

# Gippsland Regional Relief Plan

Latrobe Valley Coal Mines Fires Incident

Version: 1.2 - 20 February 2014

Current for period 20 February to 6 March 2014

## 1. Purpose

To provide an outline of the Gippsland regional level relief coordination and management to ensure essential needs are provided to individuals and communities affected by the Latrobe Valley open cut mine fires.

This plan should be read in conjunction with:

1. LV Mine Fires Strategic Risk and Consequence Plan
2. LV Mines Operational Evacuation Plan
3. Latrobe Valley Mines Fires-Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
4. Municipal Emergency Management Plans
5. State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (Emergency Management Manual Victoria – Part 4)
6. Emergency Relief Handbook: A Planning Guide

## 2. Emergency Relief Functions

Emergency relief is the provision and coordination of essential needs to persons affected by, or involved in the management of, an emergency.

The functions of emergency relief meet the needs of affected people for:

- food and water
- immediate non-food items
- emergency shelter
- reconnection with family through registration – Register.Find.Reunite (RFR).
- first aid and primary care
- psychosocial support
- financial assistance
- emergency relief for animals

- sanitation and hygiene
- information

Relief services can be provided in a number of ways. Methods for the delivery of relief services include:

- Re-supply
- Outreach
- Established supply points
- Information points
- Emergency Relief Centres

### 3. Emergency Relief Activation

The Deputy Regional Controller for the LV Coal Mine Fires will determine the actions required to address increased levels of carbon monoxide in affected communities. This may include shelter in place and individual relocation advice or in the most extreme circumstances, a recommendation to evacuate. The Deputy Regional Controller will determine the need to activate emergency relief services.

#### Communications

During an emergency, the response agency is responsible for coordinating community information and engagement, which will include information to the community regarding the activation of emergency relief centres and general support services available to the community. Such information is integrated within emergency warnings.

The Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires Communications and Stakeholders Engagement Strategy outlines key strategies for the two week period commencing 17 February. The strategic intent is:

Maintain trust and good-will by keeping the Latrobe Valley and wider Gippsland community informed re: the open cut mine fires by providing timely, tailored and relevant information about those fires. Assist and support other agencies to communicate their information (Health, EPA, Local Council). The strategic intent will be achieved by committing to regular communication and stakeholder engagement (including mainstream channels but with a strong focus on face-to-face engagement) and by having a clear channel for information.

Health and Human Services Emergency Management coordinate relief information at a state and regional level through mechanisms such as Victorian Emergency Relief Information Line and the whole-of-Victorian government Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria website.

#### **For this event information is being made available to the public through:**

- Daily media release with updated information by Incident Control public information cell
- Community Respite Centre located in Moe has information on fire management, public health messages and social support messages as provided by key relief partner agencies located at the Respite Centre
- Promotion of websites with relevant information on fire conditions, air quality, public health messages etc
- Information Bus based in Morwell for community to access information on health and fire suppression
- Community engagement teams attending pre advertised locations in Morwell and surrounding towns to provide information and answer questions
- Letter drop of community newsletter

- Letters to parents of children attending Morwell schools or pre-schools

#### 4. Current situation

This relief plan is focused on the Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires incident. The Hazelwood open cut mine has an active fire involving over 200 CFA and MFB firefighters, 100 mine staff, 30 incident management team personnel, and nine medical monitoring personnel. Fire suppression is the primary goal. While progress has been made to extinguish the fire, there is still at least two or more weeks of work ahead. Monitoring of carbon monoxide is being undertaken around the clock both at the mine site and in the Morwell community by Emergency Services HazMat technicians. The EPA also has air monitoring in place for fine particles in Traralgon and in Morwell to measure the impacts of the smoke (from bushfires and from the mine fires) on local air quality. Emergency services and EPA will continue monitoring over coming weeks to minimise any risks to communities

Air quality forecasts are available on the [EPA website](#). Conditions change regularly. Smokey conditions are expected to continue in parts of the Latrobe Valley for at least the remainder of this week and up to 4 weeks. The wind and weather will determine the areas to be effected. High levels of smoke can aggravate existing heart or lung conditions and cause irritated eyes, coughing or wheezing.

Due to the on going nature of the fires, some individuals and communities may experience smoke impacts and may seek to relocate during periods of poor air quality. This relief plan is based on an assumption that there may be periods of short duration- two hour periods, where EPA issues advice that people who are vulnerable or have pre existing respiratory conditions should consider temporarily relocating to reduce their exposure to poor air quality.

Key issues being addressed as part of coordinated regional relief planning include:

- integration of relief into response operations including evacuation planning
- surge planning at the local council and regional level
- relocation support for vulnerable people

#### 5. Community Respite Centre Planning

Due to the prolonged forecast of poor air quality a community respite centre has been opened in Moe for residents of Morwell and surrounding areas to attend to take a break from the smoky conditions.

