

# Gippsland Regional Relief Plan

Gippsland Bushfires January 2014

Version: 1.0 - 7 February 2014 – **WORKING DRAFT** (ADDITIONAL DETAILS TO BE ENTERED ON ACTIVATION)

## 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 bushfires in Gippsland which commenced in January 2014.

This plan should be read in conjunction with:

1. Gippsland Regional Strategic Plan
2. Municipal Emergency Management Plans
3. State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (Emergency Management Manual Victoria – Part 4)
4. 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

Incident Controllers are primarily responsible for determining the need to activate emergency relief services. The provision of emergency relief services by affected municipal councils can be activated by the MERC, MERO or MRM.

#### Communications

During an emergency, the response agency is generally best placed to pass on initial community information relating to the activation of emergency relief centres and general support services available to the community. Such information is integrated within emergency warnings.

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.

#### Isolated Communities

There will be times when the provision of relief services to the community will extend beyond the activation of a static emergency relief centre. Where communities are isolated as a result of an emergency, the functions detailed above still apply but will be provided based on identified needs. It may also become the response agencies' role to coordinate logistical support, such as the delivery of food and water. Any requests for resupply of isolated households within the fire perimeter while traffic management points are in place will be raised for action through the relevant Incident Control Centre.

### 4. Current situation

There are multiple going bushfires in Gippsland which have burnt out thousands of hectares of land, mostly in East Gippsland but also in Wellington Shire. The current fires of most concern are the Club Terrace, Goongerah and Snowy River complexes which continue to threaten local communities. Existing and emerging fires will require ongoing attention from fire authorities and emergency management agencies in the coming weeks.

To date, only a small number of households have been directly impacted by the fires due to the location of the fires in sparsely populated areas, however road closures have resulted in stranded holiday makers attended relief centres in East Gippsland. A fire in Westbury in Baw Baw Shire, now extinguished, had the largest known impacts to date to private assets with six properties sustaining minor to moderate impacts. No residences were damaged.

Due to the on going nature of the fires, some individuals and communities may experience displacement or isolation and/or damage to properties due to direct impact of fires and indirect impacts of road closures and infrastructure damage, and may need to access relief services.

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
- support for stranded tourists / vulnerable people
- resupply for isolated communities
- support for people who cannot immediately return to their home

## 5. 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, the council may request the relevant Regional Recovery Coordinator (DHS) to undertake the coordination of emergency relief at the regional level. Where this occurs, 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.

## 6. Relief Agency Preparedness

The Red Cross supports the Department of Human Services in the coordination of relief services. The Red Cross State Inquiry Centre was activated at 10:00am on Thursday 6 February 2014 and will remain open until further notice. The Register.Find.Reunite portal ([www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au)) is also now active.

Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) is on standby at the request of the East Gippsland Municipal Recovery Manager for fires in the area over the weekend. The VCC Emergency Operations Centre is on standby for the weekend. Regional teams in high risk areas are also on standby.

The Salvation Army has provided East Gippsland Shire with accommodation supplies for the planned emergency relief centres in Orbost, Cann River and Delegate. The Salvation Army remains on standby for the weekend as required.

## 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).

## 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. Three of the six Gippsland municipalities have opened relief centres with needs being managed at the local level. No relief centres remain open. 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.

**Table 3: Emergency Relief Centres and supplementary accommodation capacity – Gippsland Bushfires 2014. (to be completed during incident)**

<b>A. Municipal Council</b>	<b>B. Location of relief centre</b>	<b>C. Beds available at relief centre</b>	<b>D. Additional beds in private accommodation</b>
<i>Wellington</i>			
<i>Baw Baw</i>			
<i>East Gippsland</i>			
<i>Latrobe</i>			
<i>South Gippsland</i>			
<i>Bass Coast</i>			

While it is variable across the region, most municipal councils have indicated that in general terms they can operate 1 large or 2 smaller emergency relief centres within local capacity. This is subject to a number of factors related to the emergency such as geographic location, road closures and the impacts on staff and the community.

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.

## 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 East Gippsland's capacity is provided, however additional tables may be updated in subsequent versions of this document depending on the current situation.

**Table 4. Relief Services Capacity Planning**

### EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

<b>Relief service type</b>	<b>Capacity and capability planning – local</b>
<b>Food and water</b>	Red Cross Salvation Army Foodbank Victoria
<b>Psychosocial support</b>	Victorian Council of Churches Red Cross
<b>Non food items (material aid):</b>	Salvation Army, Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, Service Clubs
<b>Registration</b>	Red Cross
<b>First aid/primary care</b>	Red Cross
<b>Financial assistance</b>	Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund(GERF), Department of Human Services
<b>Animal welfare</b>	Victorian Animal Aid trust
<b>Sanitation and hygiene</b>	Council Environmental Health Officers
<b>Management and coordination</b>	Municipal Emergency Co-ordination Centre support, ICC EMLO, Relief Centre Management where required

### REMAINING MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

<b>Relief service type</b>	<b>Capacity planning – local</b>
<b>N/A</b>	Capacity to support other councils

### GIPPSLAND REGION

<b>Relief service type</b>	<b>Capacity and capability planning – regional</b>
<b>Food and water</b>	Red Cross Salvation Army Food bank Victoria
<b>Psychosocial support</b>	Victorian Council of Churches Red Cross
<b>Non food items (material aid):</b>	Salvation Army, Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, Service Clubs

<b>Register.Find.Reunite.</b>	Red Cross
<b>First aid/primary care</b>	Red Cross, St Johns Ambulance
<b>Financial assistance</b>	Department of Human Services
<b>Animal welfare</b>	Department of Environment and Primary Industries
<b>Sanitation and hygiene</b>	Department of Health
<b>Management and coordination</b>	Municipal Association of Victoria, Resource Sharing MOU DHS provide support and assistance through regional relief support function. Pressure points: if protracted event staffing capacity