

**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES  
EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT**

# State Recovery Plan

## 2014 Bushfires

## Document Acceptance and Release Notice

This is version 6 of the State Recovery Plan: 2014 Bushfires which commenced in January 2014.

This is a managed document.

For identification of amendments each page contains a release number and a page number. Changes will only be issued as a complete replacement document.

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V3	6/2/14	H&HS EM	Updated State Recovery Coordination Team working group membership details
V4	13/2/14	H&HS EM	Updated February 2014 bushfire information, recovery information, NDRRA funding details, new governance structure
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### 2. Distribution:

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# State Recovery Planning – 2014 Bushfires

## 1. Introduction

This plan has been developed by the Health and Human Services Emergency Management team in consultation with emergency recovery partners involved in the bushfires that commenced in January 2014.

This plan was presented to the State Crisis and Resilience Council's (SCRC) 2014 Bushfires – State Recovery Coordination Team for endorsement as the agreed plan for managing and implementing recovery activities following the Bushfires. Other significant fires occurring during the current bushfire season can be added to this plan based on the recommendation of the 2014 Bushfires – State Recovery Coordination Team

This plan supports a multi-agency approach to recovery management. The strategic initiatives and operational activities outlined here will be implemented by a range of agencies, organisations and departments.

This plan is based on the National Principles for Disaster Recovery<sup>1</sup>, which state that successful recovery relies on:

1. understanding the context
2. recognising complexity
3. using community-led approaches
4. ensuring coordination of all activities
5. employing effective communication
6. acknowledging and building capacity.

This plan has been prepared with reference to the *State Emergency Response Plan* (Emergency Management Manual Victoria – Part 3) and the *State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan* (Emergency Management Manual Victoria – Part 4).

## 2. Background

### January 2014

Following a week of extreme heat (13-17 January 2014) significant fire activity was experienced across the state. The regions primarily affected include: Grampians region, Loddon Mallee region and Gippsland region.

### **Grampians region**

A number of lightning strikes ignited fires which later joined to form the Grampians Northern Complex fire. The fire impacted on 55,100ha approximately. A fatality was recorded within the Wartook Valley area. Numerous residential properties and a large number of buildings were damaged. Large amounts of fencing and other assets were lost. Stock assessment and animal welfare assessments are continuing, with over 3000 sheep confirmed as lost so far. National park infrastructure was destroyed at several sites.

The following general areas / townships were affected: Laharum, Roses Gap, Wartook, Brimpaen, Pomonal, Halls Gap and Dadswells Bridge.

The Grampians fires were contained on Monday 20 January 2014.

Relief and recovery is being coordinated by the Grampians – North Complex Fire Emergency Recovery Committee.

Note: Communities in these areas have been impacted by a number of bushfire and flood events in recent years which have taken a cumulative toll on individuals, their community and businesses.

### **Loddon Mallee region**

The Mallee Complex fires impacted on 98,000ha approximately. At 14 January 2014 one large fire is still going in the Mallee (Lake Albacutya), three others are contained. The primary impact of fires was restricted

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<sup>1</sup> Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council, *National Principles for Disaster Recovery*, Australian Government, 2009, at [www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/pubs/Pages/Recovery.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/pubs/Pages/Recovery.aspx)

to Mildura Rural City Council where the Mildura railway line was affected (6144 railway sleepers) and trains did not operate between Ouyen and Speed until 10 February 2014.

### **Gippsland region**

A large number of fires were ignited by lightning strikes from dry thunderstorms. Many of the fires will continue to burn over the next few weeks. Several properties were impacted in Baw Baw Shire. Agricultural land, round bales of hay and fencing and pastures have been burnt.

### **February 2014**

Following a period of high fire danger a southwesterly wind changed caused significant fire activity across the state on 9 February 2014. The regions primarily affected included: North and West metropolitan Melbourne, Hume and Gippsland.

There were no confirmed fatalities; however fires resulted in residential being properties destroyed and a large number of buildings being lost or damaged. Large amounts of fencing and other assets were also lost. Stock assessment and animal welfare assessments are continuing.

