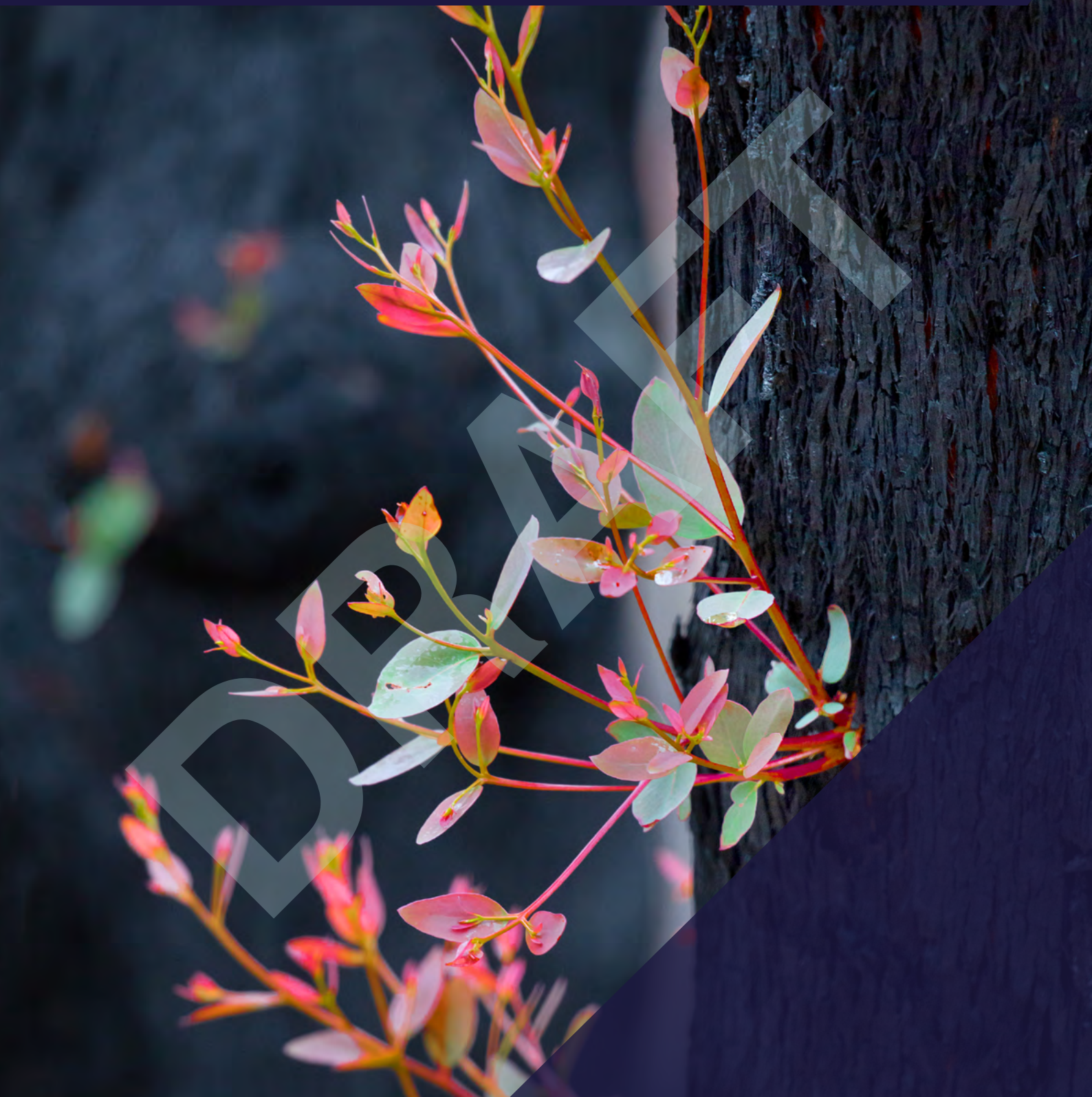
Strathbogie
SHIRE COUNCIL

Municipal Recovery Plan

Longwood-Berrys Lane Bushfire

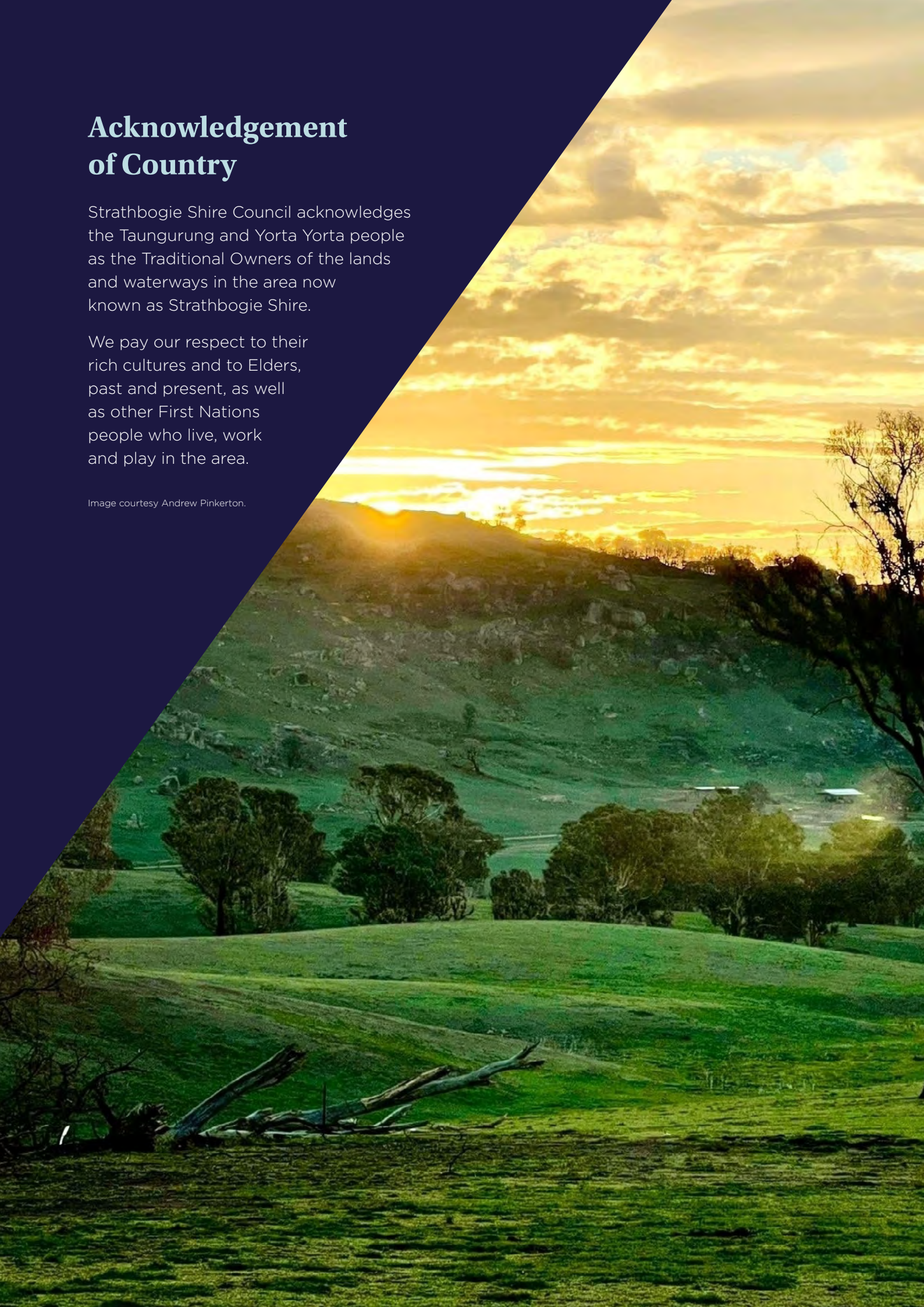


Acknowledgement of Country

Strathbogie Shire Council acknowledges the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Strathbogie Shire.

