacuate to as a place of last resort in case of emergency.



Facility Name	Address
Devenish Public Hall	34 Main Street, Devenish
Goorambat Public Hall	53-55 Halls Road, Goorambat
Swanpool Public Hall	2386 Midland Highway, Swanpool
Tatong Recreation Reserve Community Hub	46 Tatong road, Tatong
Thoon Memorial Hall	47 Sargeant St, Thoon

13.0 Emergency Shelter and care

People displaced by incident, emergency or disaster events are strongly encouraged to make their own emergency accommodation arrangements with friends, family or with commercial accommodation providers. Should displaced people have no options for managing their own shelter Council may arrange accommodation at emergency relief centres or at alternative locations such as hotels or motels. DFFH can arrange emergency shelter and accommodation when municipal councils have exhausted local resources and have escalated a request to DFFH.

Note: Emergency shelters have been likened to 'Lifeboats not Cruise Ships,' Conditions should be expected to be basic in nature.

13.1 Food and Water for Affected People

People and communities must be provided access to food and water to support their immediate and basic needs. Food and water can be provided in a variety of settings including relief centres or via the distribution of relief packs to communities who are isolated or sheltering in place. Where local resources are unable to meet the demand, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) will coordinate emergency drinking water supplies and sewerage services to affected areas (following public health advice from DH).

13.2 Psychosocial Support

In the immediate aftermath of an emergency, some affected people will require some level of psychological support. For most people, the need at this stage will be for *Psychological First Aid*. Formal psychological counselling may not be useful at this stage except for those people with pre-existing mental health conditions. Support will be coordinated by Red Cross.

See: http://www.redcross.org.au/files/Psychological_First_Aid_An_Australian_Guide.pdf

13.3 Material Aid

Individuals, families and communities affected by emergencies requiring such assistance will be provided essential material aid such as clothing and personal necessities, to help ensure their personal comfort, dignity, health and wellbeing. This will be coordinated by Red Cross. Bedding etc is provided by the Salvation Army. Wherever possible, emergency financial support should be provided to enable affected people to purchase their own requisites. This provides a level of control over their lives and is an important start to their recovery.

13.4 Reconnecting Families and Friends

The reconnection of families and friends and their communities will be primarily facilitated through a service called Register.Find.Reunite. Victoria Police is responsible for the control and coordination of the service and Red Cross for its management and operation.

Voluntary registration may be done in a relief centre, by phone at an inquiry centre or online. Control agencies are responsible for encouraging people to register with Register.Find.Reunite. and should also remind people to use their existing communication networks to connect with their family and friends to provide assurance about their safety and wellbeing.

13.5 Health Care and First Aid

Incident, emergency or disaster Incident impacted people may require to be provided with emergency health care and/or first aid. Ambulance Victoria is responsible for pre-hospital care and for establishing field primary care clinics or other health relief assistance measures in consultation the Department of Health.

13.6 Public health

The Environmental Health Officer is responsible for coordinating all Municipal public health matters. The responsibilities of the Environmental Health Officer in emergencies include:

- Water supplies: potability, supply and contamination.
- Food: hygienic production, storage, distribution, assessment of damaged food and donated foods, ensuring that an adequate supply is maintained.
- Sanitation: providing for emergency sanitation and assessment of damaged systems, promoting personal hygiene practices.
- Infectious diseases: control measures including immunisation.
- Refuse removal: supervision and advice, particularly with regard to emergency arrangements (including dead animals).
- Accommodation: advice on suitability of temporary accommodation and assessment of damaged accommodation.
- Public Health: impacts on public health, environmental complaints and incidents investigation.

13.7 Animal Welfare

Good management of companion animals, livestock and wildlife impacted by emergencies is an essential part of emergency relief. They may need access to adequate feed and water, containment and shelter and management of injuries.

The Department of Agriculture will provide advice and assistance in dealing with animal welfare. DELWP is the primary agency to respond to Native Animal welfare.