### **North and West Metropolitan Melbourne region**

Fires in Warrandyte and Malmsbury-Dalrymple areas threatened and impacted homes, communities and infrastructure.

### **Hume region**

Fires in the Wallan and Mickleham-Kilmore areas threatened and impacted homes, communities and infrastructure. The fire impacted on 55,100ha approximately. The Mickleham/Kilmore fire crossed into North and West metropolitan Melbourne and Loddon Mallee regions.

### **Gippsland region**

Existing fires in East Gippsland and multiple new fires threatened and impacted homes, communities and infrastructure particularly in the Morwell-Hernes Oak and Jack River-Egans Road area. The largest fire in East Gippsland, the Goongerah-Deddick Trail fire, burnt more than 165,441ha. The Hazelwood and Yallourn open cut mines fires produced smoke that compromised air quality. The Hazelwood Mine Fire was declared controlled on 10 March 2014.

The Victorian government has made more than 5,000 respite and relocation grants totalling approximately \$3 million to eligible Morwell residents. A \$2 million package to assist Morwell residents with clean-up, which will enable people to get back to their normal lives, has been announced. The Environment Protection Authority Victoria has advised it will continue to monitor air quality in the Latrobe Valley for the next 12 months.

Relief and recovery is being coordinated by the Gippsland Bushfire Recovery Committee and the Hazelwood Mine Fire Recovery Committee.

### **State Summary**

Relief and Recovery centres were opened and closed across the state to provide support and assistance to communities affected by the bushfires.

The Red Cross undertook and coordinated outreach, with the Victorian Council of Churches and other relief partners, in bushfire affected areas. The Department of Primary Industry undertook outreach to primary producers.

The Department of Human Services established a psychosocial subcommittee to understand and scope the impacts on communities. The Department of Human Services also developed a Bushfire Recovery Services guide for local agencies and communities that provides information on the range of financial/personal/other supports available.

Small business support is being provided including a Mobile Business Centre, Small Business Support workshops and a Morwell Business Relief Fund.

### 3. Purpose of the Plan

Section 4A of the Emergency Management Act 1986 states that “recovery is the assisting of persons and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.”

The aim of emergency recovery is to achieve a collaborative approach that is jointly owned by all levels of government, together with the individuals and communities affected, as well as other agencies and organisations that support them.

Recovery from emergencies is a developmental process of assisting individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities to manage the re-establishment of those elements of society necessary for their wellbeing.

The purpose of this plan is to provide a state overview of the arrangements for managing the planning and delivery of emergency recovery activities across the state for the current bushfire season. This plan includes:

- the objectives of recovery for the 2014 Bushfires
- the governance arrangements
- transition from response to recovery
- disaster assessment and known impacts
- recovery supports and announcements
- issues
- recovery evaluation
- State communications plan.

### 4. Objectives

The key objectives for the 2014 Bushfires recovery are to:

- provide people, enterprises, local governments and other stakeholders affected by the 2014 Bushfires with the information, support and services needed to pursue their recovery;
- plan and deliver recovery supports in a manner consistent with the National Principles for Disaster Recovery<sup>2</sup> – using a coordinated approach, which is tailored to community contexts, recognises complexity, engages communities, communicates effectively, and acknowledges and builds community capacity;
- plan and deliver a coordinated range of recovery services across the environments of:
  - Social: to meet the key social and health needs for affected people, including temporary housing, psychosocial support, financial assistance and health services
  - Economic: addressing the requirements of economic business and business recovery
  - Built: restoring essential infrastructure and other built assets in the affected areas
  - Natural: restoring the natural environment
- inform recovery at the state level so that state-led recovery initiatives are appropriate;
- mitigate known and potential risks resulting from the emergency.

While this plan provides broad guidance across multiple environments, it is not intended to be an implementation plan for all possible recovery activities undertaken by agencies.

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<sup>2</sup> Community and Disability Services Ministers’ Advisory Council, *National Principles for Disaster Recovery*, Australian Government, 2009, at [www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/pubs/Pages/Recovery.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/pubs/Pages/Recovery.aspx)

## 5. Governance arrangements

The State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan: Part 4 Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) structures responsibilities to enable the planning, management and coordination of emergency relief and recovery activities for emergencies affecting Victoria. The EMMV states that local, regional and State emergency recovery activities can operate concurrently at multiple levels.

