



RESTORE YOUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY

practitioner's handbook

disclaimer

The information, tools and templates presented within this publication are written for the express purpose of assisting readers with becoming more aware of potential issues relating to disasters and disaster recovery, to offer an introduction to concepts for planning for the possibility of a disaster and to provide some ideas and tools that might assist with minimising the impact of a disaster should one strike.

This publication is neither complete nor is it meant to represent a definitive guide or manual for disaster recovery.

It is both known and expected that information, technology and concepts will change over time and that whilst this publication is the result of our best efforts to source and provide information that is both appropriate and current at the time of writing, the relevance and currency of this information is changing and will always be changing.

It is therefore and will always be the sole responsibility of every reader to accept total and absolute responsibility for how they use any of the ideas and tools presented herein and for maintaining accuracy, relevance and currency of any information offered herein as it may pertain to their own specific and/or individual circumstances.

Further and because every disaster (and/or the effects of any particular disaster on any and every individual) is unique, it is accepted by the reader that it is both impossible and impractical for the authors and the funding partners to provide and/or for the readers to expect any guarantees or warranties as to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of any information, tools or templates presented herein.

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acknowledgements

Welcome to the Restore Your Business Community Handbook – a guide for community and economic development practitioners particularly in a local government setting.

This handbook is an important legacy project for me personally and for Murrindindi Shire Council – the ‘epicentre’ of the devastating 2009 Victorian bushfires.

As Manager Tourism and Economic Development with Murrindindi Shire Council at the time of the fires, my team worked closely with a range of support agencies, government departments and local tourism and business associations through the challenging recovery journey.

This handbook is not intended to be prescriptive but rather a grab bag of ideas, experiences and a few tricks for practitioners to deploy as relevant to crises in their community.

Of the many lessons learned, my strongest reflection is that planning & preparation are the critical steps. As such this handbook could have been titled ‘readying your business community’ or ‘reconnecting your business community’ as fostering networks underpinned all manner of recovery activities.

I’m immensely proud of the enclosed work and encourage practitioners to utilise this guide and reference materials before a crisis. Restoring your business community is not a once off task, it’s a constructive, evolving and ongoing process.

Finally, my thanks to authors Sandra Slatter and Sally Macdonald; funding partners Regional Development Victoria and the Salvation Army; and the many individuals, agencies and organisations that contributed their insights and resources to this project. This guide doesn’t reinvent any wheels but rather goes some way in consolidating some of the many resources available, please pass it on.



“a grab bag of ideas, experiences and a few tricks for practitioners to deploy”



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bob Elkington'.

Bob Elkington
Manager Economic Development
Murrindindi Shire Council



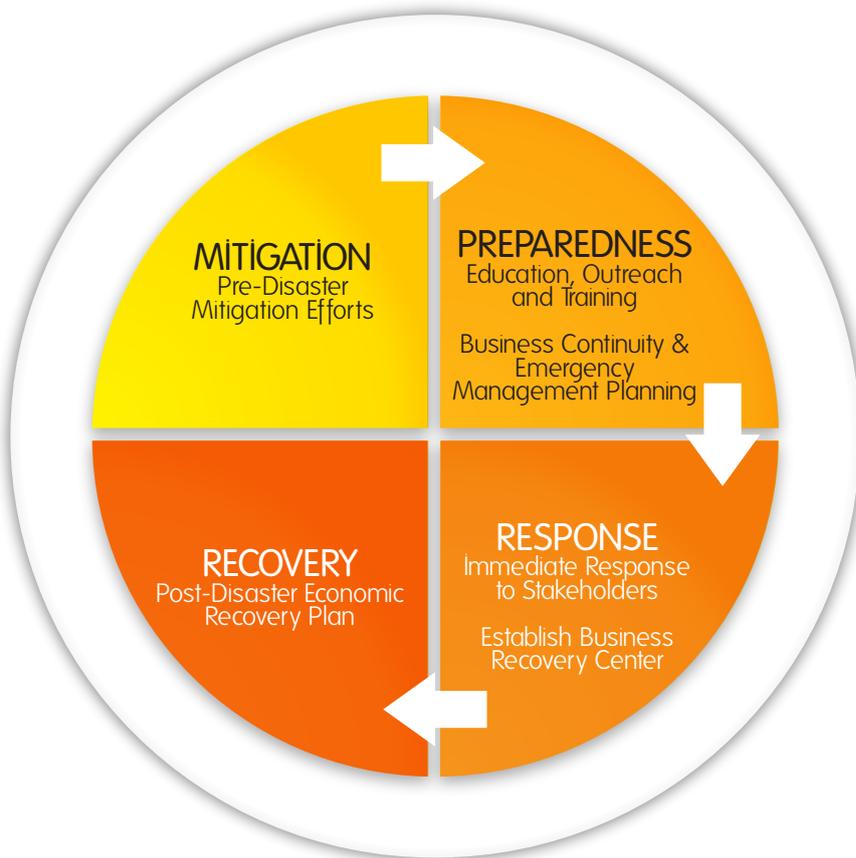
navigating this guide

This handbook is designed as a continuum and its key message is that planning is your best armour against the impacts of crisis and disaster - but it can't and won't shield your community.

Whether your community experiences economic disaster related to a sudden loss of key industry, a natural disaster event or is faced with long term structural adjustment, the planning principles of this guide hold true.

Its key phases are:

The order of these phases rather than the timing is important – meaning you can opt in at any stage of this continuum. There are no interdependencies as such although positive outcomes will be optimised by getting the foundations right (i.e. planning) and then applying the building blocks (i.e. the recovery strategies).



setting the scene

The Emergency Management Framework

In Australia, the emergency management framework varies from state to state. In the Victorian setting reform has been slated under the Victorian Emergency Management Reform White Paper December 2012. Among the drivers of this reform is the recognition that “there is a need for a consistent best-practice approach across government to guide the development of programs and initiatives intended to influence people’s behaviour before, during and after emergencies”

Local Government Role

In Victoria, Local Government has a mandated role in emergency management via the Municipal Emergency Recovery Committee structure that governs immediate response, relief and short-term recovery activities.

As an economic development practitioner – you must get around that table to ensure that the economic pillar is duly considered, represented and advocated for. You should also advocate strongly for due attention within your Municipal Recovery Plan – encourage your Council and other relevant emergency management authorities to integrate local business community business continuity into the Plan.

Ensure that disaster and crisis planning is a core feature of your Economic Development Strategy, Tourism Development Strategy and department work plans. It’s much easier and more effective to develop strategies from a distance – i.e. when you’re not immersed operationally in recovery.

The message here is that you operate in a climate where crisis planning is core business rather than a separate ‘special occasion’ or rainy day activity. Within your resources, include some ‘what if’ scenario planning when you next commission strategy updates so that your bottom drawer is ready for asks of government.



understanding the landscape

The old adage of “forewarned is forearmed” holds true in crisis and disaster management.

The recovery journey is a long one with what may feel like intermittent progress being made. Depending on the nature and scale of the crisis, your business community will be in a particular ‘headspace’ - this understanding will underpin all of your recovery activities from timing of support activities to your communication strategy.

To set the scene of what is ‘normal’ after a disaster here is a brief summation of the key stages of recovery (based on the presentations and writings of Dr Rob Gordon – Consultant Psychologist in Disaster Recovery and taken from “Are U Ready? surviving a small business disaster”).

Most psychologists will tell you it often takes five years or more to recover from a major trauma.

Everyone within and outside a disaster environment needs to understand that recovery is complex and is different for every person. In the case of the 2009 Victorian bushfires it would be impossible to count the number of times people (particularly those outside of the disaster environment who had no real understanding of the trauma and its impact) were heard to say ‘they should get over it’. But how can they ‘get over it’ when they are still stuck in the middle of it both practically and emotionally? In many cases it can take three to four months for people to slow down and begin to feel what has happened and only then to begin grasping the magnitude of the event they have been through. When the slow-down begins memories of what has been lost and the difficulty of imagining the future takes the place of focusing on immediate survival issues and problems.