If requested, BRCC may provide an appropriate disposal site for animal carcasses originating within its Municipal boundaries as a result of emergencies. BRCC does not have the capacity to offer this service to other Municipalities. The provision of emergency stock burial sites is not automatic. Consideration must be given to suitable soil profiles, proximity to drainage and the need to minimise or stop stock or carcase movements altogether.

14.0 Stand down from Response

After consultation with the control authority and any other relevant agency, and the MERC is satisfied that the response to the emergency has been completed, they will advise all participating agencies to “stand down” from Response.

Recovery actions will often overlap with Response and very often will continue after Response finishes, depending on the circumstances of the Incident. If this occurs a Transition Agreement will be completed (see 16.1)

15 Recovery (**AFTER an Incident**)

Recovery activities will usually commence before Response arrangements conclude. Ag Vic, ERV, Council and Red Cross are all important participating agencies in Recovery fields.

Recovery activities and structures aim to:

- Reduce the effects and consequences of emergencies;
- Enable community-led approaches to recovery;
- Restore essential services, infrastructure and lifelines/networks that communities need to function;
- Enable communities to adapt to interruption;
- Provide customised services that adapt when community is most in need; and,
- Bring together people, resources, skills and capability.

Tables 15 – 18 of the SEMP <https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/semv> outline the recovery roles and responsibilities of agencies at the state and regional level across the follow four (4) recovery environments:

Social - the direct and indirect effects an event may have on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. This environment is primarily concerned with safety, security and shelter, health and psychosocial wellbeing.

Economic - the direct and indirect effects an event may have on businesses, primary producers and the broader economy.

Built - the effects an event may have on essential physical infrastructure including essential services, commercial and industrial facilities, public buildings and assets and housing.

Natural - the effects an event may have on a healthy and functioning environment, which underpins the economy and society. Components of the natural environment include air and water quality; land degradation and contamination; plant and wildlife damage/loss; and national parks, cultural and heritage sites.

Recovery Co-ordination - State, Regional, Local

The SEMP outlines the responsibility for recovery co-ordination as follows.

- State recovery co-ordination: Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV)
- Regional recovery co-ordination: Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV)
- Municipal recovery co-ordination: Benalla Rural City Council
- For communities affected by the 2019-2020 Eastern Victorian Bushfires recovery co-ordination or as formally delegated by the EMC: Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV)

15.1 Transition agreement.

Transition structures and handover requirements to support recovery co-ordination arrangements will vary according to the emergency, and response and recovery agencies will work co-operatively to share information, jointly plan, jointly make decisions and execute their plans.

During the response phase, a plan will be developed to transition the co-ordination process from the RERC to the Regional Recovery Coordinator (RRC) and from the MERC to the Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM).

The Incident Controller should be involved in planning for and decision-making about the transition, as it marks the end of the response phase which the Incident Controller leads and manages.

The plan, which mainly includes short-term activities, should cover the following:

- Ensure the continuity of relief activities into the recovery phase, if required
- Set out communications arrangements for affected communities about the impacts of the emergency, relief assistance available and recovery services
- Use data from initial impact assessments to identify where to focus early recovery activities (such as secondary impact assessments)
- Identify resources needed to support immediate recovery needs including public health, wellbeing and safety needs
- Co-ordinate essential clean-up operations, as required
- Set out governance arrangements (authorisation, co-ordination and monitoring) for the transition
- Ensure all personnel with recovery roles are notified and briefed about and supported during the transition
 - Specify data-and information-sharing protocols, so information gathered during response and early recovery is disseminated during the transition to relevant agencies

An Agreement for Transition of Co-ordination Arrangements from Response to Recovery includes a schedule of transition arrangements, timing and duration of transition generally.

The transition should be delayed if:

- Significant emergency risks remain;
- The powers which are only available to control agencies and response co-ordinating agencies personnel during the response phase are still needed;
- The effects and consequences of the emergency are not yet adequately known;
- Affected communities continue to need relief services; or,
- Recovery resources are not yet assembled and ready to undertake their roles. (Recovery coordinators at the relevant tiers must be ready to assume responsibility and have the necessary resources assembled before the transition, so service provision to the community is not interrupted during the transition.)

