04

DISASTER RECOVERY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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**Beyond disaster:
the months and years ahead**

04

DISASTER RECOVERY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This resource is one in a set of eight booklets designed as a toolkit for local councils to understand, prepare for and actively support the recovery of their communities following a disaster.

The toolkit includes an introduction to the context and complexity of experiencing a disaster; what this means for individuals and the community; and the implications for local councils. The toolkit includes practical tips and tools designed to assist local councils to undertake effective recovery activity.

Each of the booklets in the toolkit is described to the right.

Cover Image: The Kalatha Giant Tree in Toolangi State Forest – this 300-year old, 80 metre tall Mountain Ash tree survived the 2009 bushfires. Photographer Silvi Glattauer.

Above Image: On the road to Tarra Bulga National Park, Gippsland. Photographer Silvi Glattauer.

	BOOKLET	CONTENT	AUDIENCE
01	**Understanding disaster recovery**	Provides a broad context and understanding of recovery from disaster and has been designed as a companion document to be read before the specialist information detailed in each of the other booklets.	Councillors, senior managers, emergency management personnel and all staff across council
02	**Recovery readiness: preparation for recovery before a disaster**	Designed to supplement municipal emergency management planning and support councils to improve recovery readiness by addressing the factors contributing to recovery success.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
03	**When disaster strikes: the first days and weeks**	Assumes that recovery readiness will have occurred and builds on this preparatory work by addressing the factors contributing to recovery success as they relate to the first days and weeks following a disaster.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
04	**Beyond disaster: the months and years ahead**	Builds on the immediate recovery experience to move towards medium and long-term recovery. In this stage the factors contributing to recovery success are embedded in the process of recovery planning.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
05	**Council business matters: meeting the organisational challenges of disaster recovery**	Focuses on council business matters in recovery, including workforce planning and resource management from preparation and post-disaster perspectives.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
06	**Regional recovery networks**	Showcases the role of regional recovery networks in finding solutions to shared challenges.	Senior managers and emergency management personnel
07	**Engaging the community in disaster recovery**	Examines how councils can support community-led recovery and engage with the community more effectively to support recovery.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
08	**Recovery tools and other resources**	Brings together the tools that support decision making and planning described in the other booklets. It also includes additional reading and other useful resources.	Emergency management personnel

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The recovery activity undertaken when the disaster strikes responds to the immediate needs of people and communities in the first few days following the disaster.

As time goes by the focus will shift towards the medium and longer term. This is an evolving process drawing on changes in community perspective and relying on up to date information to guide good decision making along the way.

Medium and long term recovery planning creates the opportunity to revisit, reaffirm and refine a vision for the community that takes into account past aspirations and responds to issues that have emerged as a result of the disaster.

Some communities will drive this process themselves looking to council for resources and expertise; others might require council to take a much more direct role. Either way council has a critical role in assisting the community to identify and create a new future on the community's own terms – taking into account past aspirations and responding to emerging circumstances.

This booklet builds on the immediate recovery experience to move towards medium and long term recovery. This means capitalising on the relationships established with the community immediately following the event as a platform to plan for a new future.

In this stage the five contributors to recovery (community focus, leadership and coordination, informed decision making, communication and capacity building) are embedded in the process of recovery planning.

Note:

Aspects of medium and long term recovery that are concerned with council as an organisation, such as business continuity, workforce planning and resource sharing are detailed in:

Book 5 – Council Business Matters: managing the challenges of disaster recovery.

YARRA RANGES SHIRE COUNCIL – A SENSE OF THE LONG TERM NATURE OF COMMUNITY RECOVERY

Disaster recovery for the community and for council as an organisation is a long term commitment. The figures below detail some of the work undertaken by Yarra Ranges Shire Council following the 2009 Black Saturday fires and provide a snapshot of the volume of activity that council can find itself managing:

- The **Health Team**, responsible for the health and wellbeing of the community, inspected 240 houses and businesses to assess damage to facilities, such as water tanks, septic tanks, accommodation premises and food premises.

- The **Local Laws Team**, responsible for animal management, coordinated management and distribution of food and water for stock and domestic animals in the days immediately following the fires and operated a 24-hour roster for seven weeks.

- The **Building Department**, responsible for supporting the inspection of damaged buildings and structures, undertook 451 inspections, 333 on private property, resulting in 41 combined emergency/minor works building orders and 221 minor work building orders being issued (all orders have been finalised).

- The **Planning Department**, responsible for the rebuilding and issuing of temporary dwelling permits, processed 116 planning applications for bushfire affected properties.

- The **Environment and public infrastructure team**, responsible for the natural environment, worked to restore and repair damage to public land – fires affected 20 per cent of the land in Yarra Ranges – 48,289.96 hectares.

- The **Economic Recovery Working Group**: worked with local businesses to assist in their revival, including The Buy Local Campaign; Major Projects; and Regional Tourism Working Group.