In the first year, there is often raw pain, distress and acute grief. As the first year post-disaster progresses, time is occupied with coming to terms with the reality of loss and coping with the changes the loss causes. People frequently become very tired and find they are starting to have more access to their feelings, which often show up as frustrations and disappointments, anger and worry, irritability or avoidance of communicating with those closest to them.

In the first year people experience grief when they think of what they have lost. They grieve for family members and friends, for pets, perhaps for the destruction of their business, perhaps for the environment and the lifestyle they loved that has now gone. Some people suffer long periods of despondency, even wondering what is the point of it all, whilst others suffer from unutterable tiredness, and may isolate themselves from others.



“it often takes five years or more to recover from a major trauma”



The opportunity to at last stop and think a little may not always bring relief.

As the second year approaches things often begin to settle. As the extent of loss becomes clear, there is a greater chance of feeling deep sadness and a sense of life being less than it was before. It is often a time when memories and the results of the loss cause people to question the meaning of everything that they believed or thought to be true. Many people wonder 'Who am I now that this has happened? How can I ever find a way back to a fulfilling life?' These questions are lost in the first year in the struggle just to keep daily life going.

By the time the third year comes round most people are more settled in their circumstance. They may have rebuilt their homes. It is during this time that many small-business owners make their decision about whether to rebuild their business or to abandon it. The future starts to take shape, but many people still feel uncertain.

For most people, stress reduces, life becomes more stable and routines start to redevelop, but there can be still a long way to go to recover from some of the indirect effects of a disaster.

Dr Gordon says it has been estimated that it can take some businesses up to seven years to recover fully from the financial consequences of a disaster.

Another important area that is often neglected during recovery but becomes more prominent as things settle down is health. Small health problems, injuries and disorders are ignored; there is a tendency to eat poorly, or neglect the lifestyle activities that maintain health.

Other problems that become evident often relate to the formation of habits that do not allow for a healthy lifestyle, such as constant work and narrow interests. Not attending to these problems combined with trying to cope with grief, trauma or other emotions can result in feelings of restlessness and being agitated.

People expect things should be back to normal by the fourth year. This may be true for some people, but for others only when the worst is over can recovery from the extended stress begin. When there is time to stop, the tiredness starts, often accompanied by a lack of energy, enthusiasm, interest or initiative. Some people just want to sleep all the time. They don't want to do anything, to see

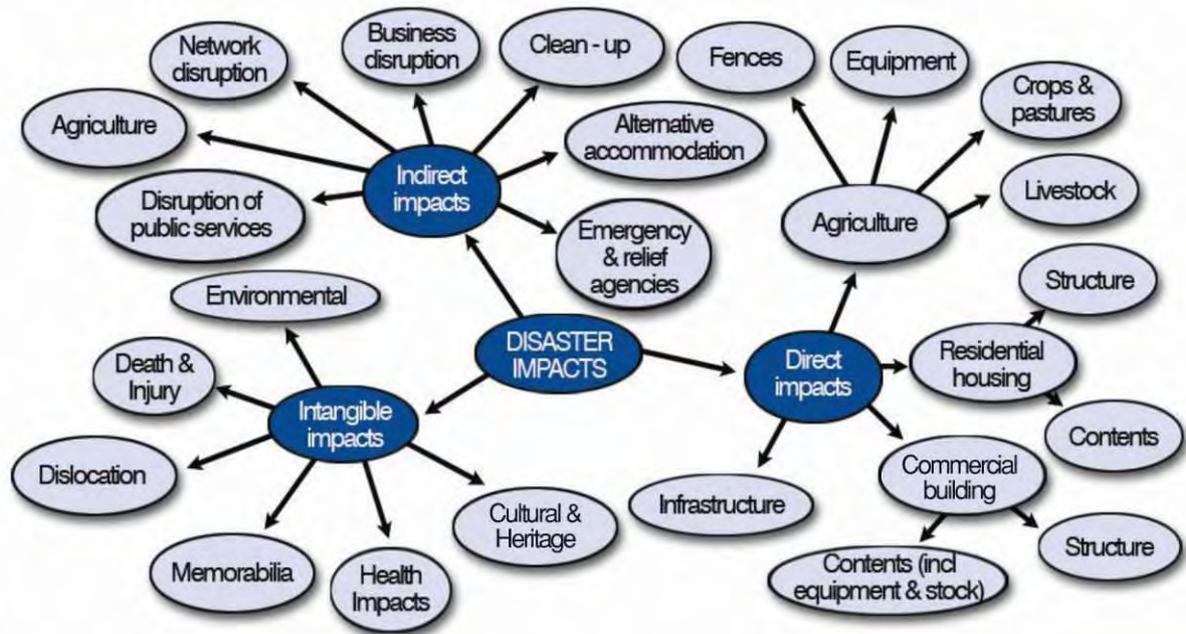
people or to go out. Everyone has their own timing and no one – especially those from outside a disaster area – can or should judge why recovery takes the time it does.

For many, financial recovery is still a long way off, particularly for small business. During this time interests, goals and values can change and it is hard to reconnect to what was important before the disaster – it may seem too hard or not relevant. Many people experience a need for time to themselves to do nothing, to just waste time. This is essential to get a perspective on the experience – to find out who they are and how they feel and to determine what is important now.

This stage is referred to as 'recovery from recovery' and should be taken seriously. Doing it well protects against health problems that have often been found to follow extended periods of stress.



the economic impact of a disaster



Source: Adapted from Bureau of Transport Economics 2001, Economics Costs of Natural Disasters in Australia, Report 103, Canberra: courtesy of Yarra Ranges Shire Council.



vicarious trauma

As a practitioner psychological preparedness is critical in readying for fieldwork. Not only do you need to understand what to expect from your community and individual 'clientele' you must also appreciate your own likely experience and psychological impacts.

Vicarious trauma is something as a practitioner that you really need to understand and be aware of. You need to ensure that you have good self-care practices in place and that you are continually on the lookout for the signs and symptoms.

Vicarious trauma is the cumulative effect of continually witnessing or hearing of other people's trauma and grief. This happens quite often following a disaster, particularly to those who work in emergency services or hospitality and to those involved in community work whether as paid workers or as volunteers.

It is a situation in which support staff slowly (and often insidiously) become intellectually, psychologically and emotionally stressed from helping clients deal with what they have been through. It is important to be aware of the possibility of vicarious trauma and to have good self-care.

Self care practices

- Healthy eating - nutrition
- Relaxation
- Play / fun
- Exercise
- Set realistic expectations for yourself
- Set personal limits and be gentle with yourself.
- Have some outlet for emotional discharge outside of your role-(exercise, writing, building, gardening, family, social action)

Above all regular professional psychological debriefing

Signs & symptoms

- Exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Increased susceptibility to illness
- Anger & irritability
- Avoidance
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy/empathy
- Personal relationship problems
- Impaired ability to make decisions
- Cynicism
- Resentment

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case study

A peer support network is an effective combative tool against vicarious trauma – the RP7 collective is a great example.

In the wake of the 2009 Victorian bushfires the government had set up community recovery groups known as CRCs. So when seven 'on the ground' support workers decided they needed to support each other 'RP7' (RP7 is an alternative degreasing product to CRC and so the name was chosen in good spirits to complement but distinguish from the afore mentioned CRCs) was formed. The name was important because it didn't reference any particular group or person and set the scene for an informal meeting group of 'on the ground' support workers. The group wasn't all about business nor was it all about community - it was primarily supporting the 'on ground' worker.

Meetings were held weekly, same time, same venue – it didn't matter if you went or didn't – no expectations. Breakfast started at 8am and concluded at

9.30am. Rules were NO DIARIES, NO NOTE TAKING – to allow people to speak freely. Emotions were welcomed – anger, frustration, tears and laughter. If someone was struggling the group would embrace them and would either help and support them work through their problem or refer them onto the appropriate assistance.