Normal recovery arrangements are in place across Victoria for the 2014 Bushfires. This plan will detail any augmented governance structures at state or regional level that are put in place to better coordinate the recovery for specific areas.

### Local

Section 4 of the Emergency Management Act 1986 requires each municipal council to appoint a Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee to prepare a Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

Municipal councils have responsibility for coordinating recovery at a local level because municipal councils are the closest level of government to their communities, and have access to specialised local knowledge about the environment and demographic features of their local government areas. While some impacts from a disaster will be more visible than others (such as destroyed buildings and roads, compared with personal stress or trauma), the broader impacts can have major impacts that may not be easily recognised – such as restricted access to work places and schools, loss of employment, or the economic effects of reduced tourism.

All agencies should seek to engage with affected communities during planning and operational processes and coordinate efforts to support spontaneous community recovery processes also. Ownership and direction by affected communities is pivotal in:

- the development of relief and recovery plans
- identifying and establishing strategies to assist the most vulnerable
- designing, implementing and evaluating recovery activities

The recovery activities in all regions across Victoria, except for the Northern Grampians Complex Fire (see below), are being managed at the local level. The Department of Human Services is working closely with councils to ensure appropriate supports are provided.

### Regional

A Regional Recovery Coordinator in each Victorian Government administrative region has responsibility for the preparation and maintenance of Regional Emergency Recovery Plans for their respective regions.

The Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) can activate a Regional Emergency Recovery Planning Committee in response to a regional-level emergency to consider issues of regional significance, advise the Regional Recovery Coordinator of key issues for consideration and assist in coordinating recovery (including information, communication and service provision).

#### Augmented regional recovery arrangements for 2014 bushfires to date

The Grampians Regional Recovery Coordinator has activated the Grampians – North Complex Fire Emergency Recovery Committee in response to the numerous fires in that region. The committee met on 14 January 2014 and established five functional taskforces to manage particular elements of the recovery (social, built, natural, economic and agriculture). The terms of reference for this regional recovery committee have been prepared. The regional recovery committee has developed a draft version of the Grampians Region Post-Incident Recovery Plan – northern complex fires.

The Gippsland regional recovery committee met in Traralgon on 14 February 2014.

### State

The State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) has responsibility for ensuring the development and maintenance of policies and procedures for effective emergency relief and recovery inter-agency coordination. The State Recovery Coordinator can also assist agencies and organisations interested in formalising their role in emergency management in Victoria by facilitating their participation in regional and local planning activities.

State departments and agencies are responsible for providing emergency related services such as policing, human services and recovery services, agriculture, education, health and ambulance provision, land use planning policy, building control policy, and emergency management policy.

The Department of Human Services is the coordinating agency for emergency recovery at both the state and regional level, working in collaboration with municipal councils who have that responsibility at a local level.

