



BULOKE
SHIRE COUNCIL

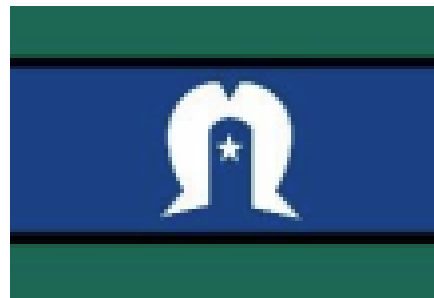
Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Buloke Shire Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee business is conducted on Aboriginal land, including the lands of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Wamba Wemba people as the traditional owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke.

The committee acknowledges and pays respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, and is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the area to achieve a shared vision of safer and more resilient communities.



This plan has been prepared by the Buloke Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) as part of an integrated approach to Emergency Management in Victoria. The plan is consistent with but does not duplicate the [State Emergency Management Plan](#) and [Loddon Mallee Regional Emergency Management Plan](#).

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1. Introduction

Foreword

Victoria faces increasing challenges from both natural and non-environmental risks. Climate change, demographic shifts, urban growth in high-risk areas, and technological advances are reshaping the state's risk profile, heightening the likelihood and impact of emergencies. This places greater demands on the emergency management sector and communities alike.

Emergencies can occur at any time, threatening lives, infrastructure, and the environment. A proactive, coordinated approach is essential to safeguarding Victoria's communities and minimizing disaster impacts.

Emergency management provides a structured framework for identifying hazards, assessing risks, and implementing strategies for prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Guided by the Emergency Management Act 2013 and its amendments, this approach fosters collaboration across government agencies, emergency services, non-government organizations, and communities.

Municipal emergency management planning supports national, state, and regional strategies by incorporating local knowledge, identifying risks, outlining local capabilities, and documenting relief and recovery strategies. This enhances community resilience and ensures a coordinated response tailored to specific needs.

Victoria's emergency management approach follows an **"all communities, all emergencies"** principle, ensuring inclusivity and adaptability to diverse community needs. Strong partnerships and continuous improvement are essential in an evolving emergency landscape.

This foreword underscores our commitment to comprehensive emergency planning in the Buloke Shire (Buloke). By working together, we can create safer, more resilient communities and a future where preparedness and cooperation are at the heart of emergency management.

Authority, assurance and approval

This Plan has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the Emergency Management Act 2013 (“Act”) and fully complies with the Guidelines for Preparing State, Regional, and Municipal Emergency Management Plans (“Guidelines”) issued under section 77 of the Act.

A Statement of Assurance, including a checklist and certificate, has been prepared and submitted to the Loddon Mallee Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee in accordance with section 60AG of the Emergency Management Act 2013. A certificate of assurance is provided in [Appendix G](#) of this Plan.

This Plan has been endorsed by the Buloke MEMPC and approved by the Loddon Mallee Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee and comes into effect when it is published on the Buloke Shire Council website. It remains in effect until it is superseded by an approved and published version.

Duplication

This plan avoids duplication by aligning with, and linking to, both the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) and the Loddon Mallee Regional Emergency Management Plan (REMP). While its format meets legislative requirements, the content is tailored to the local context. Hyperlinks are used to minimise repetition and provide access to current information, with annual reviews undertaken to ensure link functionality and relevance.

Aim

The MEMP sets out multi-agency and community arrangements for, prevention of, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies in Buloke, as per the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#) (Part 6A). It defines roles, supports collaboration, and promotes shared responsibility to reduce emergency impacts and build community resilience.

Review

This Plan must be reviewed at least once every three years in accordance with [EM Act 2013 s60AN](#), or sooner if required, to ensure it remains current, integrated, and comprehensive for emergency management within the Buloke Local Government Area (LGA).

Updates are also allowed where there is a significant risk to life or property if the Plan is not revised. In such cases, urgent updates take effect immediately upon publication on the Council website and remain in force for up to three months, as per [EM Act 2013 s60AM](#).