We pay our respect to their rich cultures and to Elders, past and present, as well as other First Nations people who live, work and play in the area.

Image courtesy Andrew Pinkerton.



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The Strathbogie Municipal Recovery Plan is prepared to guide and inform an integrated response by Government agencies, Council and other groups to support recovery from the the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire in January 2026. The Strathbogie Municipal Recovery Plan is developed as a collaboration and is owned by all the agencies identified within the plan, with all agencies endorsing the integrated approach and accountable to all for their identified actions. The Strathbogie Municipal Recovery Plan will remain a working document and will be updated and varied as required through the recovery process.

A Message From the Mayor



Cr Scott Jeffery
Mayor
Strathbogie Shire Council

As Mayor of Strathbogie Shire, it is my privilege to present this Municipal Recovery Plan. This plan focuses on the recovery needs within Strathbogie Shire, encompassing townships and rural areas directly affected by Longwood-Berrys Lane fire, including Longwood East, Ruffy, Creighton's Creek, Tarcombe, Avenel, Upton Hill and Gooram.

It covers both immediate and long-term recovery priorities, recognising that rebuilding homes, restoring services and supporting livelihoods are interconnected with social, economic and environmental recovery.

This Municipal Recovery Plan has been developed in collaboration with all agencies involved.

I wish to acknowledge emergency services personnel, volunteers and frontline workers for their tireless efforts during the fires and in ongoing recovery efforts. Your courage, professionalism and compassion have made a profound difference to those impacted.

The 2026 Longwood-Berrys Lane fire and its aftermath has been a tough experience for our district. In January, the bushfires burned through approximately 13 per cent of our municipality. We lost 115 homes, more than 240 outbuildings, and over 330 farms were impacted. The estimated economic cost exceeds $200 million.

Those numbers tell only part of the story. Behind every statistic is a family, a business, a lifetime of memories or a farming enterprise that has taken generations to build.

What impressed me through the chaos was the leadership that emerged throughout our communities. Volunteers, farmers, sporting clubs, neighborhood houses, community organisations, businesses and council staff all stepped forward because someone needed help.

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Creighton's Creek community members and CFA volunteers meet with the visiting Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC.

Many businesses also generously contributed goods and in-kind services to assist in local recovery efforts.

Nobody waited to be asked. They simply did what needed to be done. The great Aussie spirit thriving in adversity.

Resilience isn't something councils deliver to communities. It's something we enable. Council's role is to create conditions where communities can prepare, adapt, recover and thrive, even in the face of significant challenges.

This Municipal Recovery Plan is a roadmap to support the long-term recovery needs of our communities.

This is a working document so let us know if there are obvious gaps or actions not included that we can address together.

This year has been incredibly challenging. Many in our community have experienced loss, disruption and uncertainty, and continue to face a daily battle to get their lives back on track.

To everyone affected, including farmers, business owners, workers, residents and landholders, and to those supporting recovery across the community, thank you for your strength and support.

This Municipal Recovery Plan is part of Council's commitment to helping our community heal, rebuild and strengthen resilience for the future.

Executive Summary

The Longwood-Berrys Lane fire, which ignited on 7 January 2026, was one of the most severe bushfire events in central Victoria during the 2025–26 fire season. The fire rapidly spread across multiple shires, including Strathbogie, Murrindindi, Mitchell and Mansfield, impacting numerous townships, rural properties and community infrastructure. The event resulted in the tragic loss of life, destruction of homes and farm infrastructure, widespread environmental damage and disruption to essential services. The scale and intensity of the fire prompted the declaration of a State of Disaster on 10 January 2026, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated, effective recovery efforts..

This Municipal Recovery Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for Strathbogie Shire Council, partner agencies, and the community to guide the recovery process following this disaster. Its purpose is to ensure recovery activities are community-focused, inclusive, coordinated and aligned with the National Principles for Disaster Recovery (NPDR). The plan identifies both immediate actions to support affected residents and long-term strategies to rebuild community resilience, restore infrastructure, support economic and agricultural recovery, and protect the environment.

Key objectives of this plan include:

- supporting community recovery and wellbeing, with particular focus on vulnerable populations
- restoring housing, critical infrastructure, and essential services as quickly and safely as possible
- rebuilding local economies and livelihoods, including agricultural enterprises and small businesses
- promoting environmental recovery, including land, water, and biodiversity managementx
- enhancing social cohesion, leadership, and community capability, ensuring the community is empowered to lead recovery initiatives.

The plan provides a structured, phased approach to recovery — covering short, medium and long-term priorities — while embedding mechanisms for community engagement, governance, monitoring and continuous improvement. By implementing this plan, Strathbogie Shire aims to build stronger, more resilient systems and networks capable of withstanding future emergencies.



Recovery specialists SixCs lead a training workshop for Community Recovery Committee members.

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Introduction

The Longwood-Berrys Lane fire

In early January 2026, a significant bushfire ignited near Longwood in central Victoria — reported to have started on Wednesday 7 January near Berrys Lane on the south bound side of the Hume Freeway. Due to extreme heat and severe fire conditions, the blaze rapidly expanded, crossing multiple shires including Murrindindi, Mitchell, Mansfield and Strathbogie, eventually burning across a vast area of the landscape. At its peak, the fire's perimeter extended to hundreds of kilometres, with more than 130,000 hectares impacted as crews battled to contain it.

Emergency warnings were issued for multiple townships and rural areas around Longwood, Ruffy, Tarcombe, Upton Hill and surrounding districts. Residents were urged to leave affected areas or take shelter as the fire moved in different directions under challenging weather conditions. Road closures affected key regional transport routes, and relief centres were established across the region to support displaced residents, including in Seymour, Yea and Benalla.

The State of Disaster in Victoria during the 2026 bushfire crisis — which included the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire — was formally declared by the Premier of Victoria in the early hours of Saturday, 10 January 2026. The declaration was made under the *Emergency Management Act 1986* after senior emergency officials advised that the fire emergency posed a widespread danger to life and property across multiple regions. It remained in effect until 11.59pm on 8 February 2026.

The firefighting response involved hundreds of personnel, with aerial support and ground crews working under difficult conditions.

Communities experienced widespread disruption. Evacuation orders and emergency warnings were issued for dozens of townships across multiple LGAs, including Longwood, Ruffy, Avenel and Euroa forcing residents to leave their homes with little notice.

As the weather cooled, the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire was contained on 21 January 2026 with fire crews continuing to reduce fire spread and prevent reignitions. On 30 January 2026 the advice warning was returned to under control.

The toll on property and livelihoods has been significant. Hundreds of structures including homes, sheds and farm infrastructure were destroyed or damaged in the fire zone. In Strathbogie alone, over 115 houses and 200 structures were lost, with thousands of livestock also killed across the broader fire region. Roads, bridges and culverts were damaged, leaving critical transport links unsafe and closed long after the flames had passed. Full list of physical impacts known at the time of writing is available on pages 18-19.

The fire also had a profound human and psychological impact. Many families faced evacuation and dislocation. The loss of homes, livelihoods, livestock and important community infrastructure, coupled with the trauma of the fire itself, has had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of residents. For many, the ongoing uncertainty, financial pressures and challenges associated with rebuilding and recovery continue to contribute to emotional distress, grief, anxiety and fatigue. These impacts extend beyond those who experienced direct property loss, affecting the broader community and highlighting the importance of sustained psychosocial support throughout the recovery process.

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Purpose of the Fire Municipal Recovery Plan

Scope

This plan focuses on the recovery needs within Strathbogie Shire, encompassing townships and rural areas directly affected by the fire, including Longwood East, Ruffy, Creighton's Creek, Tarcombe, Avenel, Upton Hill and Gooram. It covers both immediate and long-term recovery priorities, recognising that rebuilding homes, restoring services, and supporting livelihoods are interconnected with social, economic and environmental recovery.