In total, 136 households from the Yarra Ranges needed to find medium to long term accommodation, as their primary residence had been destroyed. As at April 2010:

- 42% had secured private rental;

- 24% were back on their land (in temporary accommodation – caravans/portables);

- 10% were living with family/friends;

- 8% had purchased a new home;

- 8% were in public housing; and

- 5% had rebuilt their homes.

Adapted from Yarra Ranges Council Municipal Recovery Response to the February 2009 Bushfires Evaluation Report June 2012

BEYOND THE DISASTER – RECOVERY PLANNING

Medium and long-term recovery planning will identify and prioritise recovery action based on a thorough assessment of the needs and capacities of the community.

This will consider the social, built, natural, economic and agricultural environments. See **Book 1 – Understanding disaster recovery** for more information on the five environments.

Importantly recovery planning is most successful when communities are actively involved in the planning and decision-making process. Such planning will assist the community and council to:

- understand the issues and opportunities as fully as possible

- engage with the whole community, including specific population groups and other stakeholders

- be clear about what they want to achieve

- prioritise options and commit to effective strategies

- assemble and allocate resources

- check what they are doing works

- be flexible and open to change.

The Recovery Manager, the Planning Workgroup and other key staff from the Recovery Management Structure will work closely with the Community Recovery Committee(s), other stakeholders and the wider community to achieve these ends.

Recovery can be expected to occur over an extended period of time, depending on the scale of the disaster and the impact on the community. This means the recovery planning task has a likely timeframe of several years and will need to be refreshed and repeated periodically through the recovery period.

This is particularly important as early perspectives, expressed needs and decisions will be influenced by stress, emotion and the urgency to 'get something going'. Therefore planning decisions made in the initial weeks following the disaster might not prove to be the most effective in the longer term.

Routinely reviewing recovery plans will help to overcome this shortcoming. Such reviews might need to occur more often in the early stages as conditions and needs will change rapidly. As people and communities settle and more confident planning for the longer term becomes possible, recovery plans can be reviewed less often.

Eventually it will be possible to integrate the response to recovery issues into council's 'business as usual' planning mechanisms, that is the Council Plan, the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and other specific topic or population group plans, such as a positive ageing strategy or open space plan.

Figure 1 illustrates the recovery planning processes over time.

Assess recovery needs and capacities

Set goals

Select evidence-based actions

RECOVERY VISION

Apply lessons

Implement actions

RECOVERY OUTCOMES

Check progress

Medium and long-term recovery planning requires a flexible approach that will actively engage the community and include direct links with Community Recovery Committees.

Engagement activities might include community meetings and specific consultation with key stakeholders, for example, the local traders association or chamber of commerce; tourism or industry associations; community service provider networks; progress or rate payer associations. It might also include the use of social media and other technologies to encourage wide input and feedback. See **Book 7 – Engaging the community in disaster recovery** for more ideas on engaging the community in recovery planning.

Recovery planning will also involve collaboration with other government agencies.

LOCAL SCHOOL DESTROYED BY BUSHFIRE

If a local school is destroyed by a bushfire, the recovery action plan might also need to take into account planning decisions and actions of other organisations and agencies such as the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Parents and Friends Association and so on.

Similarly, community infrastructure managers and land management agencies such as VicRoads or the Department of Environment and Primary Industries will have information and proposed activities which relate to the Recovery Action Plan developed through the Council recovery structure.

PREPARING A RECOVERY PLAN

The recovery planning process outlined below in undertaken in the following stages:

- Agreeing a recovery vision
- Identifying recovery needs and capacity
- Setting goals and selecting actions
- Assessing and selecting recovery initiatives
- Writing and implementing a recovery plan
- Reviewing a recovery plan
- Integrating recovery into ongoing planning.

AGREEING A RECOVERY VISION

Starting recovery with a vision is important. It is the vision that provides the overarching direction for the community and will guide the refinement of community goals and decisions about priorities across the course of recovery.

A vision is an agreed statement owned by the community. The following kinds of questions can be used to prompt discussion in the community and generate a recovery vision:

- *What did you value about your community before the disaster and want to keep?*
- *What are you happy to change about your community that existed before the disaster?*
- *What are the opportunities to create a better and/or different community for yourself and for the next generation?*
- *What kind of community do you want to be in the next five, ten, or fifteen years?*
- *What kind of community do you want for your children and grandchildren?*
- *What kind of community would you be proud to share with visitors?*
- *What would your community look like if it were more resilient?*

It is important to recognise that the vision might change over the period of recovery. Initially communities might simply want to replace what they lost. The progress of time, open engagement and facilitated strategic thinking can see individuals and communities become more open to opportunities for change.

Therefore, it cannot be assumed that communities will simply want to replicate what existed before the disaster. This approach might miss significant opportunities to rethink community assets and characteristics and improve on what existed previously. In cases where a community wants to just replace what was there, councils have a key role to lead a recovery which creates opportunities and improvements on what was there previously.