The Incident Controller maintains response control and co-ordination for as long as an emergency continues to threaten a community but this should not delay ongoing relief and recovery activities. If a phased transition is appropriate, teams at relevant tiers should agree on the timing and phasing of the transition, the activities required and who is responsible. The full transition from response to recovery occurs after response activities have ceased. Long-term recovery is co-ordinated by the Recovery Co-ordination Agency (RCA), before usually moving into community-level recovery activities. Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) is the Regional Coordination Agency. If the emergency was large and complex, control and support agencies might need to remain at the incident area well into the initial stages of recovery, to support recovery managers and co-ordinators.

The Emergency Response Co-ordinator must discuss with the relevant emergency management team how they are determining that response has finished and the reasons why transition should

occur. Incident specific recovery assistance is time limited and depends on the scale of the emergency. People and communities must be engaged and supported to lead their own recovery. In time, community recovery activities should transition into regular mainstream services and activities that shift the focus from recovery to community development, renewal and future mitigation and planning. A focus on community development is an important component of recovery and it should be carefully considered and planned. Recovery agencies should consult communities, existing networks and service providers about the transition of services, to ensure adequate support for the most vulnerable.

In major emergency events where there is significant impact on communities, recovery planning and management should be integrated into the incident control system. Transition from response to recovery should be based on the needs of the impacted community and should be a phased change, reflecting shifts in priorities. Agencies involved in the response phase may also make significant contribution to the recovery effort.

The Incident Controller, the MERC and the MRM, along with other relevant agencies should start planning for the transition to municipal level recovery as soon as possible following the initial impact of a major emergency (noting that some emergency recovery may be co-ordinated at state or regional level). In some situations, the Incident Controller may physically and formally hand over to the Recovery Coordinator/Manager or agency, any response facilities and/or resources to be utilised in recovery activities. This will only occur after agreement has been reached, and after any necessary documentation has been completed to the mutual satisfaction of both the response and recovery coordinators.

The Transition to Recovery Template is found in EMCOP and should be utilised by the incident controller to enable transition.

Resources acquired for the response, which are not required for recovery, remain under control of the requesting response agency. That agency is responsible for their return or disposal.

The process for endorsement of transition arrangements is:

1. Municipality level agreement
2. Regional / Divisional level agreement
3. State Agency level agreement.

The endorsement process for a Transition Agreement may follow this or a similar example:

Local (if applicable)	Regional/Divisional	State
Control Agency Incident Controller	Victoria Police Divisional Emergency Response Coordinator	Victoria Police State Emergency Response Officer
Victoria Police Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator	Control Agency	Control Agency
Local Government Municipal Recovery Manager	ERV Regional Recovery Coordinator	ERV State Emergency Recovery Coordinator
Effective as at:	Time:	Date:

A standard approach is required to assist with the transition of emergency management coordination arrangements between the control agency, Victoria Police (the response coordination agency), BRV (the recovery coordination agency) and the affected municipalities.

Emergency management activities involve multiple agencies that are coordinated under agreed structures and it is imperative that effective notification of changed coordination arrangements occurs. This is important for the response agencies stand down arrangements and for agencies with ongoing community support and recovery roles associated with the incident as well as for the affected communities.

15.2 Recovery Operations

Recovery is the process that enables an individual or a community to get back to an acceptable or better level of functioning after a major disruption. This is a developmental process that commences along with first response, may last for weeks and possibly can extend to months or years after an emergency and is based on a continuing assessment of impacts and needs.

In emergencies where BRCC is the responsible co-ordinating agency, the MRM will co-ordinate and lead recovery operations. In situations where ERV is delegated the recovery co-ordinator, ERV will determine, in consultation with the community, the operational requirements, pathways and activities for recovery. The Benalla MEMPC and MRM will work co-operatively with ERV.