Local Context

Strathbogie Shire is a predominantly rural region with diverse landscapes, agricultural industries and small townships. The local population includes a diverse mix of farming families, small business owners, permanent lifestyle residents and non-resident landholders who use their properties as weekend or holiday retreats. The region's remoteness, variable road access and reliance on local emergency services make community engagement, local knowledge and self-reliance critical components of recovery planning.

Understanding the local context allows recovery efforts to be tailored to community needs, ensuring that initiatives are practical, culturally appropriate and sustainable. Community-centred approaches ensure that the recovery process strengthens social cohesion, local leadership and capacity for future disaster preparedness.

Recovery Governance and Coordination

Effective recovery requires clear governance, defined roles and strong coordination across council, agencies and the community. To manage recovery from the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire, Strathbogie Shire Council will oversee a three-committee model, ensuring collaboration, information sharing, and community centred decision-making.

Authority

Under the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) Councils have a responsibility to coordinate recovery. This includes providing recovery information to communities and the coordination of community recovery services

Relief and Early Recovery

Relief and early recovery activities included:

- provided 24/7 staffing at Emergency Relief Centres at the following locations:
  - Seymour
  - Benalla
- opened Euroa Saleyards on Thursday 8 January 2026 to accommodate displaced livestock and horses
- managed emergency temporary accommodation programme and associated case management, supporting people presenting at Emergency Relief Centres and through Council's community contact process. This support extended well into early recovery
- municipal Emergency Coordination Centre was stood up on Monday 12 January 2026. Staffing was provided by Community and Culture Council Officers with support from Campaspe Shire Council
- incident Control Centre (ICC) authorised initial impact assessments to commence, completed by Fire Rescue Victoria
- secondary impact assessments (SIA) undertaken by Strathbogie Shire Council with the support of other Councils from across the state. SIA process took seven weeks to complete with final assessments completed on 25 February 2026
- community self-activation of relief hubs at Creighton's Creek, Longwood, Gooram and Ruffy
- funded immediate relief needs to isolated communities in Ruffy, Gooram and Crieghton's Creek including essential food, generators, whiteboards, UHF radios, personal hygiene items, Starlink, showers, skip bins and waste coordination services
- community self-activation of a fodder and fencing hub on private property, became known as the Longwood hay depot and resulted in $2million of fodder aid being providing to famers in the area. Council funded security personnel for the depot during the height of the emergency, for one weekend only. The hay depot, closed on 1 March 2026. Council funded security and traffic management personnel for the depot during the height of the emergency, for one weekend only
- community emergency meeting held by Incident Control Centre at Euroa Community Cinema and live streamed via Facebook
- opening of the Euroa Information Centre to provide information and support for impacted community
- assessment and clearing of hazardous trees on Council managed roads
- coordinated with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) a support agency roadshow in Ruffy and Longwood

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- psychosocial support sessions held in Longwood and Ruffy
- funded community connection dinners in Ruffy throughout the immediate response and early recovery period
- commenced early advocacy efforts with a focus on seeking streamlined planning processes and support for impacted communities
- early community engagement by Council officers including outreach on the first day that roads became operational
- opened a Community Recovery Hub in Railway Street, Euroa on 11 February 2026
- officially transitioned to recovery from ICC management on 13 February 2026.

Recovery Framework

Recovery from the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire requires a structured, community centred approach that addresses immediate needs, supports long-term rebuilding, and strengthens resilience to future disasters. This section outlines the objectives of recovery in Strathbogie Shire and the guiding principles aligned with the National Principles for Disaster Recovery.

Recovery Outcomes Framework

The Recovery Outcomes Framework describes the desired outcomes for disaster affected communities and individuals across each of the five lines of recovery:

- People and Wellbeing
- Business and Economy
- Buildings and Infrastructure
- Environment and Biodiversity
- Aboriginal Culture and Healing



Australian Red Cross representatives support local community activities in partnership with Council's Recovery Team.

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Outcomes under the Recovery Framework include:

Theme	Outcomes
People and Wellbeing	• People are healthy and well • People are safe and secure • Communities are cohesive and people connected • People are managing their physical and mental health • People have timely access to a safe, stable and secure home • Communities recover and build resilience together
Business and Economy	• Businesses, industries and sectors thrive • People participate in and contribute to the economy • Communities shape their economy • Industries and businesses recover and leverage economic strengths and opportunities • People participate in established and new employment opportunities • Local economies have increased capacity to respond and adapt to any future disaster
Buildings and Infrastructure	• Utilities and transport are effective and appropriate • Public infrastructure is quality and relevant • The built environment is safe and quality • Utilities and transport routes are restored and strengthened • Public infrastructure is resilient and supports recovery • Residential, commercial and agricultural property is rebuilt and improved
Biodiversity and Environment	• Natural environments are healthy, resilient and biodiverse • Natural environments have high levels of amenity • Fauna habitats and ecological communities, particularly for threatened and iconic species, are restored and protected. • Capability to support environmental recovery and resilience is strengthened
Aboriginal Culture and Healing	• Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights are realised • Systems and structures support self determination • Aboriginal Victorians enjoy social and emotional wellbeing • Aboriginal people's unique experiences of trauma are addressed, and healing supported • Recovery and resilience of the whole community are strengthened through Aboriginal culture, knowledge, traditions and connection to country • Aboriginal communities have increased capability to lead recovery and build resilience
Overall	• People get the recovery supports they need in a timely, safe and readily accessible way • Recovery delivery is efficient, coordinated and evidence-informed • Recovery responses strengthen community capability to manage their own recovery and resilience to future disasters • The recovery workforce has the capabilities and support needed to respond to community needs

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Community Engagement

Community engagement is a cornerstone of effective disaster recovery. The Longwood-Berrys Lane fire impacted a wide range of residents, businesses and community groups across Strathbogie Shire. Recovery planning and implementation must ensure that all voices are heard, priorities are understood and solutions reflect local needs.

Objectives of Community Engagement

The primary objectives of community engagement in this recovery plan are to:

- empower communities to actively participate in recovery planning and decision-making
- ensure inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable populations, including older adults, people with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and those living in isolated rural areas
- capture local knowledge and priorities, ensuring recovery strategies are grounded in lived experiences
- build trust, cohesion, and resilience within and between communities.

Rationale/Evidence for Community Engagement

Research shows that communities that come together after a disaster recover more effectively, largely due to the strengthening of social capital — the relationships, trust and networks that enable people to share information, coordinate support and solve problems collectively. Studies by Daniel Aldrich across multiple disasters demonstrate that strong social ties accelerate recovery, even more than physical infrastructure or financial resources alone[1].

Beyond practical benefits, community connection also supports mental health and wellbeing. Participating in shared activities, attending community meetings, or simply gathering with neighbours reduces social isolation, fosters a sense of purpose, and can help mitigate trauma, stress, anxiety and depression following a disaster. Incorporating these insights, Strathbogie Shire prioritises inclusive, community-centred engagement as a core component of recovery.

1. Daniel P. Aldrich, 'Recovering from Disasters: Social Networks Matter More than Bottled Water and Batteries', The Conversation, 14 February 2017, theconversation.com/recovering-from-disasters-social-networks-matter-more-than-bottled-water-and-batteries-69611



Residents enjoy a garden renewal working bee at Ruffy's Tablelands Community Centre site. Image courtesy Cheryl Kearney.