Many will assume that the child care centre, the school or the community centre and so on will be rebuilt where it was and argue strongly for this to occur. Rebuilding may create opportunities for co-locations; centralising facilities; improving access, transport and parking; improving safety of children getting to school; reducing costs and efforts for parents getting their children to school, and the like. In some cases, the facility or building that was lost may in fact not need replacing. Opportunities to redesign communities, particularly in township areas are rare and while disasters create traumatic and difficult times for communities, they also enable changes that otherwise would not be possible.

For high risk areas, such as those experiencing frequent flooding, this planning process can be used to improve resistance to future floods. For example, where there are several dairies currently in a flood prone location the question might be asked: *How can we encourage and support future developments being on higher ground?*

Council can play a vital role in leading, managing and supporting such change – enabling communities to see and consider redesign opportunities.

Care needs to be taken in planning the content and processes for community engagement to maximise participation and create ownership across the community. A range of consultation techniques are available to ensure the right questions are asked and answered. However, planning during disaster recovery has many exceptional features, not always present under normal circumstances, including:

- Community engagement is likely to be unprecedented – after a disaster communities are highly motivated, 'fuelled by adrenalin', getting involved and expecting results.

- Planning events can be opportunities to come together to reconnect. This is part of the healing process and should be accommodated in the event design.

- Community views are likely to be very mixed and strongly felt – some will remain focused on the short-term, looking to replace the past – others will want to embrace the future as a blank canvas. All voices need to be listened to, but not all need to be acted on.

- Completely new opportunities can emerge from the disaster, ranging from reconfiguring services to new or expanded community facilities or a shift in focus for example, towards safety, sustainability and technology.

- All levels of government and community organisations will generally be very keen to work collaboratively.

See Book 7 – Engaging the community in disaster recovery for more ideas on engaging the community in recovery planning.

> **TIP**
>
> Check whether there are relevant plans, for example, the council plan, community plans, economic or health and wellbeing plans that include a vision statement and goals that provide a useful starting point to build on in the recovery plan.

MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY PLANNING TOOL

STEP 1

Use this resource to Identify or refine a recovery vision for the community.

IDENTIFYING RECOVERY NEEDS AND CAPACITY

Identification of recovery needs and capacities will draw on the quantitative information generated from the recovery data base and the qualitative information derived from interviews, surveys and other participatory methods that document community needs.

Identification of needs should consider groups that might be more vulnerable as a result of the disaster such as, bereaved people, those who were physically injured, those with major financial and property loss and/or loss of income; people geographically isolated through loss of infrastructure like bridges; people with greater barriers to accessing services, and so on.

It is also important to recognise that people will respond differently to what might appear to be a similar situations. For example, in a bushfire affected area two of the key industries were berry farming and fish farming. Some in these industries quickly saw opportunities to restore their businesses and accessed resources well ahead of the formal community recovery processes. Others walked away almost immediately saying it was 'no longer for them'; and still others took their time to weigh their options, linking their future plans to the longer term community vision for the area.

Attention should also be paid to the specific needs of population groups who might be regarded as additionally vulnerable, such as children, young people, older people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, parents with young children, and so on. These population groups might have greater difficulty managing their own recovery or have less resilience.

It is also critical to look beyond needs, deficiencies and problems to ask questions about the potential and opportunities that exists in communities. In the example above, the community was quickly able to identify ideas that would help to restore their businesses and bring together the efforts of council and relevant industry groups.

TIPS

Consider the following needs and capacity questions for affected communities:

- *What are the key needs facing the community – across each of the five environments?*

- *Do population groups, such as children, young people, older people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have any specific needs?*

- *What assets or capacity exist within the community to address these needs?*

BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL – CONNECTING WITH FARMERS

In small rural communities affected by disasters, farmers often focused on the concrete things they could do – tasks that delivered immediate results and dealt with clear demands, such as livestock control. This meant that in some areas farmers did not attend psychologist and counsellor sessions designed to assist them in understanding the recovery process for themselves, their families and the community.

Baw Baw Shire Council responded by facilitating community meetings in small rural communities at which recovery information was presented by psychologist Dr Rob Gordon. Farming families in particular were actively encouraged and supported to attend.

MURRINDINDI SHIRE COUNCIL – MAKING THE PLANNING PROCESS WORK FOR PEOPLE

Murrindindi Shire Council took a decision very soon after the 2009 Black Saturday fires to approach the state government and work on a simplified planning permit process to facilitate rebuilding activity. As a result temporary planning provisions were introduced into the planning scheme that would guarantee land owners the 'right to rebuild'. This enabled planning consents for these properties to be expedited and gave owners certainty and security about rebuilding.

A new two-page planning application form was developed to assist land owners with the process. This simplified form was also designed to assist council with the likely volume of planning applications. (Given that approximately 1,400 homes were lost in the municipality and council normally deals with around 250 to 300 planning applications per annum for home construction).

Council also provided planning support on an individual basis where required. For example, council involved the planning experts working on the Marysville urban design framework to provide advice and assistance to applicants in the commercial precinct areas and larger accommodation developments, which achieved a level of independent advice and assistance to applicants.