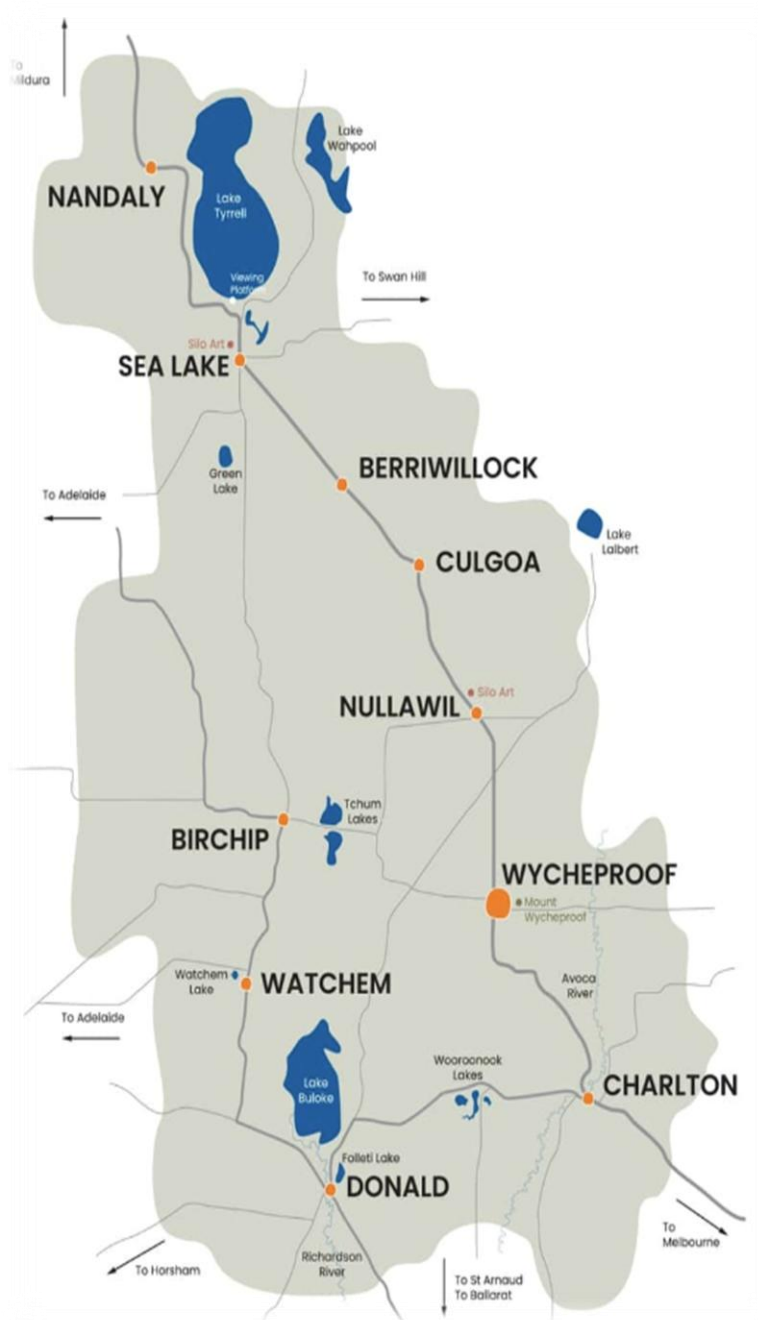
2. Buloke Shire

About Buloke

Buloke is a rural municipality located in north-western Victoria, covering approximately 8,000 square kilometers. The Shire is named after the native “Buloke” tree (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*) and is part of the traditional lands of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, and Jupagalk Peoples.

Buloke is home to a resilient and close-knit population of around 6,000 people. The municipality includes the townships of Wycheproof (home to the Shire offices), Charlton, Donald, Birchip, Sea Lake, Berriwillock, Nandaly, Nullawil, Culgoa and Watchem. The Shire’s economy is predominantly based on broadacre dryland farming, especially grain production (wheat, barley, canola) and livestock grazing. This agricultural focus shapes the Shire’s land use, infrastructure needs, seasonal workforce demands, and risk profile. Key transport routes such as the Calder and Sunraysia Highways provide vital connections for freight and travel.

Buloke features open plains, intermittent inland lakes (such as Lake Tyrrell, one of Victoria’s largest salt lakes and a popular tourism site), wetlands, and significant areas of native vegetation and conservation reserves.



History of emergencies

Over the years, Buloke has experienced a range of natural disasters and emergency events. While the municipality has a relatively small population, its geography, agricultural base, and climate variability make it vulnerable to a variety of emergency risks.

A summary of Buloke's emergency history is provided in [Appendix A](#) of this Plan.

Environment and landscape

Buloke features a predominantly flat topography and semi-arid climate, with low annual rainfall and hot, dry summers. The landscape has been extensively cleared for agriculture, yet significant natural assets and ecological systems remain, contributing to both environmental value and emergency management considerations.