The centre is being coordinated currently by DHS in conjunction with Latrobe City Council. The centre is operating inside the Moe Town Hall, Albert Street, Moe from 9am – 7pm daily, subject to local demand. **Insert details of Respite Payment here once confirmed**

Representatives from the following organisations are supporting the Respite Centre

Latrobe City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing Venue</li> <li>• Staff at venue to attend to community questions</li> <li>• Qualified staff at venue to provide Child Friendly space</li> <li>• Catering for Centre staff and volunteers</li> </ul>
Victorian Red Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Aid</li> <li>• Tea/Coffee for community members</li> </ul>
Victorian Council of Churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet and Greet people as they arrive</li> <li>• Personal support</li> </ul>
Ambulance Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide public health messages regarding impacts of smoke and ash</li> <li>• Health support</li> </ul>
Environmental Protection Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information on how air quality is measured and general questions about air quality monitoring</li> </ul>
Victoria Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Safety</li> <li>• Traffic Management should it be required</li> </ul>
Fire Services Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on fire suppression activities</li> </ul>
Dept of Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and referral for health and psychosocial related matters.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Centre Coordination</li> </ul>
Commonwealth Centrelink Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information on centrelink services</li> </ul>
Other Services TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

## 6. Regional Emergency Relief Coordination

Municipal councils have responsibility for coordinating emergency relief at the local level. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for the overall emergency relief coordination at the regional and state levels. Red Cross supports DHS in the management of some of the emergency relief functions.

A coordinated approach to the management of resources and operations is critical to ensure the effective use of limited resources required during an emergency and to ensure regional operations are managed consistent with emergency management guidelines. The primary method for regional coordination of resources and operations during an emergency is via the Regional Emergency Operations Centre.

Where an emergency is likely to exceed the capacity of a municipal council to coordinate emergency relief functions, DHS, supported by Red Cross, assumes responsibility for the coordination of relief resources. Similarly, where local arrangements for relief service delivery are exceeded, service delivery falls to lead agencies designated in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria to further expand the capacity of local relief services. Further escalations to the state level of management may also be necessary for very large or complex events. The following table identifies the organisations designated as having lead responsibility for the delivery of emergency relief services where local arrangements have been exceeded.

**Table 1: Lead agencies for emergency relief functions**

Emergency relief function	Organisation with lead responsibility
Regional/state coordinator	Department of Human Services
Emergency relief planning and functional management at municipal level	Municipal councils
Food and water	Red Cross
Non-food items	The Salvation Army
Emergency shelter	Municipal councils
Provision of emergency relief centres	Municipal councils
Registration (Register.Find.Reunite)	Victoria Police (assisted by Red Cross)
First aid and primary care	Ambulance Victoria
Personal Support	Department of Human Services
Financial Assistance	Department of Human Services
Emergency relief for animals	Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI)
Food supply manufacturing and logistics	DEPI
Sanitation and hygiene	Municipal councils
Provision of information	All agencies

When requesting emergency relief, agencies should be familiar with the following arrangements for meeting the costs of providing emergency relief services:

- Municipal councils are responsible for meeting the cost of emergency relief measures provided to people affected by an emergency.
- If emergency relief is requested by a response or relief agency for its own personnel, that agency will be responsible for costs incurred.
- When a response agency requests emergency relief (such as catering) on behalf of a number of response agencies, the requesting agency will be responsible for costs incurred.

These arrangements apply regardless of whether emergency relief is coordinated at municipal, regional or state level. Municipal councils should contact the Department of Treasury and Finance to ascertain availability of reimbursement of relief costs under the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

## 7. Relief Agency Preparedness

The Red Cross supports the Department of Human Services in the coordination of relief services. The State Emergency Response Officer (VicPol) upon advice from the Incident Controller, is responsible for liaising with Red Cross to activate the State Inquiry Centre and the Register.Find.Reunite portal ([www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au)) as needed.

To obtain Red Cross assistance contact 1800 232 969

To activate personal support from the Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) call 9650 4511

To activate the Salvation Army relief services contact Luke Roberts on 0419 535 166

## 7. Animal Welfare

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) has the coordinating role and responsibility under the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan to ensure the welfare of all animals is attended to in emergencies. To ensure this occurs, DEPI currently has:

- staff on stand-by across the state to respond to animal welfare and agricultural impact assessment (if required), and is actively monitoring the fire situation and in liaison with fire control agencies.
- additional staff capacity available should that be required.
- worked with municipalities to ensure they have contingencies in their emergency relief centre plans to deal with evacuated animals (both healthy and injured).
- provided media messaging about the responsibilities for, and care of, animals in fire emergencies.
- fire recovery arrangements to oversee the care of injured wildlife, and
- developed networks with animal care agencies and personnel to assist in larger emergency responses
- (such as veterinarians, animal aid organisations and the Victorian Farmers Federation).