The rebuilding activities were enhanced through providing access to independent advice on the more complex applications and commercial rebuilds, including some residence and visitor accommodation developments that were made significantly easier by the provision of this planning assistance. Such council support can make the difference in businesses choosing to stay and rebuild.

SETTING GOALS

Setting goals is about deciding what to achieve in the medium and long term to realise our vision for the future.

It might be difficult for the community's focus to shift to the long-term when many community members are concerned about short-term needs and their individual wellbeing. The first attempt to develop a recovery plan might tend to deal with medium term actions and strategies to address the long term – rather than long term projects and initiatives themselves. For example, medium term strategies might include temporary schooling arrangements and a strategy to establish a rebuilding program as opposed to identifying specific building projects.

It can take time for specific projects to fit within the community's vision and given the grieving and adjustment processes, as well as the breadth of opportunity to reframe the future, these things should not be rushed as recovery offers a unique opportunity for community redevelopment. This will be different for each affected community and those facilitating planning should be flexible and open to the mood and capacity of the community.

As planning proceeds over time to include consideration of the longer term, goals are likely to change to take on a more specific expression. For example, in the economic environment the goal: *To stimulate the local economy through major projects and new business enterprises* might be replaced by a goal for a particular identified major project, for example, *To construct a community hall with features that support a farmers' market*.

Developing goals that mesh with the goals of other recovery structures such as state and regional recovery committees or authorities can also create challenges. Some of these wider priorities might not match local needs. For example, a regional goal to re-roof houses damaged by a storm might not take sufficient account of other community needs, resulting in re-roofed but unoccupied houses. Similarly, large community asset developments can result in increased longer term maintenance costs to council – costs a council may be unable to easily afford.

TIP

Choose goals that are relevant to your post-disaster circumstances and to the community.

MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY PLANNING TOOL

STEP 2

Use this resource to Identify or refine medium term or longer term goals.

LATROBE CITY COUNCIL – BLACKBERRIES THRIVE ON FIRES

One of the issues that requires long term environment and land management strategies is weed control – both on roadsides and public land and on private property.

Following 2009 Black Saturday fires blackberries soon became a significant land management issue. Latrobe City Council worked with the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, the then Department of Primary Industries, the then Department of Sustainability and Environment, and Parks Victoria to establish a Blackberry Taskforce Initiative in the municipality, covering each of the communities impacted by the fire across Latrobe City.

Council facilitated interested parties such as landcare groups to come together and form a group, and provided assistance to access funds to attack the blackberry invasion across the municipality.

People, particularly farmers, are passionate about their land and this project tapped into that passion developing a cohesive approach to weed management both on private and public land, including smaller block owners. It also helped relieve tension and built a stronger community spirit between neighbours, especially where, for a variety of reasons, some landowners were more capable of acting than others.

The Blackberry Taskforce Group developed and implemented collaborative land management practices; provided education and support for blackberry and weed control; used their collective buying power to negotiate favourable purchase arrangements for control chemicals; supported local businesses; and created employment through the employment of a local coordinator and the contract spraying activity that followed.

Council also facilitated links to other relevant programs such as the Local Roadside Weed Control Project.

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL – CONSULTING THE COMMUNITY – 'STREET BY STREET'

One of the biggest challenges following a disaster event is community consultation. Mount Alexander Shire Council is developing a procedure for conducting street meetings (where practical), to engage with residents in their own space to determine what their recovery needs are.

After the 2011 flood event, council organised a one-off community session that was well attended. However, tensions arose because of information gaps and the opposing interests and perceptions of participants. Following the 2012 flood event, council took a different approach ensuring that council officers were able to provide accurate information to residents as they undertook post-impact inspections. In some instances they also conducted meetings with residents of entire streets to discuss the impact the floods had on their street and to workshop potential mitigation options. This also gave council the opportunity to let residents know about the other agencies they were working and their roles. These meetings were much more productive and helpful for all involved and gave residents a better level of understanding of the regulatory limitations affecting their area.

As a result of this experience council is looking into embedding 'street meetings' as a standard procedure following an emergency event. The long term vision is that other agency representatives might also be involved to help facilitate such meetings.

THE CITY OF WHITTLESEA – REMEMBERING THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES

Roughly two years after the event, in response to community discussions council commenced a Bushfire Memorial process. While there was a strong community desire to develop a permanent memorial to remember the 12 residents who lost their lives, many people found it difficult to participate in a formal process.

Council employed a project officer who undertook extensive consultation to get a picture of the community's views on memorials – if and where they would like them, what they might look like, what they would symbolise, and what was important. The consultation involved liaison with bereaved families, the general public and a range of other community members and groups.

One result of the initial consultation was the formation of a Memorials Working Group. Convened and supported by council, this group involved 10 community members and other interested organisations such as the Country Fire Authority, Parks Victoria and the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement. The working group provided input and guidance on the future direction of the Bushfire Memorials Project, finally determining two sites for two different memorial structures.