Traditional owners

Buloke sits on the traditional lands of the [Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, and Jupagalk Peoples](#). These Nations are represented by the Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Dja Dja Warrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. Traditional Owners have maintained deep cultural, spiritual and ecological connections to Country for tens of thousands of years. Increasingly, they are involved in environmental stewardship, fire management, and biodiversity restoration activities in partnership with local and state authorities.

Bushland, forests, and native vegetation

Native vegetation within Buloke has been significantly cleared for agricultural purposes, although remnants persist along roadsides, creek lines, and within dedicated reserves. These areas support ecological communities such as endangered buloke woodlands, scattered mallee scrub, native grasslands, and seasonal wetlands. While fragmented, these patches of vegetation provide essential habitat for native fauna, contribute to soil health, and act as biodiversity corridors across the largely modified landscape.

Parks, reserves, and conservation areas

Buloke contains a number of ecologically and culturally significant parks and reserves. Lake Tyrrell, located near Sea Lake, is Victoria's largest Salt Lake and holds great cultural significance for Traditional Owners, as well as ecological and tourism value. Other lakes such as Lake Wooroonook, Lake Watchem, and Lake Tchum serve important recreational, environmental, and drought refuge functions. Additionally, nature reserves and landmarks such as Mount Jeffcott, Mount Wycheproof, Mount Dooboobetic, Donald Nature Conservation Reserve, and the Charlton Bushland Reserve provide valuable native vegetation and environmental education opportunities.

Waterways and wetlands

The **Avoca River** forms the southern boundary of the municipality and has a long history of flooding, with recorded events dating back to 1870. Major floods occurred in 1939 before the construction of levee banks, and in 1956, 1964, 1973, 1975, 1981, 1983, 1988, and 1995 following levee development. More recent significant events were recorded in September and November 2010, and January 2011. The township of Charlton is partly protected by a levee bank built to withstand a 5% AEP (1-in-20-year) flood event, located to the southwest of the town. Rural land between Coonooer Bridge and Ninyeunook is prone to inundation during floods. The Bureau of Meteorology provides flood forecasting for this river system.

The **Avon-Richardson River** catchment covers an area of approximately 3,300 square kilometers in central Victoria, with the river itself stretching around 25 kilometers and flowing through the township of Donald before terminating at Lake Buloke. This river system does not flow into the sea and is often landlocked due to surrounding geography. Overflow from the Wimmera River at Swedes Cutting (east of Glenorchy) can feed into the Richardson River near Bismark, with the Avon and Richardson Rivers converging at Banyena. The river system has experienced significant flooding since the early 1900s, including in 1909, 1918, 1956, 1975, 1992, and during the September and November 2010 events. The most extreme flood on record occurred in January 2011, surpassing the 1909 level by 200 millimeters. Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water provides flood forecasting and guidance for the Rich-Avon Weir. Flooding from this river system affects various lands adjacent to the river.

The **Lalbert, Tyrrell and Cooroopajerup Creek Creeks**, which form part of the Avoca River floodplain, were previously used by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water for stock and domestic water delivery. These creeks are prone to overflow during larger flood events, with impacts extending further downstream depending on flow volumes. During the 2010 and 2011 floods, both creeks contributed to flooding in the South Wycheproof and Culgoa areas to varying degrees.

Buloke, particularly the Wycheproof region, is home to several significant wetlands, including the Wycheproof Wetlands Precinct. The municipality also features Lake Buloke, Lake Tyrrell (a wetland of national significance), Wooroonook Lakes, Tchum Lake, and Green Lake.

Land use and ownership

The landscape of Buloke is dominated by agricultural land use, with approximately 94 per cent of land zoned for farming purposes. Most of this land is held as freehold by private landowners and is used for broadacre cropping and grazing. Public land comprises only a small proportion of the total area and includes road reserves, bushland and conservation reserves, lake margins, and corridors associated with public infrastructure.

The [2021 Census](#) indicated that there were approximately 2,797 dwellings in Buloke based on the 2021 data.

Important Note: This calculation is an approximation. The 2021 Census data reports on residents and dwellings, not individual homes. The estimated number of dwellings is based on the average household size.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the primary economic activity in Buloke and a defining characteristic of the municipality. The region is known for its broadacre dryland cropping, with major crops including wheat, barley, oats, lentils, chickpeas, and canola. Livestock grazing, particularly sheep for wool and meat, is also widespread, with some cattle enterprises present in the region. Agricultural production is heavily influenced by seasonal conditions and global commodity markets. In recent years, some producers have diversified into regenerative agriculture, organic systems, and niche cropping.