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Mechanisms for Engagement

A range of strategies will be employed to ensure meaningful participation:

- internal Council Recovery Team: This team will focus on internal council operations and resource planning to respond to evolving community demands resulting from the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire
- strathbogie Shire Recovery Committee: This Committee will provide strategic oversight, coordination and guidance for the recovery of communities affected by the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire
- community Recovery Committees: Communities may form local committees to guide recovery initiatives at the township level, providing advice, identifying needs and monitoring progress. Council staff will participate in these committees as needed and at the direction of the community recovery committee
- workshops and Forums: Council will coordinate structured workshops with communities to discuss recovery priorities, provide updates and gather feedback. Activities are designed to enable both verbal and written contributions, ensuring accessibility for all participants
- listening posts/Conversations with community/Outreach: Community-based locations where residents can drop in to share concerns, ask questions, or provide feedback about recovery activities. Listening posts provide a visible and accessible space for ongoing dialogue, particularly for those who may be unable to attend workshops or community meetings. Community Recovery Officers (CROs) and volunteers at the posts capture feedback verbally and in writing, ensuring all contributions are recorded and fed into recovery planning
- recovery Survey: Council will undertake community recovery surveys to understand the evolving needs, priorities and experiences of fire-affected residents. Survey findings will inform recovery planning, service delivery and resource allocation, while providing an accessible opportunity for community members to share feedback and identify emerging recovery needs

Inclusivity and Accessibility

To ensure participation from all segments of the community, engagement activities will:

- provide multiple channels for input (in-person, online, written, verbal)
- consider transport, gender equity, mobility, and communication barriers to access events
- offer culturally appropriate services where needed
- ensure sensitive handling of trauma and wellbeing, integrating trauma-informed approaches into every interaction.

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Communication and Information Sharing

Transparent and timely communication is essential for building trust and ensuring community confidence. The following strategies will be applied:

- regular updates through local media, social media, newsletters, and noticeboards
- regular updates through face to face community engagement activities, Municipal Recovery Committee and Community Recovery Committees
- clear guidance on recovery services, available resources, and pathways to support
- feedback loops to show the community how input is considered and applied in recovery decisions.

Recovery Governance Structure

Internal Council Recovery Team

Given the magnitude of the event, Council has adopted a whole-of-organisation approach to recovery. A surge workforce has been established to provide additional capacity and support the delivery of recovery activities in a coordinated, responsive and trauma-informed manner.

This team focuses on internal council operations and resource planning to respond to increased and evolving demands resulting from the fire. Responsibilities include:

- Cross-coordination approach in managing council services impacted by the fire, such as roads, infrastructure, environmental management, and waste services.
- Planning for future demands, including an increase in planning permit requests, environmental health officer inspections, septic permit requests, building assessments, and other council obligations.
- Coordinating council staff and resources to maintain business continuity while supporting community recovery.
- Working with external recovery agencies to both identify recovery needs and ensure community receive the support they need at the time they need it.

Committee 1: Strathbogie Shire Municipal Recovery Committee

This is the strategic, overarching recovery committee responsible for guiding the recovery process across all domains: social, economic, built environment, natural environment, and cultural. The Municipal Recovery Committee is a sub-committee of Council's Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee. Membership includes:

- Strathbogie Shire Council Mayor as Chair
- Strathbogie Shire executive leadership and recovery staff
- State agency representatives
- Community organisation representatives
- Community Recovery Committee representative
- Health and wellbeing service providers
- Industry networks and associations

Key responsibilities:

- providing leadership, strategic oversight, and coordination of recovery activities
- ensuring recovery initiatives are inclusive, transparent and aligned with community needs
- integrating recovery actions with regional and state emergency management frameworks
- escalating issues to Regional Recovery Committee and MEMPC as required.

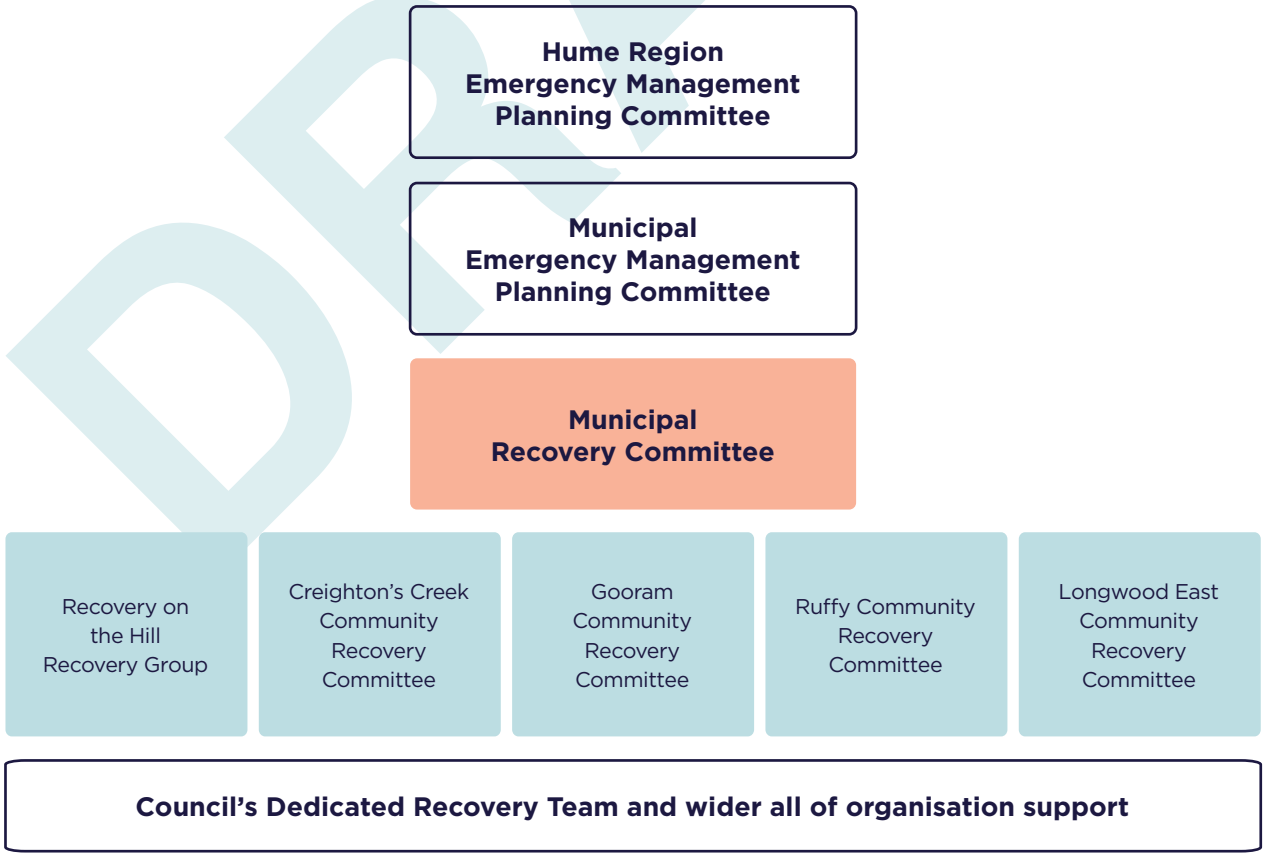
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Committee 2: Community Recovery Groups

These committees may be formed by the communities themselves to guide recovery initiatives at a local level. They ensure that resident voices, priorities, and local knowledge inform decision-making. Responsibilities include:

- identifying local recovery needs and priorities
- supporting volunteer initiatives and local relief and recovery efforts
- liaising with council and partner agencies to implement recovery programs
- promoting community cohesion, wellbeing, and resilience.

Council staff will participate as required, on all committees to ensure consistent information flow, coordination, and alignment between internal operations, strategic planning and community centred initiatives. This structure ensures that recovery is holistic, responsive and community-driven while enabling council to manage both immediate and long-term responsibilities.



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Coordination Mechanisms

- **Regular meetings** for all three committees to review progress, share updates, and resolve issues.
- **Integrated reporting** to capture recovery actions, risks, resources, and outcomes.
- **Clear communication channels** between council, agencies and communities to ensure timely information and transparency.
- **Monitoring and evaluation frameworks** to track progress and adjust strategies based on community feedback and emerging needs.