One memorial was completed in February 2014 and memorialises the 12 local residents who passed away. A private dedication ceremony was held prior to the site being opened to the public. Feedback indicated that the establishment of this memorial and the opening, which was very moving, has made an important contribution to the ongoing recovery of the community and been appreciated by the bereaved families.

The Memorial Working Group continues to work with council's Bushfire Recovery Team to complete a second memorial which will be larger and also memorialises many others who had an affiliation with the Whittlesea area through work, education, community or social links. Although the memorial process has been lengthy, it has provided time and space for the community to develop outcomes that are very meaningful now and into the future.

ASSESSING AND SELECTING RECOVERY ACTIONS

Once goals have been clearly stated it is necessary to select actions most likely to achieve them. Generally speaking approaches that have worked in the past, or elsewhere will offer the best chance of success. However, developing long term social, built, economic, natural or agricultural environment recovery actions specific to a local community will require the generation of a range of initiatives.

TIPS

Research successful recovery actions used in circumstances similar to those in your municipality, either in the past or elsewhere – **See Book 8: Recovery tools and other resources** for likely sources of information.

Take a broad approach to generating initiatives for action – welcome all ideas and invite creativity. Use methods that are inclusive and appealing.

There will be a great deal of scrutiny from the whole community and others about the order and priority of activity, for example, *'Why is the tennis court fence being replaced before the health centre has been rebuilt?'*

Local perceptions of who is benefiting most or even unfairly from recovery actions will also influence how different elements of the community feel about and respond to recovery initiatives. In a heightened state of personal need following the disaster many tensions and conflicts can arise from perceptions of disparity or inequity, for example, insured versus uninsured; permanent residents versus holiday home owners; residents versus tourists and other visitors; local businesses directly affected by the disaster versus new business owners or tourism operators to the area; or those who stayed, fought and risk versus those who left.

It can be difficult for people to see the whole picture and instead they can focus on a single perspective that seems unfair to them. For example, a local business owner who receives a business recovery grant might view it as compensating for what they went through. As a result, they might see it as very unfair that new owners of a local business purchased months after a disaster, receive support too. The bigger picture is that the re-establishment and sustainability of local business is important to the economy of the area – and this is what is driving the business recovery grants.

Similarly, councils and communities might be pressured from external funding providers to undertake special projects such as memorials or anniversaries before the community is ready for that aspect of recovery.

It will be important to work closely with legitimate, recognised and authorised community representatives. Care is needed not to allow assertive individuals and organisations with their own agendas to dominate at the expense of the whole community. It can be easy to leave the 'silent majority' out of the process unless the planning methods make sure they are included and heard. See **Book 7 – Engaging the community in disaster recovery** for ideas on encouraging wide community representation.

It is critical that decisions about these local initiatives are transparent and the rationale clear. While all ideas for initiatives should be welcomed each will need to be carefully considered to identify the most promising options. This process of identifying and agreeing recovery actions will involve:

- considering current activities that impact on the initiative

- exploring what might help the initiative proceed

- exploring what might hinder the initiative

- assessing the benefits and risks

- estimating the resources required (both initial outlay and ongoing costs)

- deciding on timing (for both project initiation and project run time)

- identifying change management issues to assist communities understand and embrace the opportunities to create a different and better community

- deciding which initiatives to pursue and include in the current recovery plan

- determining transition and completion.

TIP

Conduct assessments of recovery initiatives using a set of agreed criteria that are developed with the community. This will contribute to a process that is transparent and more likely to be owned by the community.

MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY PLANNING TOOL

STEP 3

Use this resource to determine the likely costs and benefits of proposed recovery initiatives.

BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL – INVOLVING PEOPLE NEW TO THE DISTRICT

Following the 2009 Black Saturday fires, a new person who moved into the district approached Baw Baw Shire Council to ask about the availability of funding to run local yoga sessions.

Council sourced funding for a yoga weekend that focused on the health and mental wellbeing of participants.

Other groups and activities were supported to provide semi-formal opportunities for people to get together. These included a women's calligraphy group, exercise classes, weekly morning teas, men's golf days, pizza nights and many more.

WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL – ENGAGING TEENAGERS IN RECOVERY

Following the 2009 Black Saturday fires many Yarram and District teenagers were identified as suffering trauma.

Wellington Shire Council responded by conducting a Teenagers in Emergency project with Year 9 students at Yarram Secondary College. This included a whole of school survey to determine the post-fire needs of students and culminated in an Emergency Expo with ten disaster scenarios involving 150 students, emergency agencies and the Wellington Shire Council Youth Council.

NILLUMBIK SHIRE COUNCIL – COORDINATING VOLUNTEERS

Following the 2009 Black Saturday fires, a large Parish Church in Mitcham offered major assistance to the Strathewen community. This included several volunteers who worked in the community for about two years, predominantly on weekends, assisting residents to re-establish gardens and undertake other tasks that aided in the recovery process.