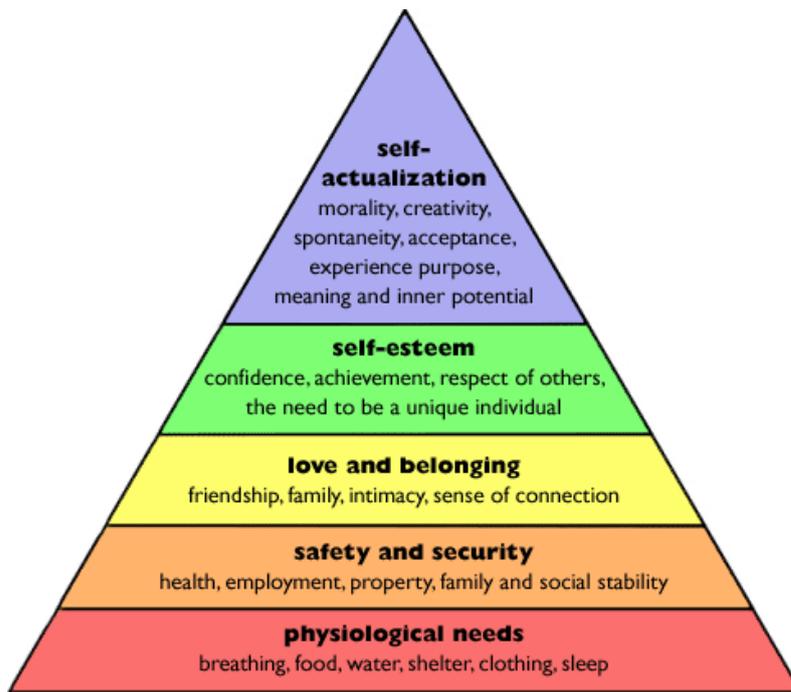
The 'convenor' was decided on the day, their role was to manage the process. Each person attending breakfast was asked to give a quick 10 minute update on what activities they were doing, any difficulties they were facing, any issues/clients/community members they were concerned about or support they needed. It was also an opportunity to vent any frustrations in a safe and secure environment. On occasions people were invited to come along and present on

what their organisations could do for the community – for example philanthropics, or corporate donators. Other times the community engagement people from various government departments i.e. Country Fire Authority and Parks Victoria would join the group for breakfast and advise on how their projects were going, what they were doing and why. Thus the support group were kept fully informed and in turn could keep community members informed.

The group started off with seven and over the 3.5 years it was in existence there was often up to 20 people sharing breakfast and their stories.



Renowned psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs offers the best illustration of what makes us tick.



A final consideration when involved in business recovery is understanding the likely 'headspace' of business operators over and above the typical trauma recovery articulated across. Many small business operators invest so much of themselves both emotionally and financially in their business that it is very difficult for them to demarcate and prioritise their needs post trauma.

The complicating factor for small business operators (and one that must be understood by support practitioners) is that once the bottom segment is fulfilled, the rest of the pyramid is intrinsically linked.

For small business operators much of their safety and security needs, their love and belonging needs, their self esteem needs and their self-actualization needs are tied to the success or otherwise of their business.

Headspace + effective strategies = effective recovery.



Summary of key success factors in disaster recovery and renewal:

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS	ATTRIBUTES / ACTIONS
Long term commitment	Long term recovery timeline covering emergency relief, early stage recovery and longer term community reconstruction and renewal with adequate support and funding provided to meet long term needs
Localised, community based approach	Geographic, community based response with local solutions developed to meet local needs
Strong community participation and ownership	Strong participation by community members and local organisations in recovery response design and delivery
Multi-faceted focus	Ensure broad, whole of community development/renewal framework rather than a narrow physical reconstruction framework used when developing localised response plans. Provide support to meet the social, emotional, economic and wellbeing needs of individuals and communities. Operate at both an individual and community level. Rebuild social, built, natural and economic environments simultaneously. Reduce future exposure to fire hazards and ensure that the community is prepared for future bushfire seasons.
Integrated response	Wherever possible use activities in one domain to support/reinforce activity in other areas. For example use the redesign and reconstruction of the built environment to support economic renewal by using local suppliers and (re)training and employing local community members in the reconstruction process
Well structured planning and design	Use good practice principles in the design and construction of community services and infrastructure
Flexible response structure	Flexible response structure, timing and delivery systems used to allow responses to be tailored to local needs
Decentralised decision making and implementation structures	Decentralised decision making, planning and implementation used to allow responses to be tailored to local needs and encourage community ownership and participation
Strong local governance and coordination structure	Strong local governance and coordination framework including government, support service and community representatives Funding and resources provided to support community consultation and intra and cross-sectoral coordination
Strong communication processes	Clear communication processes established to monitor community needs, keep community members informed and support participation in community consultation and coordination processes - strong investment in community consultation and stakeholder communication
Local resourcing preference	Recognise, support and build the capacity of community members and local organisations to participate in and drive local recovery - provide opportunities to participate in reconstruction and renewal process and wherever possible give preference to the use of community members and local organisations in community reconstruction and renewal work
Training and support	Training and support provided to local leaders, government and non government service providers and staff to assist them to understand recovery requirements and to sustain ongoing service delivery

SOURCE: Philanthropy Australia





why prepare your business community

Preparing business communities for disaster is a critical pillar of overall community planning and resilience. Investment into building local business capacity is never a dud investment as whether it's a natural disaster or an economic crisis, sound planning can provide a buffer and a solid building block for recovery.

There are a number of actions practitioners can undertake to mitigate the impacts of disaster or crisis in your community.

The contemporary mantra is that disaster planning = sound planning (i.e. it is no longer a once a year mandatory scenario day for example; it should now be part of core business).

The following are some key steps.

Building relationships

It is not necessarily helpful to compare the pace of disaster recovery from an economic perspective as there are so many variables, however there are some common 'success factors' which aid the recovery journey.

One of the most critical is sound business leadership and a cohesive relationship with this leadership to relevant support channels (local government, small business support agencies, broader community leadership, industry sector governing associations and the like).

Developing a dedicated response and recovery focused business leadership 'team' either within municipal boundaries or as part of a regional emergency management collective has merit – providing this leadership is drawn from a pool of existing legitimate business representation for example local business networks, chambers of commerce etc.

planning phase



One model broadly applied in the United States is the Local Economic Advisory Recovery Network (LEARN). The language is not important but rather the composition. The following maps some suggested participants.

Private Sector	Local & Regional Economic Development Support Organisations	Local Officials and Community Leaders
Chambers of commerce and traders associations	Regional economic development committees	Emergency managers
Industry support groups	Regional marketing committees	Elected officials
Community Banks	Training and development service providers (such as TAFE Institutions)	Volunteer pools
Utilities	Business Support agencies	Service clubs

In developing relationships, consider how they can be formalised and be readied for deployment. For example, have an agency business support team signed off in advance via an MOU.



map your networks

- ☑ Apply available resources into developing and maintaining the most robust local business database as possible.
- ☑ Explore opportunities to utilise data held by other Council departments – for example Environmental Health and Building – to populate and maintain your database. In doing so understand the constraints of privacy regulations and the like.
- ☑ Build intelligence into databases categorising by sector, employment numbers (a range), known memberships to industry associations and so on.
- ☑ Consider capacity to incorporate a critical business listing into municipal response and recovery planning documents. This listing would include for example intensive agribusiness with particular power supply requirements – in a road closure and extended power outage situation, advocacy may be required with relevant authorities to work through their logistics as a high priority. Take this a step further and interrogate data to list vulnerable businesses as well.
- ☑ Within resources ensure robust data sets are available. As a minimum conducting biannual business barometers is recommended to set a baseline to work from and measure against.

Prepare your individual businesses

- ☑ Many smaller businesses may not have business plans so suggesting a business continuity plan is unlikely to hold sway! Ensure that the “Be Prepared” message is drilled in at every possible opportunity in an accessible and palatable way.
- ☑ Focus a portion of annual business skill development calendar on some core preparedness topics such as:
 - ✓ Retail leasing
 - ✓ Insurance
 - ✓ Employment contracts
 - ✓ Business planning (including continuity)
- ☑ Subject to resources available consider disseminating business continuity kits. Consider partnering in this initiative with local Chambers of Commerce, local accountancy practices, etc.