Where community members seek to relocate with their pets the Municipal council will coordinate through their local laws officers support and information.

## 8. Municipal Emergency Relief Arrangements

Municipal councils have responsibility for coordinating emergency relief at the local level. The emergency relief functions and the nominated agencies responsible for service provision at the local level are designated in the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP).

Table 2 summarises municipal emergency relief arrangements for municipalities in Gippsland.

## Summary of Municipal Emergency Relief Arrangements in Gippsland

**Table 2: Municipal emergency relief arrangements documented in municipal emergency management plans within Gippsland**

<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>Food &amp; water</b>	<b>Material aid</b>	<b>Emergency shelter</b>	<b>Relief centres</b>	<b>Register.Find. Reunite</b>	<b>First aid/ primary care</b>	<b>Psychosocial support</b>	<b>Financial assistance</b>	<b>Animal welfare</b>	<b>Sanitation &amp; hygiene</b>
Wellington	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	VCC Lifeline Gippsland	Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF) DHS	Council	Municipal Environmental Health Officer (EHO)
Latrobe	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	Lifeline Gippsland	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO
Baw Baw	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	Council	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO
East Gippsland	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	Red Cross	VCC Red Cross	GERF DHS	Victorian Animal Aid Trust	Municipal Manager Health & Medical Officer of Health
South Gippsland	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St John's Ambulance	Red Cross/VCC	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO
Bass Coast	Red Cross	Salvation Army	Council	Council	Red Cross	St Johns Ambulance	Red Cross/VCC	GERF DHS	Council	Municipal EHO

## 9. Emergency Relief Centre and Accommodation Capacity Planning

Based on the evacuation plans and possible consequences, relief capacity planning is being completed at 3 levels:

1. local level (council managing their own needs)
2. regional level (councils seek support from other Gippsland councils)
3. state level support required (support provided externally into Gippsland)

Table 3 provides a summary of relief centre preparedness and capacity for the current bushfire situation in Gippsland. No relief centres are currently open for the LV Coal Fire Incident. Although councils are able to draw on regional resources where more resources are required, this is only possible if councils remain unaffected and have available capacity.

Relief centres can be used to provide accommodation, however municipalities often take a pragmatic approach to meet the accommodation needs of displaced community members. In some situations, accommodation may be sourced from local commercial providers, particularly where numbers are small. This approach allows, for example, a relief centre to be closed overnight and staffing to rostered and rotated in a more economical way. Should larger numbers of people present to relief centres, or where private accommodation is limited, relief centres would be more heavily relied upon for accommodation.

Municipal councils within Gippsland are all signatories to the Protocol for Inter-council Emergency Management Resource Sharing and utilise the Gippsland Emergency Relief Centre Standard Operating Procedures to provide a standard approach to setting up and operating emergency relief centres. Details of emergency relief centre locations are found in Appendix 1 of that document.

### Immediate Accommodation Plans

Latrobe City Council will initially open 2 relief centres if requested to support the relocation of community members. The first relief centres to be opened would be the Moe Townhall and Traralgon Town Hall- these two have a sleep over capacity of 280 with greater capacity for people who do not need to sleep over. Salvation Army have capacity to supply these two relief centres with necessary bedding.

If it is clear from the outset that greater capacity is needed or if these two relief centres reach capacity the **Trafalgar High School**, and the Trafalgar Community Centre (both operated by Baw Baw Shire) would be the next two relief centres that could open up quickly. The Salvation Army have sufficient bedding to supply these four centres should they be required. Anything beyond this will required Salvation Army to source additional supplies from other locations.

Local motel style accommodation is currently fully booked by emergency services staff. The Federation University in Churchill which has student accommodation is also fully booked by emergency services. There is no plans to open a relief centre in Morwell for safety reasons. Motels will be used should capacity become available.

Overall for immediate planning purposes there is relief accommodation capacity available for **580**. Beyond that the council will require support from councils further away, Regional support and possibly the State.

If all 4 Relief Centres are activated DHS would deploy a Relief Centre support staff person at each centre to assist in coordinating information and reporting requirements.