Nillumbik Shire Council employed a coordinator to successfully link volunteers with people in the Strathewen community.

MEASURING GOALS AND ACTIONS

Once the goals and actions are clear it is important to ask the questions:

- *How will we know what progress we have made on our goals?*

- *How will we know which of our action is effective and why?*

The answers to these questions can be added as 'measures' in the recovery plan and will provide the basis for checking what has worked well and what needs improvement.

These measures will focus on:

- **level of effort** – what has been done (services, infrastructure works and so on)?

- **targeting and reach** – where have they been provided and to whom?

- **quality** – have they meet standards, including customer satisfaction?

Reporting on these measures will inform subsequent reviews of the plan and can also be used to assess the overall success of our efforts across the course of recovery at a later date, for example, for an evaluation.

TIPS

Review the goals and actions statements you have drafted to check that they are 'measurable'. Do they clearly describe what will be done?

Where possible replace vague terms like 'enhance', 'commit to' or 'explore opportunities to' which are difficult to measure, with stronger words such as 'deliver', 'provide', 'increase', 'reduce' and so on.

Decide when you need to review the recovery plan and include this in your plan documentation. (Reviews might be more frequent in the early stages and become less frequent as time goes by until eventually there is a transition back to 'business as usual' planning).

MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY PLANNING TOOL

STEP 7

Use this resource to consider the measures you will use to review your recovery plan.

WRITING AND IMPLEMENTING THE RECOVERY PLAN

Documenting planning decisions in the form of a plan can help to consolidate an agreed view on the way forward. This is especially important when there has been considerable input from the community and when the plan identifies the actions of partners as well as council.

A plan will help to share the vision and brings clarity to goals and actions.

A plan that is to be released publically should meet the same standards that apply to all recovery communication, that is, it should aim to be clear and concise – see **Book 2 – Recovery readiness – preparation for recovery before a disaster (Communication)**. However, a plan should not be seen as an end in itself: it is the processes of planning and the implementation of agreed action that are most important.

TIP

Write a recovery plan that includes:

- Introduction and context

- How the recovery plan was developed (including community engagement)

- Disaster impacts

- Recovery governance and partnerships

- Initial response

- Ongoing recovery needs and capabilities

- Vision

- Goals and actions

- Measures and reporting

- Service closures and transition arrangements.

MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY PLANNING TOOL

RECOVERY PLAN TEMPLATE

Use this resource is to set out recovery goals, actions, responsibilities, timelines, resources and measures.

REVIEWING THE RECOVERY PLAN

When it is time to review the plan it will necessary to ask the same questions you asked when checking the progress of your immediate goals and actions:

- *What are the key achievements?*

- *What has worked well?*

- *What needs additional effort or improvement?*

- *What additional recovery needs and issues have been identified?*

- *What additional support or resources are needed?*

These can be answered by analysing the information gathered on recovery plan measures and also considering external influences on the community – positive and negative.

Deciding what needs to be continued and what needs to be done differently will be expressed in the subsequent recovery plan.

It is extremely important to continue with a high level of community engagement. Particularly critical will be decisions to cease services. Even over a short period of time community members can come to rely on some services or see their removal as a failure to understand the community's needs. This can be felt as a betrayal of trust and can undermine hard won community confidence.

TIP

Prepare a brief recovery plan review paper that answers the review questions for consultation with the community and stakeholders.

Openly discuss potential service closures and transition arrangements and include service closure and transition triggers in recovery plans.

CHECKING PROGRESS AND RECOVERY PLAN REVIEW TOOL

Use this resource to review medium and long – term recovery plans.

NILLUMBIK SHIRE COUNCIL – COMMUNITY READINESS AND TIMING IS EVERYTHING

In mid-2010 Nillumbik Shire Council employed a part-time community development officer to establish a men's shed in St Andrews. Funding for the construction of a shed and the development of a program was in place, however, potential participants from the St Andrews community were too busy with their own recovery and assisting neighbours following the 2009 fires to devote the time to the project.

After six months of trying to progress the men's shed, the staff member put to council that the men's shed project be placed 'on hold' until the community had the capacity to take full ownership of it. Over time, as the staff member continued to work on other projects in St Andrews, the capacity of the community and the increasing energy for the project became apparent.

The project was re-launched in late 2011 and the subsequent two and a half years has seen the men's shed realised with a healthy and active committee and over 40 active participants. The men's shed was established temporarily as a program in a vacant space in the St Andrews Community Centre and much equipment and resources have been accumulated in anticipation of a purpose-built space being constructed. The shed has completed several projects such as a pilot program to mentor young people; building sets for plays; and building possum boxes.

Most importantly, the program has become an important social outlet for many local men – the relationships developed along with the support provided have played a significant part in the recovery process of many of the participants. The community committee now responsible for the program acknowledge this as its most important role.