Strategic planning

While it is unlikely that smaller rural and regional councils will have the resources for a dedicated business recovery planning strategy document, consider how recovery can be built into a range of strategy documents from the outset.

For example:

- When refreshing economic development strategies, incorporate scenario planning into the brief. This could include 'if x then y' style modelling and prescribe a scaleable response plan.
- Consider regional partnerships. If developing a regional tourism strategy with a number of municipalities for example, again incorporate disaster modelling into the brief. While it's impossible to anticipate the nature and scale of every event, some base modelling such as what a loss of x beds might equate to is a powerful readiness tool.

Local and regional emergency management planning

Ensure that the needs of local business communities are well represented in relevant emergency management planning documents.

For example, consider representation drawn from local business leadership 'team' to participate in regional disaster planning forums and be deployed as part of Municipal Emergency Committee arrangements.

The key is to document and legitimise the inclusion of a business voice and business issues as part of the planning phase to avoid redress as an afterthought.

Traffic management

And this doesn't mean a roadside lollipop! If the event is sizeable in scale and widespread there is no doubt that there will be far more 'to do' than your resources allow. Investing some planning time pre-event in scoping out your likely tasks is a valuable exercise.

The following sequential breakdown is a helpful start:

- Transition from response
- Management structure
- Community involvement
- Impact assessment
- Data management
- State government involvement
- Public information
- Rehabilitation, restoration and assistance
- Implementation of reduction measures
- Financial management
- Reporting
- Managed withdrawal



response phase

Impact assessment and ongoing data gathering

Obtaining early and accurate information regarding the impact of an event is a core expectation on local government.

Impacts on individuals, infrastructure and the community are generally measured and managed initially through municipal emergency recovery arrangements.

In terms of business recovery, a rapid impact assessment is critical in order to get the cogs turning for an appropriate response from government.

Practitioners need to recognise the following tensions and considerations

- ☑ That primary concerns of shelter and safety may preclude accurate data gathering in the early days.
- ☑ There will be a political imperative for informed and high profile reportage.
- ☑ There may be an intense media interest in showcasing a 'worst case' scenario.
- ☑ There will be variation of impact (for example a directly flame impacted business in the event of a bushfire and indirectly impacted business due to bushfire related road closure).
- ☑ There will be early indicators but also keep in mind the end game. For example data re loss of stock, fencing and crops for agricultural businesses will be gathered by relevant agencies but keep in mind the recovery cycle in terms of crop establishment as your advocacy strategy starts now. Similarly for; retail outlets - direct impact may be limited but do their staff have the capacity to return to work? Has their customer base been greatly impacted?
- ☑ As challenging as it may be, there may be a need to prioritise efforts such as capturing impact on 'essential service' type businesses like childcare, fuel outlets, supermarkets, etc. These won't necessarily be the biggest businesses in terms of turnover, employment etc but they are critical to community function.

Data gathering methods will vary given the scale and the timing of the assessment – phone calls, inspections, surveys and self reporting via insurance claims, media regulatory channels and the like.

Initial assessment is of a 'top line' nature – for example best estimates of how many commercial businesses have incurred physical damage and from this there can be some extrapolation of impacts on employees, suppliers, etc.

TOP TIPS

- ☑ Depending on resources, incorporate event and impact modelling in Council recovery planning and economic development strategy (refer to planning section for more detail) including some thought to economic stimulus projects/initiatives.
- ☑ Use local business champions in the early days. An industry-by-industry snapshot will provide early information. For example, contact a key wine grower, a local tourism association representative and a retailer – they will be well placed to provide the early impact measures needed.
- ☑ Use the regulatory channels. For example Council's Environmental Health team will be out on inspections very early on and can advise re food/takeaway premises impacts.

Finally recognise that agencies will collect data for their own application and requirements, but ensure that recovery planning includes data sharing arrangements.



The following is the model adopted by Bunbury, Western Australia and although it relates to broader community it can be effectively applied to the business community.

- ☑ Use intelligence/planning information from the response operation and set up a recovery liaison person in the Municipal Emergency Centre.
- ☑ Confirm the total area of impact for determination of survey and other methodology focus.
- ☑ Manage the collection and collation of the required data.
- ☑ Set out the immediate information and needs; infrastructure problems and status; damage impact and pattern and welfare issues.
- ☑ Link with parallel data gathering work.
- ☑ Identify and close information gaps (establish the 'big picture').
- ☑ Assess the financial and insurance requirements of affected parties.
- ☑ Gather evidence to support requests for government assistance.
- ☑ Ensure all relevant information is strictly confidential to avoid use for commercial gain.

TO SUMMARISE

The kind of data collected from businesses and timing of collection will depend on industry sector, whether the business itself is identified as a critical business or economic anchor in the impacted community and which 'tier' they fall into – for instance first tier (directly impacted by flame for example); second tier (indirectly impacted) and third tier (flow on impacts such as neighbouring locality).

Once the rapid impact assessment is completed, more detailed interrogation can follow. Remember business operators are time poor and generally have a low tolerance for excess paperwork at the best of times – so be prepared to be economical with paperwork requirements and adapt data collection to where and when it best suits.



establish business centre

Establishing a business centre is an integral feature of your business response and while again the scale will vary, the importance of dedicated business resource can't be emphasised enough.

Upon presenting at a relief hub to attend to personal needs, business operators should then be directed to a suite of business case management services.

In the early days of relief centre establishment, quarantine an area for a business support presence. Individual needs will of course take precedence but referral for business related needs must be streamlined and accessible.

The need for a dedicated business support area is a point that can't be made strongly enough – there are many barriers to business owners seeking support from perceptions such as their issues not being as important or fear of backlash i.e. "I have nowhere to live and you are worried about your business" to assumptions that they have no entitlement to support or no-one can remedy their issues.

Following the initial recovery referral area, the business support 'space' can transform into a hub for coordinated business case management from suitably qualified agencies working in partnership. At an appropriate time, a separate location to the emergency relief centre is ideal.

A sound case management structure is important – and where possible Council should take on a coordination role to ensure emergent issues are

captured and service provision meets the needs of the business community. MOU arrangements are important as are data capture and sharing agreements to ensure effective and coordinated service provision for as long as needed.

There is also some scope for business centres to offer temporary business premises space – pictured below Kinglake Ranges Business Centre one such example.

And a bit more on Service Coordination....

As mentioned in the planning section, having a business leadership model in place pre disaster offers a sound footing. However, if there is no such vehicle in place, mobilisation of business leadership should be a response priority. While it's a high priority, it's also important to get it right so make action swift but don't rush membership selection.



case study



Marysville & Triangle Economic Leadership Group – 2009 Victorian bushfires

For any kind of meaningful recovery to get underway it was imperative that relationships and partnerships were re-formed and in some cases established from scratch as soon as possible.

Following the 2009 bushfires, Boston Consulting Group provided pro bono services and developed the Marysville and Triangle Economic Recovery Strategy.

In response to key recommendations in the strategy, Murrindindi Shire Council initiated one of the foundation stones of economic – and therefore social and emotional – rebuilding with the creation of the Marysville & Triangle Economic Leadership Group (MTELG).

The MTELG involved the coming together of a broad range of key community and business leaders with local and state government representatives to chart the pathway for the future of the district that included many of the most severely hit towns in the state.

Key industries were identified and respected community and business leaders were identified by the Economic Development Manager and the Business Recovery Officer to represent the business sectors recruited in the strategy. Forestry & Timber, Agriculture, Horticulture & Aquaculture, Tourism, Accommodation and food services, Retail & small business (to pick up all other business outside of these sectors). Representatives from various government agencies and support and referral groups were called upon for advice and information. In the earlier days, there were representatives from the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority's (VBRR) Economic Recovery Team, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries, Parks Victoria, Country Fire Authority etc.

An "independent chair" was appointed from CPA Australia (Certified Practising Accountants) - it was important that the Chair be able to work with people under pressure, government officers and support and referral people.