By adopting this three-committee structure, Strathbogie Shire ensures recovery is strategically coordinated, locally led and inclusive, supporting both immediate recovery needs and long-term recovery.

Integration with Governance Structure

Community engagement is fully integrated with the three-committee governance model:

- insights from Community Recovery Committees inform the Strathbogie Shire Recovery Committee's strategic decisions
- the internal council committee receives information about service pressures and operational considerations raised by the community
- council staff ensure information flows between committees, maintaining alignment and preventing duplication or gaps.

By embedding community engagement throughout the recovery process, Strathbogie Shire ensures that recovery is community centred, inclusive and sustainable, supporting both immediate needs and long-term resilience.



Inaugural Municipal Recovery Committee meeting with emergency agency representatives.

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Impact Assessment

A comprehensive understanding of the impacts of the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire is essential to guide recovery actions. This assessment considers social, economic, built environment and environmental effects across Strathbogie Shire, incorporating data from emergency services, council reports and community feedback.

Human and Social Impacts

- **Fatalities and injuries:** Tragically, the fire resulted in at least one confirmed death within Murrindindi Shire and multiple injuries.
- **Evacuations:** Hundreds of residents were evacuated from Avenel, Creighton's Creek, Euroa, Gooram, Longwood East, Longwood, Ruffy, Tarcombe, Upton Hill and surrounding districts.
- **Displacement and temporary accommodation:** Many families required short-term emergency accommodation, including stays in relief centres, with friends or family and through accommodation arranged by Council
- **Psychological impacts:** High levels of trauma, anxiety and stress have been reported, highlighting the need for mental health and wellbeing support.
- **Community cohesion:** While the fire caused disruption, community solidarity and volunteerism were strong, with neighbours and local organisations providing critical support.

Housing and Infrastructure Impacts

- **Residential properties:** 115 homes were destroyed or severely damaged, particularly in Ruffy, Longwood East and Creighton's Creek.
- **Community facilities:** Ruffy Community Centre, Ruffy Tablelands Community Centre were both destroyed by the fire and Ruffy Transfer Station was damaged.
- **Transport and utilities:** Roads, bridges, and key transport routes were closed or damaged. Power and communications infrastructure experienced outages, affecting access to services and emergency alerts.
- **Council services**: Immediate increased demand on waste management. Increased demands on planning, environmental health inspections, road maintenance and other council functions are anticipated as we move forward with recovery.

Economic Impacts

- **Agriculture:** Extensive losses of livestock, fencing, crops, viticulture and farm infrastructure were reported across rural properties.
- **Businesses:** Small businesses, particularly those reliant on tourism and local commerce, faced interruptions and property loss.
- **Employment:** Disruptions to farming and business operations affected local employment and income streams.
- **Supply Chain:** Ongoing impact to supply chains of rural and agricultural supplies and financial challenges in impacted communities being able to cover costs. As well as some agricultural businesses not rebuilding.

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Environmental Impacts

- **Vegetation and biodiversity:** Large tracts of native vegetation and habitat were destroyed, posing risks to native fauna and ecological balance.
- **Soil and water quality:** Fire-affected land may face erosion, runoff and contamination, requiring ongoing environmental management.
- **Hazardous materials:** Ash, debris, and fire-damaged infrastructure present ongoing risks that need careful handling during recovery.
- **Impacted water ways:** Ash, debris being washed into water supplies, catchments and dams impacting drinking water for humans and animals.
- **Animal impacts to farmland:** Native and introduced species moving from bushland to pastures, damaging young trees and crops

Summary of Impacts

Theme	Outcomes
Economic Impacts	Total farm area affected 33534.29 ha with the following loses: • 2.2 tonne of store grain • 11,821 tonne of hay and silage • 25,177 ha of grazing pasture • 8.3 ha of plantation soft wood • 12 ha of field crop standing • 248 sheds lost • 28 irrigation pumps • 28 tractors • 2 harvester • 16 vehicles • 31 ATV utility vehicles • 42 other farm machinery The information has been collected directly from landholders during response operations and represents a point-in-time snapshot based on what was known at the time of contact. It is not intended to be a complete or final record of loss or damage. With significant fire activity, road closures and direct impacts, tourism over the peak summer period has caused significant economic loss that will also compound the mental health of affected and wider communities.

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Landholders across the fire area were severely impacted by stock, fencing and farm machinery losses.

Theme	Outcomes
Built Impacts	115 houses destroyed. The information has been collected directly from landholders during secondary impact assessments and represents a point-in-time snapshot based on what was known at the time of contact. Not all impacts may have been identified and information may change as further contact and on-ground assessments occur. Two community facilities destroyed.
Natural Impacts	The fire area is 132,653 hectares with a fire perimeter of over 500 kilometres. Natural impacts to vegetation, trees, water and streams. • Habitat areas impacted for threatened species. • Loss of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage sites assumed but not yet known.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Impacts	Significant Cultural Heritage Sites are likely within the fireground, and surrounding areas, this could include: • Loss of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage sites. • Displacement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community members Impacts to Traditional Owner Corporations or Recognised Aboriginal Parties.

Implications for Recovery

The scale of these impacts highlights the need for coordinated, multi-sector recovery, addressing both immediate needs (shelter, food, mental health) and long-term rebuilding (housing, infrastructure, economic and environmental recovery). Recovery priorities will be tailored to each community's unique needs, while ensuring that strategies are inclusive, sustainable and resilience-focused.

Action Plan

Overall Recovery Commitment

- People get the recovery supports they need in a timely, safe, and readily accessible way.
- Recovery delivery is efficient, coordinated and evidence informed.
- Recovery responses strengthen community capability to manage their own recovery and resilience to future disasters.
- The recovery workforce has the capabilities and support needed to respond to community needs.

Council will report progress through the Municipal Recovery Committee and deliver a biannual recovery progress report to community, tracking delivery of the Community Recovery Plan through to 2028.

Timeframe Key

Timeframe	Definition
Immediate	Action required now or within 0–3 months
Short term	Action to be progressed within 3–6 months
Medium term	Action to be progressed within 6–12 months
Long term	Action expected to take 12+ months
Ongoing	Continuing activity throughout the life of the Action Plan

Status Key

Status	Definition
Not commenced	Work has not yet started
Planning	Scope, approach, resources or partnerships are being established
In progress	Action is actively being implemented
Complete	Action has been delivered
Ongoing	Action is established and requires continued delivery or monitoring

Our Strategic Pillars



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RECOVERY PILLAR: **PEOPLE AND WELLBEING**

Outcomes:

- people are safe and secure
- communities are cohesive and people are socially connected
- people are managing their physical and mental health
- people have timely access to a safe, stable, and secure accommodation.

Actions	Timeframe	Status
1. Deliver at a minimum, quarterly community connection events in impacted townships as well as capacity building workshops identified in partnership with community.	ONGOING	IN PROGRESS
2. Support residents to navigate agency support for temporary emergency accommodation and emergency recovery program support.	ONGOING	ONGOING
3. Partner with case management providers to ensure a coordinated person-centred approach to recovery service delivery.	ONGOING	ONGOING
4. Continued advocacy for increased funding to support locally delivered mental health and wellbeing services, including supports for children and young people.	ONGOING	ONGOING
5. Participate in the Mental Health task force led by Murrindindi Shire to identify service gaps and improvements.	IMMEDIATE	IN PROGRESS
6. Deliver Community Leadership Program in 2027 to support community capacity building, resilience and connection.	MEDIUM	PLANNING
7. Partner with Community Recovery Committees to deliver on medium to long term recovery priorities, including: development of community recovery plans, ongoing mentoring and development opportunities, information sharing and joint advocacy.	SHORT TO MEDIUM	PLANNING
8. Facilitate community information sessions to improve preparedness and resilience ahead of future emergency events.	IMMEDIATE	IN PROGRESS
9. Deliver mental health first aid training to impacted communities.	SHORT	PLANNING
10. Establish and operate a Community Recovery Hub and outreach program providing access to support services and information.	ONGOING	ONGOING
11. Conduct a community and staff debrief session reviewing Council's response and early recovery efforts to capture lessons learned and improve future responses.	SHORT	COMPLETE

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RECOVERY PILLAR: **BUSINESS AND ECONOMY**

Outcomes:

- businesses, industries and sectors thrive
- people participate in and contribute to the economy
- communities shape their economy
- industries and businesses recover and leverage economic strengths and opportunities
- people participate in established and new employment opportunities
- local economies have increased capacity to respond and adapt to any future disaster.