An incident specific recovery plan will be developed to specifically guide recovery following an emergency. To assist in the preparation of the plan, the MRM will use the disaster recovery toolkit for local government published on the EMV website

(<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/disaster-recovery-toolkit-forlocal-government>)

15.3 Recovery Arrangements

The context for recovery in Victoria is changing and it is anticipated that a revised model for community recovery, 'Resilient Recovery' will be implemented in the near future. Resilient recovery is intended to connect communities and networks to plan for and support *wellbeing, livability, sustainability, viability and community connection*. This plan considers the Resilient Recovery model as appropriate for the municipality.

As outlined in the SEMP (p30), recovery means the assisting of people and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.

At the local level, the co-ordination and delivery of recovery services should be aligned with the following National Principles for Disaster Recovery.

- **Understand the context** - Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the specific communities affected by recovery activities: each community has its own history, values and dynamics.
- **Recognise complexity** - Successful recovery recognises and responds to the complex, dynamic nature of emergencies and communities.
- **Use community-led approaches** - Successful recovery is community-led and community centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with communities and supporting them to move forward. It is managed locally, closest to the community and can be scaled up to deal with more widespread, complex issues and support needs. This recognises the key role of non-government organisations, community groups, businesses and others.

Decisions made during response will affect recovery outcomes. Recovery activities begin immediately and continue beyond the need for relief activities. Recovery should therefore be considered during response and at all stages of emergency management planning.

As response transitions to early recovery, secondary and post-emergency needs assessments will support planning, decision-making and recovery priorities. Assessments can also be shared over time, to ensure people and communities are given the information they need to support their own recovery.

15.4 Community Recovery Committee (CRC)

Depending on the level and nature of an emergency incident that impacts the community the MRM and Regional Recovery Coordinator (ERV) may make the decision to establish a CRC to support local recovery through a community led approach.

The CRC will act as a single point of contact for the affected community. The role of the committee includes but is not limited to:

- provide and co-ordinate recovery support to the affected community.
- identify community needs and resource requirements
- make recommendations to recovery agencies, council and recovery managers on strategies and plans regarding community preparedness, recovery and resilience.
- liaise, consult, co-ordinate and negotiate where appropriate and on behalf of the community, with recovery agencies, government departments and council in order to implement recovery programs and initiatives.
- advocate and lobby where appropriate and in conjunction with the community, recovery agencies, government departments and council in order to implement recovery programs and initiatives.
- identify community issues and concerns, and where appropriate, advocate and lobby, in conjunction with the community, government departments, other agencies and council to implement programs and initiatives to address these concerns.
- Determine and activate applicable sub-committees.

Additional membership will be considered to ensure appropriate representation is achieved across all affected communities with community members, groups and leaders. Other organisations may be included depending on the skills and expertise required by the CRC.

The CRC will meet as frequently as required and will report to the Benalla MRM to guide more strategic recovery activities.

15.5 Recovery functions and activities

Emergency Recovery Centres will be established as needed and designed to provide a single point of entry for affected people for an “all agency, all stakeholders” integrated recovery process, effectively a ‘one-stop shop’. ERV is the state lead agency for most recovery co-ordination, except Pandemic, and DFFH is the lead agency for social recovery. An Emergency Recovery Centre provides support to affected communities in the restoration of their emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing and facilitates access to recovery services, such as:

- psychological services (for example, counselling)
- temporary and medium-term accommodation
- environmental (for example, public health)
- financial assistance and legal and insurance advice
- case coordination/management service.

Recovery activities and structures aim to:

- Reduce the effects and consequences of emergencies;
- Enable community focussed approaches to recovery;
- Restore essential services, infrastructure and lifelines that communities need to function;
- Enable communities to adapt to the interruption;
- Provide tailored services that adapt when community needs it most; and,
- Bring together people, resources, skills and capability.

Tables 12 to 15 of the SEMP outline the recovery roles and responsibilities of agencies at the state and regional level

15.6 Recovery communications

Affected communities need consistent, repeated and co-ordinated information that spans immediate needs in line with the functions delivered by relief and recovery agencies.

Recovery communications require care and sensitivity and can often be impeded by significant physical, logistical and psychosocial limitations.