According to the original project officer – '***The shed has drawn in blokes who would never have seen themselves there. Some previously said things like" Why would I bother with that – I've got my own shed."'***

In an act that demonstrates the depth of participant understanding of the 'men's shed concept' the group changed the name from the '*St Andrews Men's Shed*' to the '*Men's Shed at St Andrews*'. This made it clear that the shed provides a service not just to St Andrews' township but to anyone from the surrounding districts.

EVALUATING RECOVERY

Checking the progress of recovery actions and reviewing recovery plans will go a long way towards increasing your understanding of what works and what does not.

However, it is useful to take a more detailed look at whether you have achieved your recovery goals; to answer the question:

To what extent have recovery goals been achieved?

Sometimes this will be a requirement of funding bodies or it might be desirable to demonstrate accountability to the wider community. Whatever the motivation, it is valuable to document what you have learned so that others can also learn from your experience.

To be reliable and credible this will require a higher level of detail than used for monitoring and review and it will be necessary to consider the following steps:

- Clarifying purpose
- Engaging stakeholders
- Determining measures
- Choosing data collection methods
- Documenting evaluation tasks
- Collecting data and information
- Interpreting the findings and making recommendations
- Communicating and sharing the results.

RECOVERY EVALUATION TOOL

Use this resource to evaluate the long–term effectiveness of the overall recovery effort.

Note: This tool can also be used to evaluate a single action or set of actions in more detail.

ALPINE SHIRE COUNCIL – SHARING AND LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Following the 2009 Black Saturday Fires, Alpine Shire Council worked with Women's Health Goulburn North East on the *disaster resilience project "Through Women's Eyes"* to engage women affected by the fires and record their stories.

Thirty-one women aged between 16 and 80 years met in small groups across Alpine Shire to share their experiences.

The reported results of the project included: increased resilience, knowledge and confidence; experiences and suggested policy and practice changes were shared with Emergency Services; and six posters and video clips of women's disaster resilience insights were produced and displayed locally along with publishing them on relevant websites.

Half the participants indicated they plan to undertake individual and family fire planning and contribute to community fire planning or disaster resilience and recovery activities. Women's Health Goulburn North East has strengthened local agency capacity to understand women's needs, strengths and gender equity by working with Alpine Shire Council and the regional Country Fire Authority on a women centred project.

Examples of the types of comments provided by participants included:

'I got involved with the community – set up a fodder depot on my property – and it made it a lot quicker for me to recover; it gave me a routine as you had to do it. And it was valuable – it was necessary and valued'.

'Visits from professional psychologist 'suddenly put words to the way you were feeling, made us feel like "OK so I'm normal, so I'm allowed to feel like this"; fire brain, grief cycle, the way he explained adrenalin – physiological stuff – just made sense – one of the best things that happened, created new understanding of what's normal, putting things in the cupboard and not opening it again – shutting the door – analogy really hit home'.

'Men and women deal with the aftermath of an emergency differently – "a lot of blokes just got busy – not necessarily logically. They just went and did stuff. Women are often the "rock" getting on with making life as normal as possible – women try to normalise everything: replant the garden, organise clean clothes, vacuum the carpet and have milk in the fridge'.

Alpine Shire Council has used the project findings, which were presented to a Community Report Back Forum at the St Albans Hall, Running Creek, to shape the Community Resilience Committee Resilience Plan and Resilience Week activities.

LATROBE CITY COUNCIL – CELEBRATING LONG TERM MILESTONES WITH THE BEREAVED COMMUNITY

Latrobe City Council continue to work with the immediate families of those who lost their lives in the 2009 Black Saturday fires.

An important part of this process is recognising significant milestones as they occur. In late 2013, council organised for the bereaved community to get together as a group and consider their longer term recovery and support needs. This included engaging psychologist Dr Rob Gordon to provide insight into the likely longer term recovery issues people were experiencing and to identify further needs.

Council reaffirmed its commitment to continue supporting the group and recognised the important role of the group in maintaining linkages with each other – particularly given that some of them have moved out of the district.

The long term nature of recovery and the benefits to the bereaved community of maintaining contact is demonstrated by people continuing to join the group as time goes by. When the group was formed there were some people who lost loved ones who simply asked to be kept informed of the group's activities as they were not ready to participate. Five years later they made the decision to join.

Council facilitated a gathering of key people from other agencies with the group to acknowledge the completion of the arson case associated with Black Saturday. Many in the bereaved community had developed strong links with the police officers who were involved in collecting evidence for the case and for the coronial inquiry and with their case managers and counsellors. The gathering provided an opportunity to catch up and acknowledge this significant recovery milestone together.

TRANSITION AND INTEGRATING RECOVERY INTO ONGOING PLANNING

As communities within the municipality that were affected by disaster approach the re-establishment phase of recovery, council will be able to integrate the long term consequences and learning from recovery into 'business as usual' planning processes.

Recovery will remain a priority and long term recovery initiatives are likely to continue.

For councils, it will be important to ensure that the a fresh vision for the community is expressed through their key plans – the Council Plan, the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Municipal Strategic Statement. This might involve integrating ongoing elements of recovery into the next scheduled planning rounds, for example, the economic development strategy; the capital works plan; the social plan; or the parks and garden strategy.