A set of agreed objectives and critical success indicators were developed, a vision was set, and 5 core elements were identified for Marysville and surrounds recovery

- ✓ Complementary product set
- ✓ Single voice to government and market
- ✓ Drive recovery through a local economic leadership team – supported by the local community
- ✓ Provide incentives to stimulate reconstruction – assets and skills
- ✓ Implement a phased recovery approach

The MTELG proved to be a highly effective partnership of key stakeholders whose common aim was to advocate for, facilitate and deliver economic recovery to, and with the townships within the surrounding communities. The MTELG allowed the community to have a say in their future whilst being heavily supported and resourced, particularly by local government and VBRR.

In summary, any model requires resourcing – whether this is behind the scenes or taking centre stage – it is crucial to success. Generally the former is better allowing local leadership to be acknowledged, and regain kudos is an important rebuilding block.

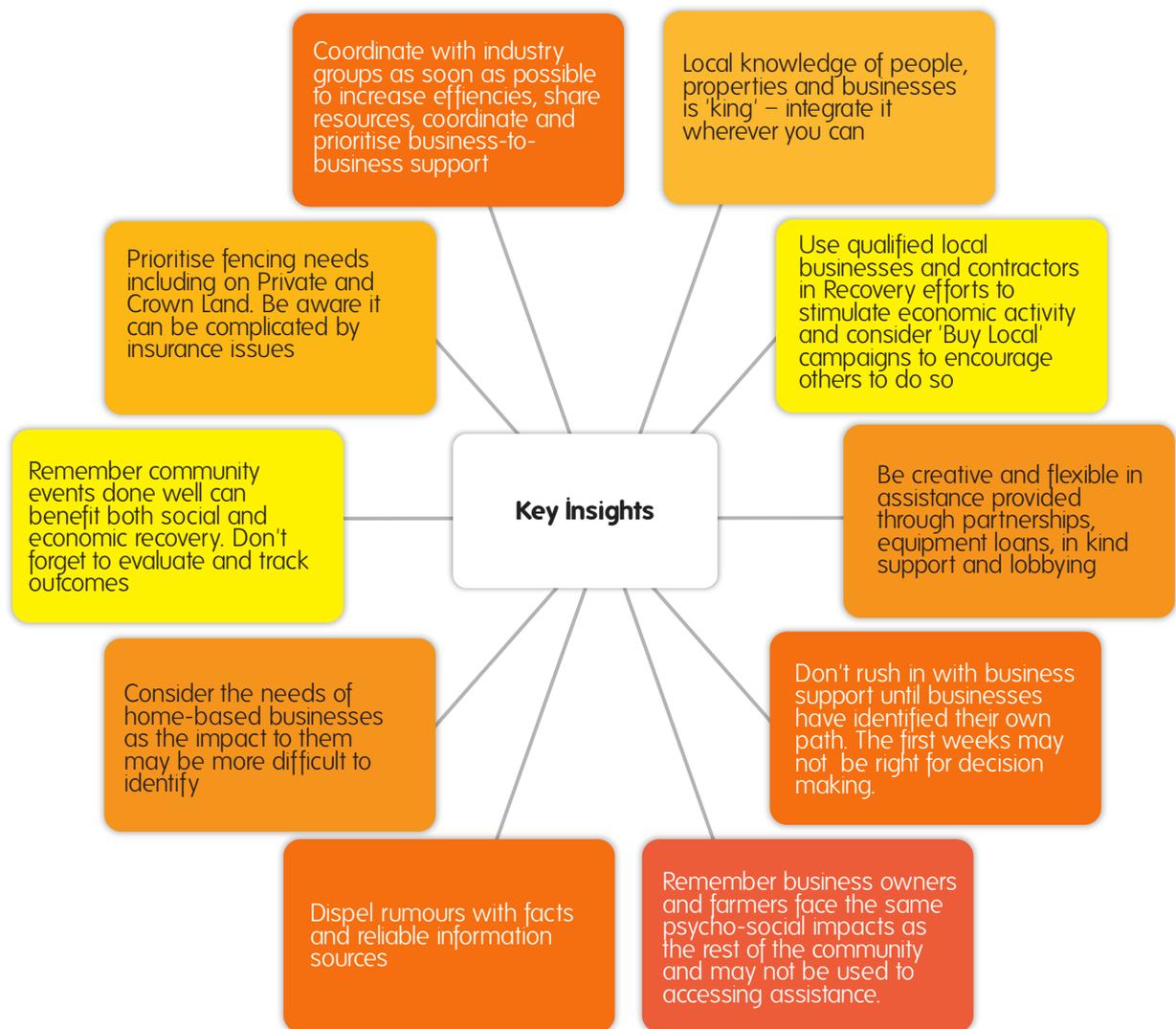


prioritising

As mentioned earlier, traffic management will be a challenge – so much to do, what should be done in the early days, and what falls within the realm of economic development?

Answers to these questions will of course not only vary based on scale and nature of the event but also the setting.

For instance, don't 'park' livestock or fencing issues as the domain of other Council departments and support agencies in a rural setting as primary producers are a large part of the business community. While not necessarily a lead agent, being on top of business related issues and advocating strongly and in a timely way is a critical practitioner task.



SOURCE: Yarra Ranges Council Emergency Recovery Inception Plan - Yarra Ranges Further Insights Table



role of economic development professionals

Below is a chart illustrating both the traditional role of economic development professionals and their additional responsibilities in the event of a disaster as well as what they should be doing to ensure their business community is better prepared. A clear understanding of these roles & responsibilities will assist the professional in helping to spur economic recovery in their disaster-impacted community.

	PRE-DISASTER ROLE	POST-DISASTER ROLE
Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understand how possible disasters could impact local businesses /industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understand current conditions/damage to critical industries, businesses, property and infrastructure ✓ Assess impacts on long-term viability of businesses/industries ✓ Provide cost/benefit analysis of recovery projects
Catalyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establish Business Recovery Task Force to work on preparedness activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Participate in Business Recovery Task Force to identify immediate and long-term recovery efforts ✓ Garner input and support for critical recovery initiatives ✓ Update strategic plans to match current realities
Gap Filler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outreach to public and private institutions about setting up a bridge loan program for a disaster event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Conduct concerted outreach to reconnect with businesses and identify at-risk companies ✓ Assist with bridge-loan financing until SBA loan approval ✓ Provide business recovery assistance and services ✓ Develop programs/initiatives as needed to support long-term recovery
Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Advocate for mitigation and preparedness efforts ✓ Advocate for tiered business re-entry procedures ✓ Address impacts/adequacy of community's emergency management plan from businesses' perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seek funding opportunities for recovery initiatives ✓ Communicate priorities and need for policy changes to state and federal leaders
Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Educate small businesses on business continuity planning ✓ Educate business community on community's emergency management plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Facilitate flow of accurate info to businesses ✓ Communicate "open for business" and "we need help and resources" messages ✓ Develop and distribute a disaster recovery guide
Visionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engage key stakeholders in visioning process to identify scenarios for post-disaster redevelopment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Envision how community can build back stronger, more resilient ✓ Connect public/private resources for building back a more resilient community

SOURCE: <http://restoreyoureconomy.org/preparedness/role-of-economic-development-professional/>



recovery phase

Resourcing the Recovery

The structure of recovery teams varies greatly from council to council based on scale of event, organisational structure and the level of resourcing available.

There is no recommended single effective structure, however there are a number of principles which optimise effectiveness:

- ☑ Economic development cannot be a lone ranger nor an afterthought, the folio must be well represented in the adopted structure.
- ☑ Core business is not different to recovery, it is just a matter of priority shifting.
- ☑ Temporary resources can deliver highly effective project output freeing up time for permanent resources to make best use of their local networks to support the recovery effort. (NOTE Temporary resources can only be effective if solid plans/templates are in place).
- ☑ Think beyond organisational walls when conceptualising your 'team'. For example, the LEARN group articulated earlier.

In terms of recruitment of resources, in Victoria in recent years funding of short term recovery officer positions has been a common state government response to natural disasters. Organisations needn't get too caught up about whether this type of position is an economic development or community development one – but economic development outcomes need to be embedded in the position objectives.