Successful recovery is built on effective communication. Recovery should:

- Recognise that communication with a community should be two-way and that input and feedback should be sought and considered over an extended time;
- Ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations, addresses a variety of communication needs, and is provided through a range of media and channels;
- Establish mechanisms for co-ordinated and consistent communication with all organisations and individuals; and,
- Repeat key recovery messages because information is more likely to reach community members when they are receptive.
- BRCC has developed a Relief and Recovery sub-plan which also outlines the roles of essential staff including the MERC, MRM and MEMP

15.7 Transitioning to Post Recovery

Recovery is a developmental process that could continue for months, if not years, therefore planning must address short, medium and long-term recovery needs and goals.

Withdrawal of emergency recovery services is a critical aspect of recovery management. A planned withdrawal involving the CRC, Council and the affected community is crucial so that a void will not be left.

Transitioning to post recovery requires careful consideration and planning and is based on reduced levels of demand and need for such services. Community recovery programs should transition into regular mainstream services and activities which shift the focus from emergency recovery to community resilience and support, whilst still providing services for ongoing needs of affected people.

Communities must continue to be supported through community development and Resilience Committee activities that will focus on building future preparedness, risk management and all the characteristics of resilience such as community leadership, formal and informal networks, communication channels and partnerships with Council, other communities and agencies.

15.8 Termination of response activities and handover of goods and facilities

When response activities are nearing completion, the MERC in conjunction with the Control Agency will call together relevant relief and recovery agencies including the MEMO and the MRM, to consult on the timing and process of the response stand down.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for certain facilities and goods obtained during response, to be utilised in recovery activities. In these situations, there would be an actual hand-over to the MRM of such facilities and goods. This hand-over will occur only after agreement has been reached between the Incident Controller, MERC and MRM.

Resourcing and payment for goods and services used in the recovery process (by Council) is the responsibility of the MRM through the MEMP arrangements.

16 Impact assessments

Under the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, the Emergency Management Commissioner is responsible for ensuring the coordination, collection, collation and reporting of information on the impact of the emergency.

Impact assessment is conducted in the aftermath of a Class 1 emergency event to assess the impact to the community and inform government of immediate and longer-term recovery needs.

Impact assessment must be community focused to ensure the data/information will assist decision making on how to best support impacted communities.

Victoria uses a three-stage process to gather and analyse information following an emergency event. The term impact assessment encompasses all three stages:

- Initial impact assessment (IIA)
- Secondary impact assessment (SIA)
- Post emergency needs assessment (PENA)

Despite three stages being described, impact assessment is not linear and some of the stages may be completed concurrently depending on the size and nature of the emergency event. The stages described must be an evolving continuum or a single process made up of stages which transition as seamlessly as possible.

16.1 Impact assessment procedures

TASK	WHO	NOTES
INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IIA)		
Within first 48 hours Broad, preliminary assessment may not be accurate – gives indications of extent of damage	Control agency	The starting point for prioritisation of recovery Data entered into Crisisworks Risk assessments
SECONDARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SIA)		
Built environment (also environmental health) Public and private assessment Includes roads, roadsides, bridges, drainage, community infrastructure, utilities	MEMO EHO Council teams	Teams to undertake drive-bys and site inspections. Also data gathered at ERC Data entered into Crisisworks Utilities will also conduct their own impact assessments and