Some of the detail required to transition recovery planning needs into ongoing planning processes might need to be generated from a precinct level – for example flood issues in the irrigation precinct; or specific issues for certain townships or geographical areas.

Additionally, it is important that the lessons of recovery are translated into subsequent recovery readiness and emergency management planning so that recovery goals and actions can be refined and improved.

TIPS

Review other council plans and strategies and modify accordingly to incorporate disaster recovery based on the experience and learning from this disaster.

Use the findings of disaster recovery plan reviews or evaluations to inform future development of other council plans and strategies.

Review the Municipal Emergency Management Plan and arrangement to ensure lessons learned from the emergency event are captured and implemented.

Use disaster recovery as leverage on external funding and grant opportunities.

BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL – THINKING ABOUT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

At the time of the 2009 Black Saturday fires, two townships affected had progress associations. The value of having these local community organisations was recognised and council worked with two other townships to establish progress associations in their areas. The two new organisations required more time working through a range of different things (appointing committee members, establishing committee processes, purchasing rules, reporting requirements) in part, because they had less knowledge and understanding of how local government and incorporated community organisations actually worked.

Council provided administrative support; advice on establishing an effective group; assisted with preparing meeting agendas and developing skills to chair and conduct effective meetings; helping with members' understanding of their roles in a group; and assisting to develop Terms of Reference. Council also worked with the groups on how to develop and manage projects, and accountability for finances and purchasing arrangements.

The two established progress associations realised that the assistance they received during the fires would not last and they took steps to attract volunteers to continue on and keep up the work they were doing. This was less obvious to the two new groups that were brought together after the event.

Supporting the establishment of these new groups had a substantial impact on council's staff time and resources when compared to the established committees. Council sees this process as an investment in building future community capacity. The two new progress associations have been valuable additions to their communities – not only for disaster recovery, but also from a broader community development perspective.

On a personal note, council's Community Development Officer who was one of the staff members that assisted in establishing the new organisations, described 'the whole experience as fantastic – from the learning opportunities to meeting and working with a diverse range of people. I'm very grateful to have had the chance to be involved'.

MURRINDINDI SHIRE COUNCIL – ADVOCATING FOR THE COMMUNITY

The Kinglake community lost several commercial premises, including its petrol station in the 2009 Black Saturday fires.

Re-establishing the facility proved to be very complex and resulted in a temporary fuel station, which is still providing fuel to the community five years later. It is not a simple process re-establishing a fuel station, with environmental, economic and land availability, which need to be considered. Council stepped into the breach to advocate for the community with the aim of achieving a long-term investment with a fuel provider to service the Kinglake Ranges.

In March 2014 a permit was issued for the construction of a new service station (incorporating several retail outlets) which has now commenced.

WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL – LONGER TERM COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL PLANNING

Following the Spoon Bay Track fire in September 2012, the Loch Sport Community Emergency Planning Group reported many residents were unaware a fire was in close proximity.

This Group with the support of Wellington Shire Council, successfully applied to the then Fire Services Commissioner for a Community Alert Siren. The Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee in conjunction with the community conducted an alert siren exercise to test its effectiveness. This resulted in two additional sirens being installed at either end of the township.

NEXT STEPS

To respond to recovery needs beyond the disaster support and review your council's recovery plans.

Use the following checklists to assess the status of your recovery response as the months and years of recovery unfold.

MAYOR AND COUNCILLOR IMMEDIATE RECOVERY RESPONSE REVIEW

Medium and longer term recovery roles are understood and carried out ☐

Satisfied that their council is responding to medium and longer term needs in appropriate ways ☐

CEO IMMEDIATE RECOVERY RESPONSE REVIEW

Legislative responsibilities are met ☐

Governance mechanisms are actively addressing recovery issues involving council and by partners ☐

Adequate resources (physical, financial and human resources) are allocated to emergency management including recovery to meet legislative responsibilities ☐

Medium and longer term recovery plans are developed, implemented and reviewed ☐

CROSS-COUNCIL MEDIUM AND LONGER TERM RECOVERY PLANNING

Community-led recovery planning processes are supported ☐

Recovery planning is informed by the best available information ☐

A recovery vision is agreed with the community ☐

Recovery goals that will pursue this vision are identified across the five environments ☐

Recovery actions that will support these goals are based on the evidence of what has worked well in the past or elsewhere ☐

Initiatives are assessed to ensure they meet agreed criteria ☐

A recovery plan is documented and endorsed by council, the community and partners ☐

Actions are Implemented by council with partners and affected communities ☐

Capacity building is provided to support implementation of these actions ☐

The recovery plan is reviewed periodically to check what is working well and what needs improvement ☐

Subsequent recovery plans reflect review findings ☐

Take action to address any gaps or deficiencies in recovery planning by using the resources referred to in this booklet. They can be found in **Book 8: Recovery tools and other resources which also includes additional reading such as existing recovery resources**; materials and web links.