Actions	Timeframe	Status
1. **Deliver two annual business recovery workshops or forums per annum, supporting local businesses to access grants, recovery funding and advisory services.**	MEDIUM	**PLANNING**
2. **Deliver two annual workshops supporting agricultural businesses with a focus on strategic farm planning and recovery.**	MEDIUM	**NOT COMMENCED**
3. **Partner with Goulburn Regional Tourism board to develop an initiative to drive tourism return to the area.**	LONG	**NOT COMMENCED**
4. **Continued advocacy for agricultural funding to be more inclusive.**	ONGOING	**ONGOING**



Vineyards, farms, equine and tourism businesses were severely impacted by bushfires in the region. Image courtesy Fowles Wine.

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RECOVERY PILLAR: **BUILDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Outcomes:

- utilities and transport routes are restored and strengthened
- public infrastructure is resilient and supports recovery
- residential, commercial and agricultural property is rebuilt and improved
- community infrastructure is built to support the community now and into the future.

Actions	Timeframe	Status
1. Continued advocacy for improved telecommunications and reliable electricity supply.	ONGOING	ONGOING
2. Support the Committee of Management of the Ruffy Recreation Reserve and Ruffy Tablelands Community Centre to build on concept designs inclusive of community engagement and subsequent master plan and detailed design process for the rebuilding of community assets.	ONGOING	IN PROGRESS
3. Facilitate ongoing engagement with Community Halls in the fire footprint to consider improvements for future resilience.	MEDIUM	NOT COMMENCED
4. Investigate funding opportunities to support master planning and rebuilding of lost community infrastructure as well as for improvements of broader community facilities across the Shire to support future resilience.	ONGOING	IN PROGRESS
5. Continue advocacy efforts for waiver of statutory fees and fast tracking of planning and building approvals for residents.	ONGOING	ONGOING
6. Support residents and landholders through planning and rebuilding processes, with information sessions delivered quarterly.	ONGOING	IN PROGRESS
7. Engagement of dedicated rebuild support staff through recruitment of planning, environment health and administrative support to provide trauma-informed advice to affected property owners.	SHORT	COMPLETE
8. Detailed and relevant trauma-informed training for staff, to help guide their communication and use of language during rebuild process.	SHORT	COMPLETE
9. Undertake a review of community facing documentation for the rebuild process and redesign to ensure communication is clear and concise.	ONGOING	IN PROGRESS

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RECOVERY PILLAR: **ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY**

Outcomes:

- natural environments are healthy, resilient and biodiverse
- natural environments have high levels of amenity
- the natural habitat and processes that support threatened and iconic species and ecological communities are restored and protected
- capability to support environmental recovery and resilience is strengthened.

Actions	Timeframe	Status
1. **Support communities to identify and control pest species in fire-affected areas and prioritise rehabilitation of environments.**	ONGOING	**IN PROGRESS**
2. **Deliver Climate Ready Gardens program and other initiatives that support environment and community connection.**	LONG	**IN PROGRESS**
3. **Support landholders with land management and environmental recovery information through annual workshops or field days.**	MEDIUM	**IN PROGRESS**
4. **Engage with and support local Landcare and environmental groups in re-establishing native vegetation and habitat.**	ONGOING	**IN PROGRESS**
5. **Manage fire impacted trees and roadside vegetation habitat responsibly, and suppress the resurgence of pests and weeds.**	ONGOING	**IN PROGRESS**
6. **Collaborate with other land managers, public authorities and community to identify at-risk flora and fauna and implement precautionary habitat improvements.**	MEDIUM	**NOT COMMENCED**
7. **Minimise any damage/removal of habitat/shelter during other recovery activities.**	ONGOING	**IN PROGRESS**

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RECOVERY PILLAR: **ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND HEALING**

Outcomes:

- aboriginal land, water and cultural rights are realised
- systems and structures support self-determination
- aboriginal Victorians enjoy social and emotional wellbeing
- aboriginal people's unique experiences of trauma are addressed, and healing supported
- recovery and resilience of the whole community are strengthened through Aboriginal culture, knowledge, traditions and connection to country
- aboriginal communities have increased capability to lead recovery and build resilience.

Actions	Timeframe	Status
1. **Partner with Taungurung Lands and Waters Council (TLaWC) to ensure representation in recovery governance structures and planning processes.**	IMMEDIATE	COMPLETE
2. **Support Wa Wa Bik sessions with a focus on cultural healing or connection-to-Country led by TLaWC.**	LONG	PLANNING
3. **Work with Traditional Owners to embed cultural knowledge and land management practices into environmental recovery projects.**	LONG	NOT COMMENCED



