

Enquiries: Justin Murray
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11th October 2017

Local Government Victoria
Level 35,
2 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Councils and Emergency Position paper

Nillumbik Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the “Councils and Emergencies Position Paper.” We note that this paper has been produced following extensive consultation undertaken since the publication of the original document the “Council and Emergencies Directions Paper”.

Nillumbik Shire Council endorsed the MAV’s submission to the original directions paper. In their submission MAV express a number of concerns. Their submission made a number of recommendations including:

- In listing the roles of local government there should be a delineation of core requirements and non-core requirements and that core requirements should be specific, not general statements. They should be derived from legislation or statutory documents only- not guidance documents or policies or plans with a lesser status. Furthermore they should be quoted verbatim so there is less chance of misinterpretation.
- Core requirements should also be achievable, irrespective of the size or resources available to the council. Compliance should not be reliant on grant funding.

These recommendations have not been included in the updated document.

The ‘Councils and Emergencies Position Paper’ fails to provide the clarity of responsibilities that would enable the project to proceed meaningfully to stage 2, assessing councils against these responsibilities. Further to this there is a stage missing between identifying these responsibilities and then assessing councils. This stage would be to identify the skills and competencies required to undertake these responsibilities.

While the introductory text attempts to clarify what is a ‘responsibility’ and what is an ‘activity’ the table of responsibilities/activities could be taken as this is what all councils should be doing. What are described as “identified practice” items are included even if this a current practice “of one or more councils”.

The descriptions of Council responsibilities are sometimes direct quotes from the source i.e. the legislation or Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV). At times these descriptions have been reworded. In some instances giving the impression that Councils have greater responsibility than they actually have. For example: Council responsibility/activity No 22: "Test, exercise and evaluate relief and recovery plans" is a responsibility of a Municipal Emergency Management Planning committee, not just Council.

Also, at times the descriptions are not even accurate. For example No 60 "Coordinate the housing of displaced, lost and stray companion animals and livestock (other than wildlife)." Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources is the lead agency regarding this not Councils.

Some listed activities are very specific such as No 86 which refers to the provision of pillar hydrants and others very general or vague such as: No 24 "Encourage and assist the community to participate in emergency management awareness programs."

The paper would benefit for being more specific as to the responsibilities of all council's under the current legislation. Given that the intent of this paper is to inform phase 2 of the project, the success of the entire project is dependent on this happening.

The "Councils and Emergency Position Paper" does not provide clarity as to what Council's role is or should be in an emergency. As such it should not be considered to be an agreed position as to Councils' role.

Yours sincerely

Cr Peter Clarke
Mayor