Once again practitioners must argue the critical nature of a healthy local business community to the overall health of the local community if any "powers that be" need convincing!

Regardless of term of tenure and title, the following skill sets should form part of the position description:

- ☑ Ability to effectively facilitate group discussions/stakeholder meetings
- ☑ Ability to foster and/or re-invigorate networks
- ☑ Ability to effectively advocate
- ☑ Ability to develop a sound business case
- ☑ An understanding of the principles of sound governance for community and business groups
- ☑ Experience in working with volunteers
- ☑ A capacity to effectively work with all tiers of government
- ☑ Experience in grant writing
- ☑ Expertise in project management
- ☑ Ability to detach and not become emotionally involved
- ☑ A very thick skin





tactical regulatory support

Impacted business communities will require regulatory support – whether this be directly within Council's own areas of mandate or via advocacy with other agencies and tiers of government

Some key supports include:

- ☑ Waiving of planning and building application/permit fees where appropriate.
- ☑ Introduction of 'planning consent' protocols where appropriate to streamline straightforward 'like for like' commercial premises building and works.
- ☑ Proactive engagement with referral authorities such as roads, heritage, vegetation and environmental protection authorities. It is likely that most significantly damaged commercial premises will need to comply with contemporary regulations not in place when first established – so be realistic with expectations of when the above suggested planning consent approach will and won't apply.
- ☑ Be at the ready to strongly advocate re any planning anomalies that might preclude business reestablishment. Take this approach one step further where possible and use the opportunity to advocate strategically for appropriately consulted rezonings which may provide investment stimulus.
- ☑ Once issues within Council's domain are redressed, be ready and informed to advocate effectively more broadly. A lateral and long term lens at hand will be needed. For example, get on the front foot on behalf of licensed premises that may have been destroyed in an event – timeframes vary by jurisdiction but warehousing of liquor license permits is generally limited. This can have a substantial impact on business in the short term – ie. cost to 'hold' license and in the longer term potentially loss of license and therefore trading capacity if reestablishment takes some time.

Where possible advocate for equitable regulatory concessions for businesses.

Stage a roundtable with statutory referral authorities very early on to identify issues, anticipate challenges and endorse a consistent and flexible approach.

Employ a robust investment facilitation approach as a streamlined and clearly articulated approvals process is even more critical in a recovery setting.



inducting resources

It is vital that 'recovery' staff undergo an appropriate 'induction' before being deployed to the field. Remember, depending on the scale of the event it may be an all hands on deck approach – meaning all staff are recovery staff – and so if possible appropriate training is advisable as part of generic organisational training.

Ideally, training will canvass the following:

- ☑ Effective advocacy
- ☑ Mental Health self care
- ☑ Mental Health first aid principles
- ☑ Effective facilitation
- ☑ Crisis communication principles

This training is imperative to armour staff for the challenges they'll face from both a personal and professional perspective.

mobilising external resources

Remember resources are not only those available internally. Local business and tourism associations are a powerful partner. When asked post the 2009 Victorian bushfires what the single most effective support extended by government could be, the consensus of associations in Murrindindi Shire was a paid resource to work for them, alongside agency and government contracted personnel.

Be cognisant that associations are made up of business operators and while they play an important role in spearheading recovery they are volunteers who have their own business and personal issues to work through post disaster. Funds for the engagement of a resource for a reasonable tenure – at least three years – is a priority advocacy point.



material aid

The management of material aid extends well beyond the remit of economic development and community development practitioners – and for that matter well beyond the realms of local government.

We strongly encourage the inclusion of procurement, receipt and distribution of material aid as a feature of disaster and recovery planning – and ensure that the flag of local business is vigorously waved.

A core concern of any local business community will be the nature, timing and longevity of material aid.

Some key considerations:

- ☑ Be realistic and focus on the end game! For example, the local hardware store cannot possibly supply the amount of torch batteries in demand when electricity infrastructure has been damaged however you may be able perform effective brokerage to ensure they can competitively supply building materials.
- ☑ Be creative and make connections! For example, can local takeaway shops be engaged to supply goods for subsidised community dining activities?
- ☑ Be a problem solver! For example, personal therapies such as massages are an important health and wellbeing service. Be aware that well intentioned practitioners offering freebies may be doing so at the expense of local businesses whose customers may no longer have discretionary spending capacity. Advocate for funded voucher systems to drive patronage back to these businesses rather than supporting itinerant service providers.
- ☑ Utilise local service clubs if possible to create and manage a local voucher system with donated cash for items such as tools (shovels, rakes, axes), work wear, work boots, etc.
- ☑ Consistently drive the Buy Local message – where goods and services are available locally and the supplier has the capacity to deliver, give them every opportunity to do so.
- ☑ Think logistics and be practical. For example, managing immediate business needs such as supply of generators to retail and food premises; deployment of administration resources to assist business operators complete paperwork.

Often there is a tension between the availability of goods and services that are gratefully received by the community, and the actual or perceived impact the availability of these freebies has on local businesses.



managing pro bono support

Larger scale events generally mobilise a raft of offers for pro-bono support.

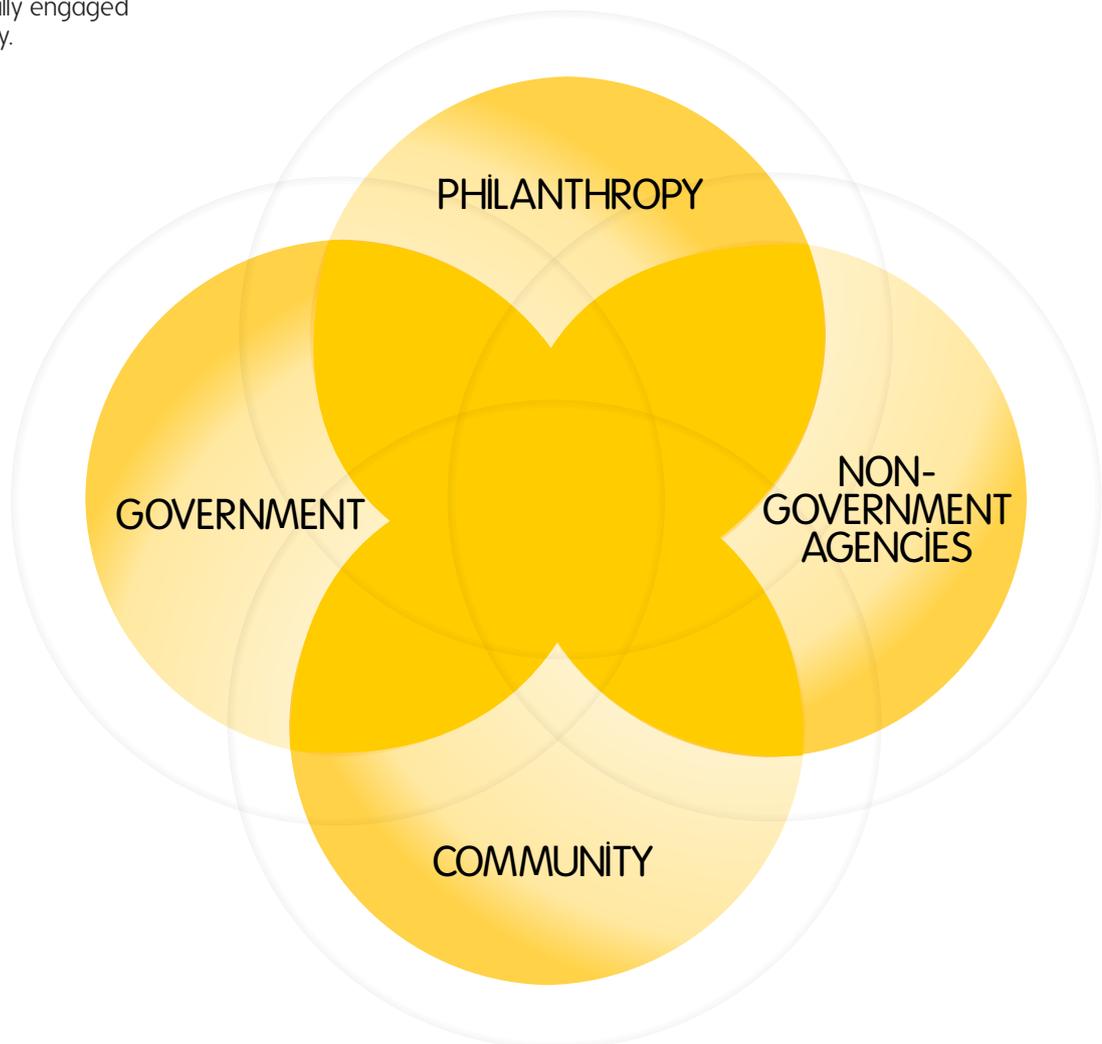
Offers must be evaluated carefully. Some may be practical in nature – for example architectural services would be immensely valuable to rebuilding commercial premises, as would strategic business planning consultancies to aid in developing recovery strategies.