Appendix One:
Longwood-Berrys Lane fire Map

Map of the Longwood-Berrys Lane fire area

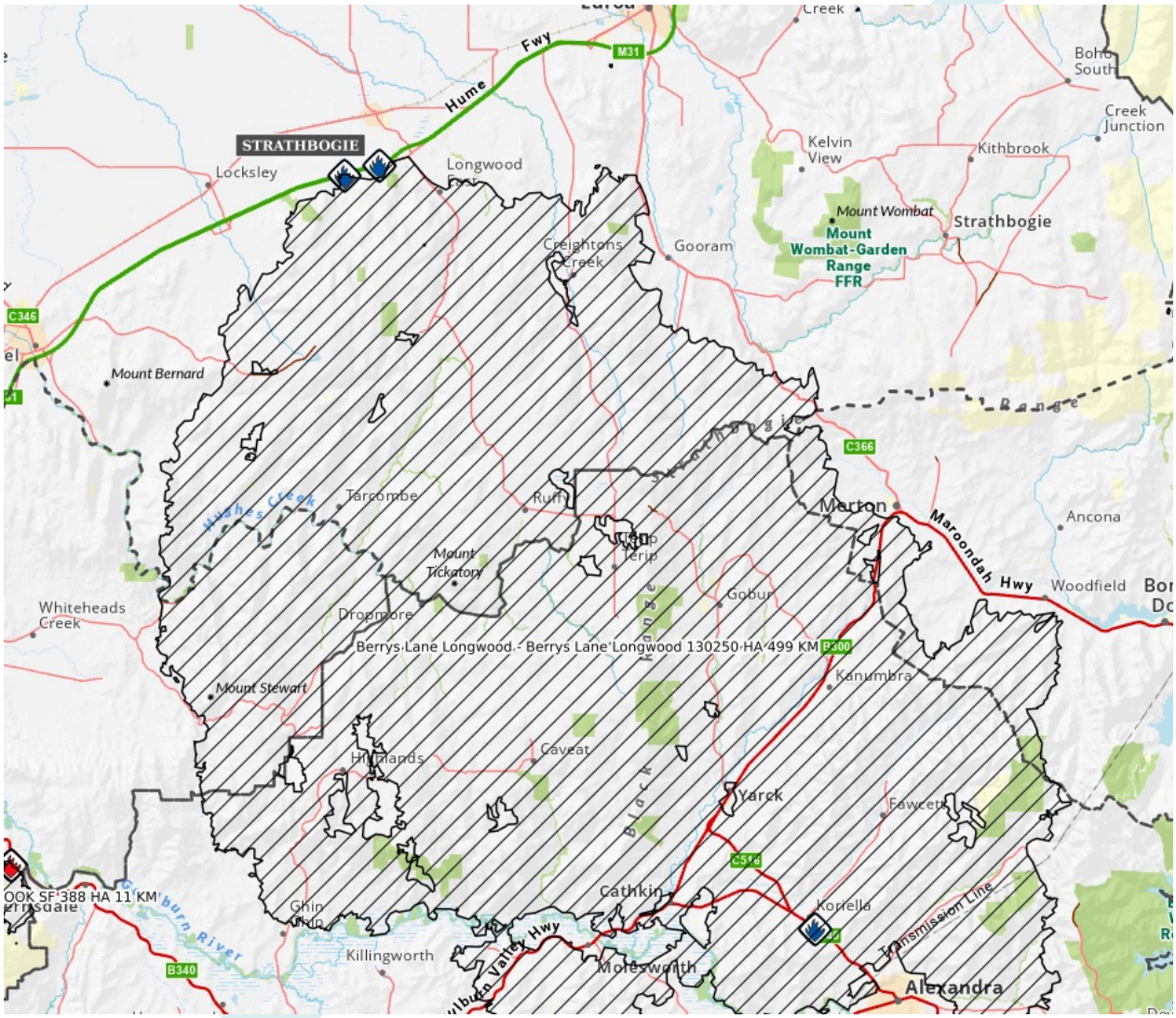




Image courtesy Andrew Pinkerton.

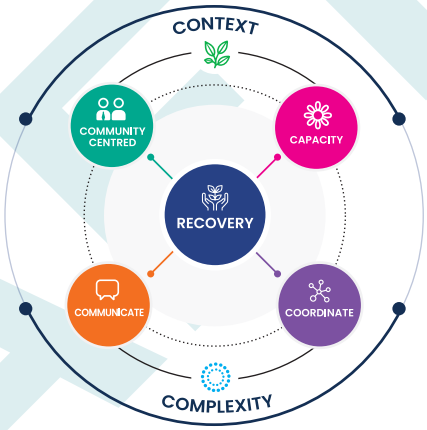
Appendix Two:
National Principles of Disaster Recovery

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR

Disaster Recovery

Recovery is part of emergency management, alongside prevention, preparedness and response. Planning for recovery is integral to preparedness and creates opportunities to reduce future risk.

Recovery spans built, environmental, economic, social and wellbeing dimensions. Effective recovery supports communities to adapt and move forward on their own terms.



SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY

Understand the CONTEXT

Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics.

Recognise COMPLEXITY

Successful recovery is responsive to the complex and evolving nature of disasters and their impacts on communities, including compounding, cascading and concurrent events.

Use COMMUNITY-CENTRED approaches

Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward, with shared responsibilities.

COORDINATE all activities

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach, between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.

COMMUNICATE effectively

Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.

Recognise and build CAPACITY

Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience.

Social Recovery Reference Group
AUSTRALIA

Note :
This poster contains summarised principles only.

Source: NEMA Updated National Principles for Disaster Recovery https://www.nema.gov.au

Appendix Three:
Recovery Risks and Issues

People and Wellbeing Risks

Risk	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Displacement of people due to inhabitable homes and delayed accommodation support.	People and Wellbeing	MEDIUM	Emergency and Temporary Accommodation Program stood up. State-led Cleaning program commenced.	EMV, DFFH, DTP, Council	ONGOING
Financial impacts on homeowners (bills, rates, other financial liabilities).	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Financial support and counselling. Support in accessing financial supports.	Local Gov Authority (LGA)/ Councils, State/ Federal Government	ONGOING
Identified psychosocial needs or wellbeing issues.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Community services and support, counselling. Providing safe space for counselling services at the Recovery Hub. Delivery of mental health first aid and events to support mental health and wellbeing.	Health, DFFH, Council	ONGOING
PTSD from loss of stock requiring removal and disposal by landowners.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Communication, support, counselling services (mental health and financial).	AgVic, DOH, LGA	ONGOING
Loss and/or damage to community assets and timeframe to rebuild.	People and Wellbeing	MEDIUM	Communication and community engagement on progress of Council's insurance and rebuilding plans. Community services and support, counselling.	LGA, State/ Federal Government	ONGOING
Domestic water contamination/loss.	People and Wellbeing	MEDIUM	Impact Assessments with GV WATER.	LGA, Water Authority, Landowners	ONGOING

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Risk	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Stoic mindset iof agriculutral community (particularly males). **Increase in suicide and other mental health related illnesses.**	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Proportionate/ongoing mental health funding. Increased access/ outreach and ag specific mental health support.	DoH	ONGOING
PTSD potential/ re-traumatisation given speed of fire and number of people who chose not to evacuate. **Ongoing warnings in area to fires that is a potential trigger.** **Having to drive through the impacted fire area on a regular basis to reach essential services.**	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Proportionate/ongoing mental health funding. Increased access/ outreach and ag specific mental health support.	DoH	ONGOING
Increased rates of family violence, including elder abuse.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	All recovery related roles are trained to identify risk and refer appropriately; Targeted outreach and communications.	Council, DFFH, ERSP	ONGOING
Temporary accommodation provided by insurance companies expires at the 12-month mark, possibly leaving residents without housing.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Early intervention by financial counsellors and through emergency recovery support program.	ERSP	ONGOING
Bushfire-affected property owners may engage contractors or suppliers who are inadequately insured, unqualified or offer unfavourable contract terms. This potentially resulting in financial loss, substandard building works, disputes and delays impacting wellbeing.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Provide information and guidance on engaging reputable, appropriately qualified and insured contractors, including advice on verifying credentials, reviewing contract terms and accessing independent legal or building advice prior to entering into agreements.	Council	ONGOING

People and Wellbeing Risks continued

Risk	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Neighbour disputes leading to conflict and/or reduced social cohesion (eg. Disputes over fencing etc).	People and Wellbeing	Medium	Encourage early neighbour consultation, provide access to impartial mediation and dispute resolution services, and support community-led activities that strengthen relationships, promote understanding and maintain social cohesion throughout recovery.	Council	ONGOING
Proactive, consistent, person-led care case management support not consistently provided. **Delaying recovery.**	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Ongoing reviews completed by Emergency Recovery Support Program (ERSP). to ensure right level of care (Low, Medium, High) is being provided in a timely and consistent manner. Early escalation of any concerns to ERSP to enable review and action.	ERSP	ONGOING



Sleep workshops for fire-impacted residents were held in Creighton's Creek and Ruffy to support community wellbeing.

People and Wellbeing Issues

Issue	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Only one visiting mental health provider in Strathbogie Shire area. **Long delays for clinical sessions.**	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Surge workforce and outreach services coming into community to deliver clinical sessions.	Health	ONGOING
Loss of income and financial security. Fire event compounded by existing drought (over previous 18 months) – and the need for extra support.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Financial counselling Providing information of financial supports available.	EMV/LGA	ONGOING
Elderly farmers not rebuilding or reestablishing farming operations. Loss of income, loss of connection.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Financial counselling.	EMV/LGA	ONGOING
Community members underinsured, inability to rebuild.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Financial and insurance counselling.	EMV/LGA/ Insurance Council	ONGOING
Reduced informal support networks. **As neighbours etc are also impacted community members may focus on their own recovery and neglect the value of community connection. This may result in a reduced sense of place, isolation and mental health impacts.**	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Community engagement/social connection opportunities must be prioritised.	EMV/LGA	ONGOING