Events

Buloke hosts a variety of annual events including OK Motels in Charlton, the Wycheproof Cup, the Berriwillock Rodeo, the Birchip and Donald Races, and the King of the Mountain footrace on Mount Wycheproof, as well as seasonal football, netball, and hockey matches and finals that reflect its rural identity and strong community spirit.

The Esoteric Festival, held near Donald, is the largest event in the municipality. As a multi-day music and arts festival attracting thousands of attendees, it involves complex logistics and emergency management planning across multiple agencies.

Hosting major events in Buloke can present unique challenges due to the geographic isolation, limited local infrastructure, and constrained emergency management resources. Large crowds can place additional pressure on health services, emergency response capabilities, accommodation providers, telecommunications, and transport networks. At times, the MEMPC may play a key role in planning and coordinating with relevant agencies, land managers and event organisers to identify and manage associated risks, supporting community safety and event resilience.

Vulnerable persons and facilities

The Vulnerable Persons Register is a statewide database designed to identify individuals who may require assistance during emergencies. These individuals are typically receiving support from agencies and have been assessed as needing additional help in such situations.

The register can be accessed by authorised Council staff, Victoria Police and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to support emergency planning and response including potential evacuation.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing are responsible for overseeing the [Vulnerable People in Emergencies Policy](#). The Policy applies to organizations funded by DFFH to provide personal care, support and or case management services to clients.

Vulnerable facilities are buildings where vulnerable are likely to be situated or gather including, hospitals, aged care facilities, schools, disability groups homes and early learning Centres.

A register, listing facilities located in Buloke is available to authorised Council staff and Victoria Police.

Critical infrastructure

Buloke Shire contains a range of critical infrastructure essential to community functioning, including utilities, transport networks, and key service facilities. A detailed list of critical infrastructure is provided in [Appendix B](#) of this plan.

Industry and essential services

Buloke Shire's economy is primarily driven by agriculture and food processing, with key employers including Kooka's Country Cookies and other manufacturing operations based in Donald. The Shire's five major towns Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake, and Wycheproof, each support essential services including hospitals or nursing homes, which play a vital role in community wellbeing and emergency response capacity. Education services are provided through a network of government and Catholic primary schools, as well as preschools and early learning centres, which are central to community stability and recovery during emergencies.

Emergency management capability and capacity

Buloke's geographic isolation and sparse population shape the capacity and capability for emergency response through several key factors, including reliance on volunteer services, extensive travel distances, telecommunication black spots, limited resources, and strong community resilience.

This context underscores the importance of engaging proactively with the community to build preparedness and resilience. Strengthening local planning frameworks ensures emergency responses are locally informed and risk appropriate. Effective collaboration between council, emergency services, and regional partners is vital, not only for coordinating resources but also for activating resource-sharing protocols and partnering with neighbouring municipalities to scale up support when required. These approaches improve the ability to respond quickly, sustain essential services, and support long-term recovery across the Shire.

Emergency response capability in Buloke

Emergency response in Buloke is supported by multiple agencies with strategically located facilities across the Shire, though not all are staffed at all times. The table below outlines the presence of key emergency services,

Agency	Locations
Victoria Police	Stations in Birchip, Charlton, Culgoa, Donald, Wycheproof, Sea Lake (<i>not always manned</i>)
Ambulance Victoria	Sub-stations in Charlton, Donald and Sea Lake
VIC SES	Units in Birchip and Wycheproof
CFA – Buloke West Group	Birchip, Cope Cope, Corack, Corack East, Curyo, Donald, Jeffcott, Laen East, Litchfield, Reedy Dam, Warne, Watchem, Watchupga
CFA – Charlton Group	Buckrabanyule, Charlton, Glenloth East, Teddywaddy, Wooroonook, Yeungroon
CFA – Tyrrell Group	Berriwillock, Culgoa, Dumosa, Nandaly, Narraport, Nullawil, Sea Lake, Wycheproof, Wycheproof South

Council

Buloke Shire Council has dedicated emergency management staff, including a Municipal Emergency Management Officer, Municipal Recovery Officer, and Municipal Fire Prevention Officers, as required under the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#). These core roles are supported by other council staff who take on essential responsibilities across preparedness, response, relief, and recovery. While not legislated, these additional roles are critical to ensuring an effective and coordinated emergency management capability.