#### Augmented state recovery arrangements for 2014 bushfires

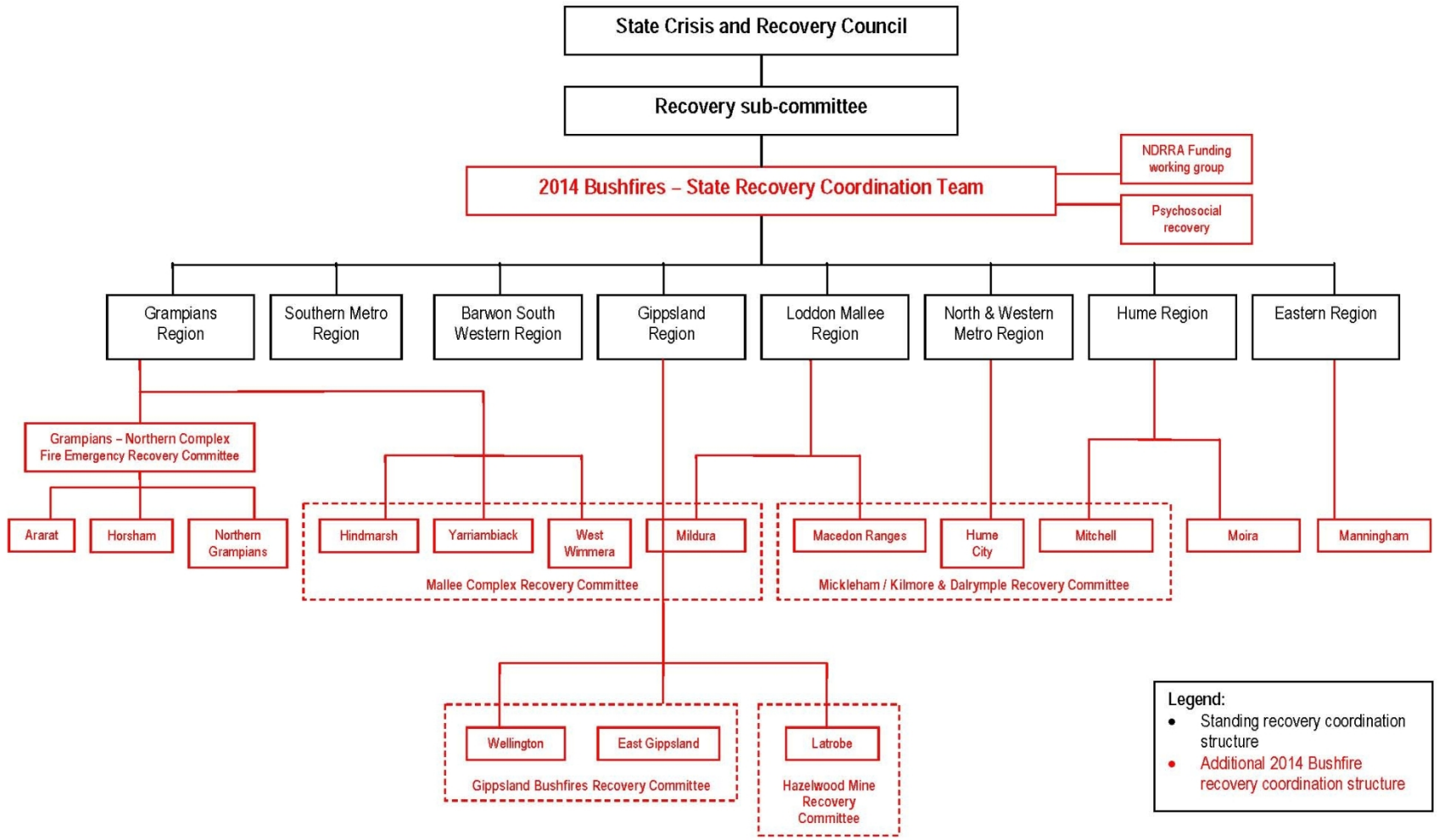
On 24 January 2014 a special meeting of the State Crisis Resilience Council recovery sub-committee was held to discuss the January 2014 bushfires. It was agreed at this meeting that augmented recovery arrangements would be established for this event. The State Recovery Coordinator will coordinate recovery through the State Crisis Resilience Council's '2014 Bushfires – State Recovery Coordination Team'. The 2014 Bushfires – State Recovery Coordination Team, chaired by the State Recovery Coordinator, will meet on a weekly basis until transition to long-term governance arrangements is confirmed. Terms of Reference for the SCRC's 2014 Bushfires – State Recovery Coordination Team have been prepared (**Attachment 1**).

A key responsibility for the 2014 Bushfires - Recovery Coordination Team is to determine the recovery streams requiring leadership, and to endorse the lead agencies for these streams. The following working groups were established to aid recovery:

- Economic impacts
  - Members: DHS, DOJ, DEPI, DSDBI, DTPLI
  - Purpose: to explore the economic impact and consequences from the damage to the Mildura freight line following the bushfires.
- Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) funding
  - Members: DTF, DPC, DHS, DOJ, DEPI, DSDBI
  - Purpose: to investigate eligibility for further assistance through the NDRRA Cat B and Cat C.