People and Wellbeing Issues continued

Issue	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	EMV/LGA	Status
Psychological trauma of re-telling story/ impacts due to lack of coordination/ information sharing. **Impacted people having to re-tell their stories/impacts as a result of uncoordinated support providers.**	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Ensure measures in place to promote/ formalise information sharing between councils and Emergency Recovery Support Program (ERSP).	DFFH/LGA/ ERSP	ONGOING
Loss of pride of place. **Homes (and more specifically gardens) are relied upon as places to retreat and reduce stress. Where this has been taken away as a result of fire, the access to coping mechanisms is reduced and replaced with feelings of being overwhelmed.**	People and Wellbeing	LOW	Garden rehabilitation sessions. Landscaping and replanting advice post fire. Use of fire retardant materials and species etc.	EMV/LGA	ONGOING
Ongoing power outages in shire communities.	Eroding community resilience, causing PTSD and impacting mental health	HIGH	Infrastructure upgrades.	AusNet	ONGOING
Community members underinsured, inability to rebuild.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Referrals to financial counselling.	ERSP	ONGOING
Some insurers prolonging dispute resolution processes, increasing trauma and delaying recovery.	People and Wellbeing	HIGH	Referrals to financial counselling and legal assistance. Insurance forums at the Recovery Hub.	LGA, ERSP, Arc Justice	ONGOING

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Aboriginal Culture and Healing Risks

Risk	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Unknown consequences for Aboriginal communities and impacts to places of significant cultural value.	Aboriginal Culture and Healing	MEDIUM	Further investigation needed in partnership with Tuangurung Land and Water Council.	Health	ONGOING
No Country advisor for duration of event, and no ACH pillar lead at ERV. This means Council and other agencies are unable to understand recovery priorities for places of significant cultural value.	Aboriginal Culture and Healing	MEDIUM	Appoint ERV ACH pillar lead. Receive full Traditional Owner impacts report.	EMV/LGA	ONGOING
No representation at Council Municipal Recovery Committee due to capacity challenges. This means Council and other agencies are unable to understand recovery priorities for places of significant cultural value.	Aboriginal Culture and Healing	MEDIUM	Remain engaged with TLaWC providing updates of recovery updates and engage on project specific basis	LGA	ONGOING



Image courtesy Andrew Pinkerton.

Environment and Biodiversity Risks

Risk	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
On-going environmental damage to farmland/ agriculture.	Environment	MEDIUM	Bulldozing, grading and other operations.	Landowners	ONGOING
Tree Hazards on private property.	Environment	HIGH	Impact assessments. Communication around classifications and next steps.	Landowners	ONGOING
Loss of vegetation, stock and wildlife.	Environment and Biodiversity	HIGH	Impact assessments, removal, disposal.	EPA, AgVic, DEECA, LGA, (vegetation only), Landowners	ONGOING
Erosion control measures.	Environment and Biodiversity	MEDIUM	Further investigation needed.	LGA, Landowners, CMA	ONGOING
Waterway and dam contamination from dead animal carcasses etc. **Potential for blackwater events and aquatic species relocation.**	Environment and Biodiversity	MEDIUM	Sediment control. Water quality monitoring. On-farm workshops and information for impacted communities.	CMA, AgVic and LGA	ONGOING
Decline in wildlife and poor biodiversity outcomes due to loss of habitat for native wildlife.	Environment and Biodiversity	HIGH	Consideration of roadside clearing of trees and what can be saved for habitat.	CFA, DEECA, LGA	ONGOING
Detrimental impact to farmland from native and introduced species due to loss of habitat.	Environment and Biodiversity	HIGH	Consideration of deer control program.	DEECA, AgVic	ONGOING

Environment and Biodiversity Issues

Issue	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Biodiversity. **New and emerging weeds from fodder and emergency response vehicles bringing in seeds and plant matter from neighbouring properties.**	Environment and Biodiversity	HIGH	Promote containment feeding. Support landholders with land management and environmental recovery information through workshops or field days.	AgVic, Landowners	ONGOING
Loss of native habitats.	Environment and Biodiversity	HIGH	Engage with and support local Landcare and environmental groups in re-establishing habitat.	Landcare, community, LGA	ONGOING



Business and Economy Risks

Risk	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Damage to agriculture properties, farmland, machinery, farm buildings crops and stock too large for some areas to recovery. Decision made not to commence farming operations again.	Business and Economy	HIGH	Provide support and services to those affected.	EMV, LGA, Red Cross, State Government, RDV	ONGOING
Reduced visitation to communities and cancellations of bookings. **Reduced revenue and short to medium-term financial stress for affected businesses.**	Business and Economy	HIGH	Reduced visitation to communications and cancellation of bookings - accommodation - hospitality - activities/tours - events/functions.	Reduced revenue and long-term financial stress for affected businesses.	ONGOING
Economic impact report/assessment has not been completed to understand the full economic impacts of this event. Appropriate recovery support cannot be identified.		MEDIUM	Commission the completion of a full economic impact assessment/report considering immediate and long-term impacts including the secondary impacted agricultural businesses.	DJSIR	ONGOING



Business and Economy Issues

Issue	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Agricultural impact data does not appear to be a true reflection of actual impacts as landowners not aware of full impacts at the time of assessments.	Business and Economy	MEDIUM	Continued impact monitoring and updating of reporting.	AgVic, Landowners	ONGOING
Stoic mindset of agricultural community (particularly males) and not accessing available economic supports and relief payments.	Business and Economy/ Financial Stress	HIGH	Provide support for accessing relief payments through outreach services. Financial counselling.	EMV, LGA, AgVic,	ONGOING



Buildings and Infrastructure Risks

Risk	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Disruptions to essential service infrastructure (power, water, communications).	Buildings and Infrastructure	HIGH	Impact assessments to prioritise restoration.	AusNet, Central Goulburn Valley Water	ONGOING
Clean program. **Where no clear program and guidelines have been announced, there is uncertainty in the community around who is/is not included. We are hearing insurance companies providing advice to their customers to wait for the cleanup program, so as not to reduce their insurance payout. No advice consists to confirm/ deny this statement.**		HIGH	Immediate announcement of cleanup program including precise detail on its delivery.	EMV	CLOSED
Insurance assessment and claim offer for destroyed Council community assets is insufficient to rebuild.	Building and Infrastructure	HIGH	Work with community to design future needs/ asks. Seek external funding support. Advocacy to state and federal government.	LGA	ONGOING
Bushfire-affected property owners may engage contractors or suppliers who are inadequately insured, unqualified or offer unfavourable contract terms, potentially resulting in substandard building works.	Building and Infrastructure	HIGH	Provide information and guidance on engaging reputable, appropriately qualified and insured contractors, including advice on verifying credentials, reviewing contract terms and accessing independent legal or building advice prior to entering into agreements.	LGA	ONGOING

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Buildings and Infrastructure Issues

Issue	Area	Rating	Mitigation Action	Responsible Agency/s	Status
Traffic Management points and road closures. Residents and general public impacted.	Building and Infrastructure	MEDIUM	Communication with community. Updating VicRoads app.	DTP, VicPol, AusNet, CFA, EMV, VicRoads, LGA	CLOSED
Delay in temporary accommodation package.	Community are coming up with their own options that lead to suboptimal land use and safety risk.	HIGH		DFFH/LGA	CLOSED
Long term accommodation.	No announcement from the State about resources to support statutory planning and facilitation.	HIGH	Continue to advocate.	DTP/LGA	ONGOING
Loss of community centre infrastructure.	No community meeting place to hold events and gatherings to support social connection.	HIGH	Assess community aspirations for future development. Make immediate rectification works to make safe so some events or programs can run.	LGA	ONGOING
Hazardous materials (asbestos) located in damaged buildings and infrastructure on Council and private property.	Health impacts Clean up protocols and costs.	HIGH	State clean up program. Polytank recycle program.	State Government, EMV	ONGOING
Fire impacting power infrastructure, disrupting essential services. Communities without power for extended periods of time.		MEDIUM	Provide suitable short-term solutions for community members impacted. Power outage subsidies appear appropriate, however are not being made in a timely manner.	LGA/Ausnet	CLOSED

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