		<p>DELWP and RRV also have responsibility on certain roads – information to be shared</p> <p>Data and photos from Council's asset management program may be used to inform SIAs of infrastructure</p> <p>Building surveyors will be activated to survey damaged houses and report back to Council</p>
Social environment Includes psychosocial support, accommodation, health, basic needs	MRM DFFH	ERC data collection Home visits Phone calls Data entered into Crisisworks Recovery module
Natural environment Includes dangerous trees, native animals, restoration and erosion prevention	MEMO Agencies	Drive-bys and site inspections Data entered into Crisisworks Impact Assessment module
Agriculture Includes livestock care and burial, fencing, fodder, water replacement Impact assessments led by Agriculture Victoria with Council as support agency	Agriculture Victoria MEMO	Face to face and phone calls Site visits Data entered into Crisisworks Impact Assessment and Recovery modules
Risk Assessment	MRM MEMO RMO	Risk management should be included in every impact assessment
POST EMERGENCY NEEDS ASSESSMENT (PENA)		
Economic Assessment of businesses affected and needs	MRM Eco Dev DJPR	Face to face Meetings Data entered into Crisisworks
Community health and well being	MRM DFFH	Meetings, social gatherings Social media Face to face with community leaders
Reporting on cost of restoration and recovery Early estimations move to detailed	MRM Finance	Crisisworks and internal reports prepared for NDRRA
Inform recovery planning	MRM	Recovery committee

17 Debriefing arrangements

A debrief should take place as soon as practicable after any emergency having a significant impact.

At the municipal or MEMP level, the MERC may convene a meeting and all agencies who participated should be represented with a view to assessing the adequacy of the MEMP and to recommend any changes. Such meetings should be chaired by the MERC.

Following a 'debrief' of an event, incident or exercise, minutes will be kept, presented to the following MEMPC meeting and identified actions implemented by change to procedure (or reinforcement of procedure) or by variation to the MEMP etc

Post major events, the Incident Controller will arrange a debrief.

Each agency involved will hold their own debrief to review their own planning and response.

18 Appendices

Appendix 1 MEMPC Membership (Not for Public release)

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Appendix 2. Emergency relief / Recovery Centres

The following Table identifies the Benalla municipality facilities have been assessed and found to be potentially suitable for use in times of emergency as relief and/or recovery centres. Careful consideration will be given to the prevailing circumstances and number of people needing assistance when selecting a site or sites to be used to operate an emergency relief and/or recovery centre.

Normally only one or a limited number of Relief and Recovery centres will be activated at any one time and in any one incident. Arriving at one of these listed Relief and Recovery shelters does not guarantee that the shelter has been activated at that time.

Identified Relief and Recovery Centres

Name	Location	Air Cond. Status	Subject to flooding	Disability Access Disability Toilet/s	Capacity to hold people Standing / sleeping
Baddaginnie Public Hall	Palmerston Street Baddaginnie	No			Stand 200 Sleep 30
Benalla, All Blacks Football Club Rooms	Ackerly Avenue Benalla	Yes	Yes	Toilet Yes	Stand 150 Sleep 80
Benalla, CWA Hall	117 Bridge Street, Benalla	No			Stand 100 Sleep 50
Benalla, Football Club Rooms	Chiswell Pavilion, Benalla Show Grounds				Stand 150 Sleep 80
Benalla, Indoor Recreation Centre	Ackerly Avenue, Benalla	Yes	Yes	Toilet Yes	Stand 2000 Sleep 1000
Benalla, Salvation Army Hall	85 Bridge Street, Benalla				Stand 200 Sleep 100
Benalla, Scout Hall	Corner of Coster St & Lowry Place Benalla	No	Yes		Stand 150 Sleep 80
Benalla, Senior Citizens	Fawckner Drive, Benalla	Yes	Yes	Toilet Yes	Stand 200 Sleep 100

Benalla, Town Hall	Nunn Street, Benalla	Yes, in meeting rooms			Stand 200 Sleep 100
Devenish, Public Hall	Main Street, Devenish				Stand 200 Sleep
Goorambat, Public Hall	Halls Road, Goorambat	Yes			Stand 150 Sleep 80
Lima Community Centre	Lima Road, Lima	No			Stand 30 Sleep 20
Lima South, Public Hall	Midland Highway, Lima South				Stand 150 Sleep 80
Lurg, Public Hall	Lurg-Winton Road, Lurg	Ceiling fans			Stand 100 Sleep 50
Molyullah Memorial Hall	Centre Rd, Molyullah				
Moorngag, Public Hall	Samaria Road, Moorngag	No			Stand 250 Sleep 150
Stewarton, Public Hall	Stewarton Road, Stewarton	No			Stand 100 Sleep 60
Swanpool, Public Hall	Midland Highway, Swanpool	A/c in Supper room. Generator for emergency power		Toilet Yes	Stand 150 Sleep 80
Tatong, Public Hall	Tiger Hill Road, Tatong	No			
Thoonah, Public Hall	Corner of Sargeant & Nicholls Streets, Thoonah	Ceiling fans in hall and supper room			Stand 150 Sleep 80
Warrenbayne Public Hall	Benalla – Warrenbayne Road, Warrenbayne	No			Sleep 200 Stand 100