### **Table 3: Emergency Relief Centres and supplementary accommodation capacity – Latrobe Valley Mine Fires 2014.**

A. Municipal Council	B. Location of relief centre	C. Beds available at relief centre	D. Time frames for Bedding
<b>Baw Baw</b>	Trafalgar High School School Road, Trafalgar <b>TBC</b>  Trafalgar Community Centre 105 Princes Hwy	Sleeps 200 on floor of Hall  Sleeps 80-100 more if not sleeping over Sleeping on mattresses on hall floor	Salvation Army to provide bedding-Linen & Mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour  Salvation Army to provide bedding-Linen & Mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour
<b>Latrobe</b>	Moe Townhall, Cnr Albert Street and Skeltons Lane, Moe  Traralgon Town Hall, (known as the Little Theatre) Cnr Grey Street and Breed Street Traralgon	Sleeps 200, capacity greater if not sleeping.  Sleeps 80 Theatre has seating capacity for 300	Salvation Army to provide bedding-Linen & Mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour  Salvation Army provide bedding-linen& mattresses and can organise within 30 minutes to 1 hour
<b>South Gippsland</b>	Mirboo North	Sleeps 200	Need to confirm availability of bedding

## 10. Emergency Relief Services Capacity and Capability Planning

Table 4 below outlines capacity and capability planning at the local and regional level and identifies agencies providing relief services. It includes relief services provided at all locations including Emergency Relief Centres and re-supply of isolated communities.

**Note:** Given the current situation only Latrobe and Baw Baw's capacity is provided, however additional councils may be called upon to assist. South Gippsland, Cardinia and Yarra Ranges have made contact with Latrobe to indicate they are able to assist.

**Table 4. Relief Services Capacity Planning**

### LATROBE CITY COUNCIL

Relief service type	Capacity and capability planning – local
<b>Food and water</b>	<b>Red Cross-</b> Has some capacity locally to assist with catering but as they are currently supplying emergency services personnel in the Mine, they will need resources from outside the area. They will liaise with <b>Foodbank Victoria</b> to obtain pre-pack food/drink packs and



	<p>have them pre-positioned for use in Latrobe. Red Cross will also liaise with local suppliers to see if they can prepare ready food packs.</p> <p><b>Capacity Issues:</b> Need to confirm with Red Cross if they can supply 4 concurrent relief centres</p>
<b>Psychosocial support</b>	<p><b>Victorian Council of Churches:</b> Can immediately deploy an initial team of 2 (within 30-45 minutes) when relief centres open up (based on 2 relief centres) and increase team size to 4 as needed fairly quickly. They have further capacity to help with greater than 2 relief centres if needed but this may reduce the overall team size at each centre</p> <p><b>Capacity - Good</b> <b>Red Cross</b> VCC will be primary support provider</p>
<b>Support for Children</b>	Latrobe City Council through the pre school program can open up child friendly space in and or near both relief centres and supervise these as needed.
<b>Non food items (material aid):</b>	Salvation Army, Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, Service Clubs
<b>Registration</b>	<p><b>Red Cross-</b> Can supply teams of 4-6 within an hour.</p> <p><b>Capacity Good</b></p> <p>If there is a request to activate the State Inquiry Centre and the Register.Find.Reunite portal (<a href="http://www.redcross.org.au">www.redcross.org.au</a>) outside of business hours this may take 1-2 hours to scale up these resources</p>
<b>First aid/primary care</b>	<p><b>Red Cross and St.Johns.</b> Both are currently assisting emergency response and can be redeployed to assist in Relief</p> <p><b>Capacity-Good but might be reduced to nil capacity if any health services need help with relocations/evacuations.</b></p>
<b>Financial assistance</b>	<p><b>Department of Human Services- Personal Hardship Assistance</b> Program will be activated if centrally authorised. Currently Relief is not available for pro active relocations, but this may further considered.</p> <p>DHS to ensure adequate supply of Personal Information Forms at each relief centre-confirmed there are high volumes of these forms in Traralgon office</p>
<b>Animal welfare</b>	<p>Latrobe City Council, through their local laws officers will coordinate relief centre management of people arriving with pets. Possible use of boarding kennels at Traralgon East.</p> <p><b>Capacity –TBC</b></p>
<b>Sanitation and hygiene</b>	<p>Council Environmental Health Officers</p> <p>Salvation Army have 'Comfort Packs' with basic toiletries available for distribution at relief centres.</p> <p>Each of the Relief centres have amenities which can be increased as needed</p> <p><b>Capacity good</b></p>
<b>Management and coordination</b>	<p>Latrobe City Council have established a roster to ensure they could operate 2 relief centres concurrently with minimum of 2 staff per relief centre as well as staffing the Municipal Emergency Co-ordination Centre support, ICC EMLO. Baw Baw indicates they will prepare a roster to support relief centre management of 2 relief centres.</p> <p><b>Capacity Good</b></p>

<b>Safety</b>	<p>VicPol to deploy police to assist with maintaining safe environment and help defuse any incidents that may arise. Confirmed their availability</p> <p>Personal Protection Kits- Masks. Determine if these are required- currently public health messages do not include use of PPE</p>
<b>Community Outreach</b>	<p>VCC are available to do community outreach visits at the request of the council.</p>
<b>Additional Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Telstra to supply phone/internet supply if required</li><li>• Headspace- program for youth</li></ul>