Responsibilities of land managers, asset owners, and critical infrastructure operators

The [State Emergency Management Plan](#) (SEMP), states that all land managers, asset owners, and infrastructure operators are responsible for emergency management activities relating to the land, assets, or services they manage. This includes councils (for council-managed land and assets), DEECA and Parks Victoria (for forests and public land), VicRoads/DoT (for transport infrastructure), and critical infrastructure providers (water, electricity, gas, and telecommunications).

Responsibilities, outlined in the SEMP Sections 3.4.3, 3.4.4 and Appendix B, include risk assessment and mitigation, preparedness planning, supporting emergency response, restoring damaged assets or services, and contributing to relief and recovery. These entities are expected to collaborate with emergency services and participate in local and regional emergency management planning. Councils are also responsible for providing resources to support response operations, where appropriate and available.

Resource support and sharing

In Victoria, response agencies and councils can access additional support during emergencies through established resource-sharing frameworks. [The Practice Note - Sourcing Supplementary Emergency Response Resources through Municipal Councils](#) provides a structured process for requesting personnel, equipment, and services when local capacity is exceeded. This is particularly valuable for rural councils like Buloke, where limited resources and geographic isolation can affect emergency response capability.

In addition, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) coordinates an [Inter-Council Emergency Management Resource Sharing Protocol](#). This voluntary agreement enables councils to share trained personnel and support functions across municipalities. It ensures timely access to specialised expertise, enhances resilience during prolonged or large-scale emergencies, and helps councils manage recovery operations more effectively.

3. Planning arrangements

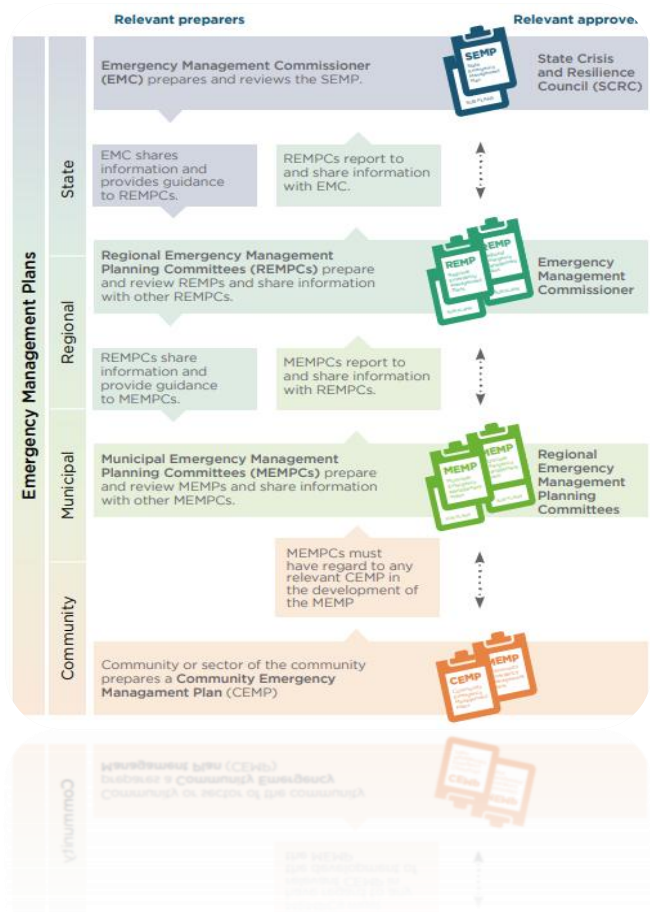
Victoria's Emergency Management Planning Framework

[Victoria's Emergency Management Planning Framework](#) establishes a structured approach across three planning tiers: state, regional, and municipal. The [State Emergency Management Plan \(SEMP\)](#) provides the overarching strategic direction, outlining policies and responsibilities for all emergencies. This is supported by hazard-specific sub-plans that detail arrangements for particular risks, such as floods or bushfires, ensuring targeted response strategies.

Regional Emergency Management Plans (REMPs) adapt state strategies to local conditions, coordinating resources and agencies across regions to align with the SEMP and hazard sub-plans. Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs) are developed by Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees to address specific community risks and capabilities, ensuring preparedness and response activities meet local needs while maintaining consistency with regional and state frameworks.

The framework's clear hierarchy prevents duplication or conflict between plans, with the SEMP and hazard sub-plans guiding regional and municipal planning. This unified approach promotes collaboration, efficient resource sharing, defined roles, and enhances community safety.