Further details on the operation of the relief centres may be found in the:
BENALLA RURAL CITY EMERGENCY RELIEF CENTRE HANDBOOK 2021

Appendix 3 Abbreviations used in this plan

AEMO	AUSTRALIAN ENERGY MARKET OPERATOR
AGVIC	AGRICULTURE VICTORIA
AV	AMBULANCE VICTORIA
ERV	EMERGENCY RECOVERY VICTORIA (formerly BRV)
CEO	CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CERA	COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT
CFA	COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY
DJPR	DEPARTMENT of JOBS, PRECINCTS and REGIONS
DELWP	DEPARTMENT of ENVIRONMENT, LAND, WATER and PLANNING
DET	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION and TRAINING
DFFH	DEPARTMENT of FAMILIES, FAIRNESS and HOUSING
DH	DEPARTMENT of HEALTH
DoT	DEPARTMENT of TRANSPORT
EM Act 13	<i>Emergency Management Act 2013</i>
EM Act 18	<i>Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018</i>
EMC	EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR
EMLO	EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT LIAISON OFFICER
ESV	ENERGY SAFE VICTORIA
EPA	ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY
FRV	FIRE RESCUE VICTORIA
IERC	INCIDENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR
IC	INCIDENT CONTROLLER
ICC	INCIDENT CONTROL CENTRE
IIA	INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
IMT	INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEMPC	MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEMP	MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN
MERC	MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR
MEMO	MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICER
MFMP	MUNICIPAL FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN
MFPO	MUNICIPAL FIRE PREVENTION OFFICER
MRM	MUNICIPAL RECOVERY MANAGER
NEW	NORTH EAST WATER
NSP	NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACE
PENA	POST EMERGENCY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
PV	PARKS VICTORIA
RERC	REGIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR
RRV	REGIONAL ROADS VICTORIA
RSPCA	ROYAL SOCIETY for the PROTECTION of CRUELTY to ANIMALS
SEMP	STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN
SIA	SECONDARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
TFB	TOTAL FIRE BAN
VICPOL	VICTORIA POLICE
VICSES	VICTORIA STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE
VCCEM	VICTORIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES EMERGENCIES MINISTRY

Appendix 4. The Australian Warning System

As part of the new Australian Warning System, the way incidents are displayed on the website has changed. The Australian Warning System is a new national approach to information and warnings during emergencies like bushfire, flood, storm, extreme heat and severe weather.

The System uses a nationally consistent set of icons, see below. The AWS has been designed based on feedback and research across the country and aims to deliver a more consistent approach to these types of emergencies, no matter where you are. Australia's fire and emergency services aim to provide you with timely and relevant information during emergencies.

Refer to your local agency website for information on any current warnings and incidents in your community.



BUSHFIRE



CYCLONE



STORM



FLOOD



EXTREME HEAT



OTHER

Know the Signs:

How you receive warnings may not have changed, but the wording, colours and call to action may be different to what you're used to, as this system is implemented across Australia. Refer to your state or territory's emergency service's website for how to stay informed during an emergency.

What is a Warning?

A warning provides point-in-time information about a hazard that is impacting or is expected to impact communities. It describes the impact and expected consequences for communities and includes advice on what people should do.

There are three warning levels:**Advice (Yellow):**

An incident has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.

Watch and Act (Orange):

There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.

Emergency Warning (Red):

An Emergency Warning is the highest level of warning. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.

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Appendix 5.

Certificate of Audit for previous plan