However the devil is in the detail for this latter 'consultancy' category – be very clear on expectations re timelines and deliverables in the same way you would manage any commercially engaged consultancy.

It is also prudent to assess the bona fides and credentials of consultants that approach you. Adopting a position of only ASX listed entities for example provides a measure of confidence and recourse.

Engaging the philanthropic sector is important – there will be a willingness to assist but often the flag for 'business assistance' needs to be waved quite strongly.

As demonstrated below philanthropy can legitimately and effectively partner with other sectors.



back in business communication

<http://watchusgrow.com.au>

While it should be all good news, in fact pumping out 'back in business' messaging can be fraught. There won't be a singular readiness throughout your business community – be prepared for great variance - and in terms of the tourism sector, it is difficult to go to market with limited product. There are also some sensitivities of pushing the business case 'too soon' when the community may be facing significant displacement and possibly loss of life.

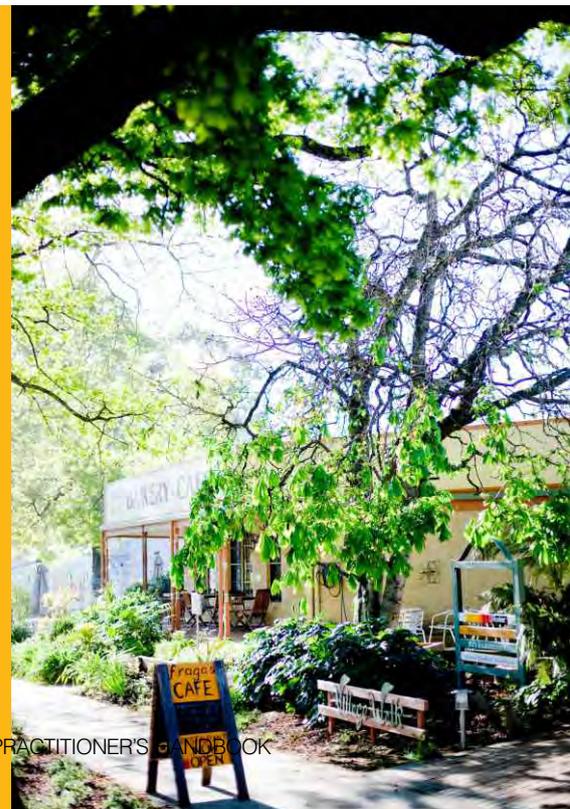
There are core 'housekeeping' concerns such as a redundant image library which can no longer be used in tourism collateral in good faith; psycho-social concerns for the welfare of coalface business operators and their staff who may be ill prepared for an influx of well intentioned patrons; and logistical challenges such as an impaired power supply limiting trading capacity in the early days.

Back in business messaging also serves an important investor attraction purpose and often regions that have experienced significant disasters struggle with their pitch. For example, in the aftermath of Victoria's 2009 Victorian bushfires and the introduction of a new regime of bushfire warning protocols there was great concern amongst the business community that the new regime was 'excessive' and discouraged both tourists and investors from known bushfire regions.

From an investment attraction perspective, this concern can be translated into a competitive advantage – for example invest in x locality because it boasts excellent business leadership, strong relationships with regulatory authorities and detailed business continuity planning in place to offset disaster impacts



Tourism Victoria "Redbook" - excellent resource



funding for business

There has been much discussion in recent years about the merits of providing funds to businesses during disaster recovery, periods of structural adjustment and economic crisis.

In a disaster recovery setting, there has been lively debate about whether donated funds can and should be directed to businesses. Notwithstanding Australian Tax Office barriers, there is a legitimate argument that funds to support business equate to funds for community prosperity.

While practitioners can join the chorus and agitate for changes in legislation, in the meantime focusing on what can be achieved in a more timely fashion is a priority

Loan and grant schemes are generally part of a suite of government responses depending on the nature of the disaster.

The practitioner's role in regard to loans and grants is to advocate re:

- ✓ Timing,
- ✓ Eligibility criteria,
- ✓ Application process (simplicity),
- ✓ Structure of scheme,
- ✓ Facilitation of loans and grants related to rebuilding.

Timing:

Remember, businesses will present at different times for support – many will not be in a position to focus on business for some time post event so 'clean up and restoration grants' need to remain available for application for some time post event.

Eligibility criteria:

While there clearly needs to be rigour around the process, there also needs to be recognition of varying impacts in terms of scale and timing. A tiered eligibility criteria reflecting varying but legitimate impacts should be a key advocacy point.

Application process:

Again there needs to be some rigour, however information capture should be streamlined. For instance, providing appropriate information management systems are in place a business case management approach would allow sharing of data amongst various support agencies and would negate the need for onerous and repetitive paperwork for the business operator.

Where possible, truncated Expressions of Interest processes should be offered with more detailed submission required after initial eligibility has been assessed – again to negate onerous paperwork.

Support to fill out forms is vital. A case management approach is useful and providing a real live person to go over forms has proved valuable and well received. On this front, staffing needs include support outside of standard business hours i.e. so tradies, retailers and hospitality workers for example can access the service.

Facilitation:

For re-establishing/investment attraction style schemes – perform a proactive role in embedding 'pre-application' discussions with Council as part of the process to ensure any showstopping regulatory issues can be worked through prior to funding.

Finally, there is also a dissemination role to distribute loan information – don't assume all businesses are connected to communication channels. Again a robust database comes into play here and sms alerts/email reminders should be considered to communicate pending closing off of grant opportunities and the like.

Funding Innovation

A suggestion was posed from a number of quarters post 2009 Victorian bushfires that a New Enterprise Incentive Scheme style support program for business was worth considering.

This would involve appropriately structured/quantum Centrelink payments geared to a supported business planning process to guide recovering businesses through re-establishment and/or diversifying in response to market change.

A program of this kind would work well not only in response to disaster but also structural adjustment caused by climate change, regulatory change and the like. This suggestion requires Federal support so keep this top of mind as an advocacy point with your local member and relevant government departments.



case study

Pandora developed a line of jewellery whereby proceeds of sales were donated to the Salvation Army to assist 2009 Victorian bushfires impacted communities. This meant that Pandora could claim a tax deduction and in turn the Salvation Army could direct funds to a number of initiatives to support small business.

One example in the Murrindindi Shire was a series of workshops for small business operators by renowned facilitator Mel Neale. These workshops were aimed at energising businesses and their staff and equipping them with high level service skills. This initiative was particularly valuable to the local hospitality industry and its pool of younger workers. In this way it fulfilled an important recovery remit of supporting small business as a critical community pillar as well as local young people.

Reflections from David Barker on his time coordinating the Salvation Army's Victorian bushfires efforts

The Salvation Army has the capacity to provide a holistic response to the needs of people in a disaster. Our focus is on families and individuals, and also community level concerns. We have experience in dealing with households suffering the social ills of unemployment. Hence, included in our response to disaster is the capacity of the household to generate income, so we recognise the critical role the local business community plays in times of crisis. Not only are local business operators community members in their own right, but their businesses provide employment, enhance the

liveability of their community and post disaster contribute to a sense of well-being when back up and running.