An overview of this governance structure and relationship to regional governance is provided in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: Governance arrangements during 2014 Bushfires recovery



**Legend:**

- Standing recovery coordination structure
- Additional 2014 Bushfire recovery coordination structure



## 6. Transition from response to recovery

An agreement for the transition from emergency response control to emergency recovery coordination is required to achieve a smooth transition of information, management, responsibility, resources and coordination of activities.

The decisions relating to the timing of the transition of response to recovery coordination, and whether recovery coordination will be transitioned to local and/or state government), will be impacted by a number of key considerations including:

- The nature of the hazard/threat and whether there is a risk of a recurring threat.
- The extent of impact on communities, as this may determine if a prolonged transition period needs to be implemented.
- The extent of and known level of loss and damage associated with the incident.
- The considerations for the extent of emergency relief required by affected communities.
- The considerations for the resources required to be stood up for effective recovery arrangements.

The Incident Controller, the Emergency Response Coordinator and Emergency Recovery Coordinator (State and/or Regional/Local Government – Municipal Emergency Resource Officer/Municipal Recovery Manager) will determine the transition structure and handover requirement to fully establish the Recovery Coordination arrangements. In a prolonged campaign incident, a transition period will be established to allow sufficient time for briefing, resource planning and implementation of immediate recovery services.

### Transition from response to recovery arrangements for the Grampians Northern Complex fire

The “Agreement for transition of coordination arrangements from response to recovery” has been signed for arrangements relating to both Horsham Rural City Council and Northern Grampians Shire effective as of 23 January 2014. The State countersigned these arrangements at 30 January 2014.

## 7. Disaster assessment and known impacts

Good decisions about recovery require timely, accurate and progressively more comprehensive information about the impact of an emergency, and the recovery services required.

The following processes for collecting loss and damage impacts are being followed:

### 1. State situation reports

The State Control Centre Intelligence Unit prepares a state loss and damage report. The report is collated from a number of data sources supplied by agencies managing the current fire emergency. It represents the best estimates and should be considered ‘indicative’.

The Health and Human Services Emergency Management state situation report is designed to inform stakeholders of the progress and status of incidents and operations. The report includes a situational summary, known impacts, a summary of activities, issues and actions taken, and operational statistics (e.g. relief/recovery centres, financial assistance and community meetings).

### 2. Victorian Fire Recovery Program Enterprise Project Reporting System

On 22 January 2014 the State Recovery Coordinator requested impact information from the following organisations:

- Agriculture - DEPI
- Business Recovery and Community Assets - DSDBI and DEECD
- Health and Human Services - DH/DHS
- Natural Environment – DEPI
- Transport - DTPLI (including VicRoads)

It was agreed at the special meeting of the January 2014 Bushfires - Recovery Coordination Team meeting on 24 January 2014 that these organisations will continue to report impact information through the Victorian Fire Recovery Program Enterprise Project Reporting System. The streams being captured are:

- People, social, community and health
- Built environment
- Economic environment
- Natural environment
- Agricultural environment.

The data is reported against January 2014 bushfires (Loddon Mallee and Grampians regions) and February 2014 bushfires (all other regions) and Hazelwood Mine Fire.

The latest report is attached (**Attachment 2**).

## 8. Recovery supports

For the current bushfire season there are a number of policies that support recovery applicable to any bushfires with Victoria including:

- Repair of fences damaged by Bushfire and Fire Control Line Rehabilitation policy, DEPI October 2010
- Essential water policy, DEPI October 2010
- Personal Hardship Assistance Program, DHS December 2012.

Health and Human Services Emergency Management makes the following recovery supports available for individuals and families affected by fires:

- After the Fires kits contain information sheets about health matters, financial assistance, safe return to fire damaged property (e.g. clean up, alternate fuel and electricity generation) and dealing with trauma
- Personal Protection Equipment for people returning to properties affected by fires. The kits contain disposable overalls, disposable P2 face mask, sturdy gloves, garbage bag to dispose of used safety equipment and information sheets on 'Please be safe when returning to property' and 'Using protective equipment in bushfire-affected areas'.