In the aftermath of Victoria's 2009 Victorian bushfires, our organisation formed valuable partnerships with government, business and industry groups and local business leaders to deliver targeted and highly effective assistance to the business community, which in turn supported community recovery.

We're delighted to endorse the production of this handbook as it captures some of the lessons learned and will ensure relevant, timely and proactive disaster response in support of small business.



exit planning

As difficult as it may be, investing time in identifying the 'finish line' from the outset of recovery is critical.

An aspiration initially, there will be some pressure for measurable targets that drive funding procurement, service deployment and project management as well as the somewhat less tangible areas of psycho-social management and a return to 'business as normal' (albeit this may be a new normal).

As discussed earlier, people expect things should be back to normal by the third or fourth year,

in the case of a major disaster. Remember while this may be true for some people, for others only when the worst is over can recovery from the extended stress begin. Everyone has their own timing and no one – especially those from outside a disaster area – can or should judge why recovery takes the time it does.

Meanwhile, economic recovery varies from one locality and situation to the next. Alas, the political climate and election(s) cycle demand tangible results which rarely marry with the aforementioned.

A few recovery planning tips:

- ☑ Enter into a solid agency governance arrangement from the outset. Meaning embed service coordination into recovery efforts so that case management, health and well-being issues and business confidence can be discussed, debated, measured and reported on.
- ☑ Be clear from the outset what the aspirations/objectives are. For example – is it restoration or betterment? Is it a percentage and time equation for business reestablishment? Have some targets.
- ☑ Resist quantitative data being the only measure: qualitative and anecdotal information plays an important role as well.
- ☑ Take regular 'temperature checks' but do understand there will be spikes along the way. This can be done via simple survey instruments (bearing in mind the tolerance of recovering businesses for onerous paperwork) or via case management data sharing.
- ☑ Agree to celebration intervals as a way of marking progress to date (there are many mini finish lines/milestones along the way).
- ☑ Embed capacity building into business support efforts. For instance broker partnerships that leave a legacy of ease of navigation for the local business community.



practical initiatives

So an economic recovery team has been built and a budget has been secured.... what to do with this spoil of riches?

Wouldn't that be nice!

The good news is there are some great examples of highly effective recovery initiatives which don't require a large budget or resource pool – merely some lateral thinking and strong partnerships.

Adapting = Effectiveness

The application of the Rural Skills Connect program in the Murrindindi Shire after Victoria's 2009 bushfires is a great example of adapting a working program to achieve swift and effective outcomes. Established by the state government some years before as a drought response initiative, Rural Skills Connect was essentially a

brokerage program to assist farm operators to supplement declining on farm income and replace employment for farm workers who had lost their job due to drought. A key feature of the program was documenting the skill set of participants, formal credentialing of experience and marrying participants up with suitable training and employment opportunities.

In the bushfire setting, the Murrindindi Shire local government area benefited from having a highly skilled coordinator working on the ground who was able to quickly connect with displaced workers. As an example, the loss of hospitality businesses was large however it was important to retain these workers wherever possible in the region to ensure a labour pool remained once businesses re-established. The Rural Skills Connect coordinator networked across the region to place chefs in employment thus avoiding a long term loss of skill.

Mustering collaboration

Another practical initiative during the 2009 bushfires response was a coordinating effort of the local earthmoving industry. Led by the Kinglake Ranges Business Network, the initiative stemmed from concerns local operators had expressed to the network. These concerns centred around the level of opportunity and capacity to participate in the clean up effort once a head contractor had been appointed to undertake the mammoth task of site clearing the many lost homes and business premises.

The Network swiftly responded to budding disquiet by initiating discussion with the head contractor and convening a gathering of the local industry. Issues around regulatory compliance, contracting rates, equipment specifications and the like were canvassed in detail. Local contractors were given a very clear way forward to optimise their opportunity to be engaged as part of the clean up operation. The key to this initiative was a proactive grass roots response (i.e. local business network advocating on behalf of its community rather than an agency or government led response), and capacity building of a local industry to enhance both short term opportunity and longer term capability.



Keep Australia Working

Building the Recovery Information Session and Tendering Workshop – Yea

As part of the Keep Australia Working initiative, you are invited to attend an information session for the construction industry. The information session is being hosted by ICN Victoria, the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Murrindindi Shire Council and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

The information session will be followed by a tendering workshop to give local businesses an understanding of the common requirements in tendering and how to best promote your business when tendering for work.

The information session and tendering workshop will be held at the Yea Council Chambers on 25 March from 7:30 am to 1:00 pm:

Information session: 7:30 am for an 8:00 am Start
Networking brunch: 10:00 am to 11:00 am
Tendering workshop: 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

The information session will outline:

- what opportunities and projects will be available in the area as part of the rebuilding and recovery of the community - in both the public and private sector
- how local businesses and tradespeople can find further information on these opportunities and tender for Government business, and
- what services and programs exist to support and assist local business.

You may choose to attend individual sessions or the half day. There is no cost involved, but registration is essential.

Please register at:
www.KeepAustraliaWorking.gov.au/buildingtherecovery
or by phoning Russell Murray on 02 6121 3491.

Questions? Please email us:
BuildingTheRecovery@deewr.gov.au

For more information go to KeepAustraliaWorking.gov.au/buildingtherecovery or email BuildingTheRecovery@deewr.gov.au

Building the Recovery





the finish line

The big question – how to measure success?

A good starting point is to set clear priorities and targets. These may need to be flexed/changed later.

A core challenge is often a lack of baseline data to begin with therefore it can be very difficult to measure the impact of recovery activities.

In the absence of relevant generic indicators that can be applied, think about measures that are relevant to the local setting and the event.

A few numeric measures to consider:

- ☑ Numbers of commercial planning and building approvals.
- ☑ Decisive outcomes – businesses categorically deciding whether to re-establish or exit (a decision either way is a concrete result).
- ☑ Attendance numbers at business workshops.
- ☑ Grant and loan scheme applications – note, successful applications may be a different measure.
- ☑ Number of visitors/vehicles entering the region.
- ☑ Number of accommodation beds and what standard.



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Disaster%20Resources/General_
Publications.html](http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/Disaster%20Resources/General_Publications.html)

Are You Ready; Your guide to get
down to business with your
community; published by
Municipal Association of Victoria



consultation list

Federal & State Governments

Department of Business & Innovation, Small Business, Victoria, Tourism Victoria, Queensland Government, Department of Health Services (VIC), Regional Development Victoria, Fire Recovery Unit, Municipal Association Victoria, Regional Development Victoria – Hume Region, Rural Finance Corporation, Rural Councils Victoria

Local Governments

Murweh Council, Murrindindi Shire Council, Hepburn Shire Council, Yarra Ranges Shire Council, City of Moonee Valley, Moira Shire Council

Research/Academia

Australian Emergency Management Institute, Post Trauma Victoria, Local Government Australia, South Australia Department of Employment, Economic Development & Industry (QLD), Local Government New Zealand, Griffith University, Institute of Sustainable Futures

Industry

Insurance Council of Australia, Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry VECCI, QLD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Utilities Ombudsman (VIC), Ombudsman NZ, Economic Development Australia, CPA Australia, Murrindindi Tourism and Business Associations

Non-Government Organisations

Salvation Army, Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS), Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), Rotary International (Local and Regional Districts)

Individuals

Anthony Turner & Hall – SBMS Mentors, Bruce Bayley – ex Head of Economic Recovery Unit – VBRRA, , Cris Massis – ex Chair – Marysville & Triangle Economic Development Group, David Hall – ex Manager Berry Street - Case Manager, Dr. Rob Gordon, Disaster Clinical Psychologist Edie Hester – The Training Connection (psychotherapist engaged by Council), John Joyce (ex RDV-Hume Region), Ken Slatter – Rural Financial Counsellor, Mike Delmau – ex Berry Street Case Manager, Scott Elkington – Bendigo Community Bank, Scott Jendra – Principal, Boston Consulting Group.