Local councils in affected areas operate emergency relief and recovery centres where residents and visitors can access a range of support services. The opening and closing times of these centres will vary, depending on community demand. The latest information is available at: [www.recovery.vic.gov.au](http://www.recovery.vic.gov.au).

The government also announced that a number of additional recovery supports have been made available in response to the 2014 Bushfires. (**Attachment 3**).

## 9. Funding

The Australian government provides funding through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) Determination 2012 to states and territories to help pay for natural disaster relief and recovery costs.)

The Australian government has approved the following NDRRA financial assistance:

### Reference Number 602 (January 2014)

- Personal Hardship and Distress, through:
  - emergency relief grants, to assist with emergency accommodation, food and clothing
  - emergency re-establishment grants, to assist in the removal of debris, repairs, rebuilding and replacement of essential household contents.
- Personal and Financial Counselling

- Counter Disaster Operations
- Restoration of Essential Public Assets

The emergency financial assistance is available for eligible residents in the affected Local Government Areas of: Ararat, East Gippsland, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Mildura, Northern Grampians, Southern Grampians, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack.

In addition, Concessional interest rate loans of up to \$200,000 are available for small businesses, primary producers and voluntary not-for-profit organisations directly affected in the local government areas of Ararat, Horsham, Northern Grampians and Southern Grampians for the Grampians bushfire.

#### **Reference Number 608 (February 2014)**

- Personal Hardship and Distress Assistance, through:
  - emergency relief grants, to assist with emergency accommodation, food, clothing, personal items and personal and financial counselling
  - emergency re-establishment grants, to assist in the removal of debris, emergency accommodation, repairs, rebuilding and replacement of damaged household contents.
- Personal and Financial Counselling
- Counter Disaster Operations
- Restoration of Essential Public Assets

The emergency financial assistance is available for eligible residents in the affected Local Government Areas of: Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Greater Shepparton, Hume, LaTrobe, Macedon Ranges, Manningham, Mitchell, Moira, Nillumbik, Wellington and Yarra Ranges.

## **10. Issues**

As the full impacts and consequences of the emergency are not known, the state risk assessment table is being populated by organisational members of the 2014 Bushfires - State Recovery Coordination Team (**Attachment 4**).

## **11. Recovery evaluation**

The Department of Human Services is committed to continuously improving recovery coordination and recovery services through documenting, sharing and incorporating lessons learned into future planning and/or procedures.

The evaluation of recovery from this event will be completed in accordance with Health and Human Services Emergency Management Evaluation of Relief and Recovery: Framework and Guidelines.

## **12. State communications plan**

Health and Human Services Emergency Management has developed an initial whole-of-government communications strategy to promote recovery support services for the Grampians fires (. The strategy could be expanded to include other fire recovery areas, if required.

The strategy also concentrates on the initial information needs for the first 1-2 weeks post-fires, with further action pending advice from regions and affected local councils on their public information needs.

The strategy relies on paid and free information channels, with a call to action for fire-affected community members to:

- contact their local council
- visit the Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria website ([www.recovery.vic.gov.au](http://www.recovery.vic.gov.au))
- phone the Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line (1300 799 232).

Information posted to the last two channels is updated daily, as required.

Communication activities are also being managed at the local level, e.g. community meetings, local websites (facebook, council sites), local newspapers and radio interviews.

All public information activities are undertaken in consultation with the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC), and approval from the Victorian Emergency Communications Committee (VECC).

### **13. Attachments**

1. Terms of Reference –2014 Bushfires State Recovery Coordination Team
2. Victorian Fire Recovery Program enterprise project reporting system report
3. Recovery announcements
4. State Risk Assessment Table

Note: the following attachments were previously included with the Plan and are available upon request

- Terms of Reference - Grampians – North Complex Fire Emergency Recovery Committee
- Grampians Region Post-Incident Recovery Plan – northern complex fires
- Agreement for transition of coordination arrangements from response to recovery - signed for arrangements relating to Horsham Rural City Council and Northern Grampians Shire
- State Control Centre Intelligence Unit current state loss and damage report
- Health and Human Services Emergency Management state situation report
- State Communications Plan: Grampians Fires Recovery Communications Plan week 1, weeks 3-4, weeks 4-5