This plan supports holistic and coordinated management arrangements within the municipality and is consistent with and contextualises the SEMP and [Loddon Mallee Region Emergency Management Plan](#).



Victorian Preparedness Framework

The [Victorian Preparedness Framework](#) (VPF) is a strategic planning tool developed by Emergency Management Victoria to enhance the state's ability to manage emergencies effectively. It outlines 21 core capabilities—such as planning, community information, health response, and recovery—that are essential for mitigating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. Each capability is supported by specific critical tasks and assessed against plausible risk scenarios to identify capability gaps and inform resource allocation.



The VPF is particularly valuable for regional areas like Buloke, providing a common language and structure for assessing local emergency management capacity. It supports collaboration across agencies and municipalities, ensuring that preparedness efforts are coordinated and aligned with statewide priorities.

Emergency management planning framework

Emergency management in Victoria is guided by a tiered planning framework, with the [State Emergency Management Plan \(SEMP\)](#) providing overarching policy direction and coordination arrangements. Prepared by the Emergency Management Commissioner, the SEMP outlines how the state prevents, prepares for, responds to, and recovers from emergencies through clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and governance structures. It emphasises shared responsibility highlighting that individuals, communities, government, and non-government agencies all play a role—and ensures effective escalation, where local efforts are supported by regional and state resources as needed.

The SEMP defines agency responsibilities across the four key pillars of emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (PPRR). These are categorised in the table below.

Role Type	Description	Examples
Control Agencies	Lead specific types of emergency responses.	CFA (fires), VICSES (floods and storms)
Support Agencies	Provide functional assistance to control agencies during emergencies.	VicRoads (traffic management), DH (public health)
Recovery Coordinators and Agencies	Manage short- and long-term recovery, including psychosocial support, housing, infrastructure, and economic recovery.	Emergency Recovery Victoria, local councils

This structure promotes coordination, avoids duplication, and ensures clarity and efficiency across emergency management activities.

At a regional level, Buloke Shire is part of the Loddon Mallee Region, one of Victoria's eight emergency management regions. The [Loddon Mallee Region Emergency Management Plan](#), developed by the Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee, aligns with the SEMP and provides region-specific risk context and operational detail.

At the local level, this Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) sets out multi-agency arrangements for the prevention of, response to, and recovery from emergencies within Buloke. It is prepared in accordance with the [Guidelines for Preparing Emergency Management Plans](#) and is aligned with both state and regional frameworks to ensure consistency and integration across all levels of emergency planning.

Sub-plans and complementary plans

Sub-plans are developed to manage risks that require a coordinated, multi-agency response and are not the responsibility of a single control agency. At the municipal level, the Emergency Management Planning Committee may develop sub-plans to address specific local risks or emergency events involving multiple agencies.

In line with current legislation, Municipal Emergency Management Sub-Plans must be developed using the same collaborative, multi-agency approach as the main Municipal Emergency Management Plan. They are subject to the same consultation, approval, review, and assurance processes and must be published on the Emergency Management Victoria website.

This Plan includes sub-plans for fire management and flood and storm with a full list provided in [Appendix C](#). Existing sub-plans remain in effect until reviewed and updated to comply with new legislative requirements and assurance processes.

In addition, complementary plans are developed by specific industries or agencies under separate legislative or governance frameworks. These plans do not fall under Part 6A of the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#) and are not subject to the same approval or consultation processes as sub-plans. However, they may support coordinated emergency management in Buloke. A list of relevant complementary plans is included in [Appendix C](#).

Other plans

Control agencies also maintain internal operational plans and procedures, which may be used during emergency responses in Buloke. Additionally, state-level documents such as the [Victorian Emergency Operations Handbook](#), [Joint Standard Operating Procedures](#), and [Emergency Management Team Arrangements](#) provide overarching guidance for incident management.

Community Emergency Management Plans may also be developed in partnership with local communities to support grassroots preparedness and resilience. Under the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#), these plans aim to capture local knowledge and build community-led capacity to manage emergencies, complementing formal municipal and agency arrangements.

Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee

The Buloke Shire Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) is responsible for developing and maintaining the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP), which outlines how emergencies will be prevented, prepared for, responded to, and recovered from across the municipality. The Committee operates in accordance with the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#), with governance arrangements detailed in its Terms of Reference.

While the MEMPC is responsible for local emergency management planning, it does not manage emergencies directly, this is the role of designated Control Agencies, supported by partner agencies. Emergency management in Buloke is built on strong multi-agency collaboration, with emergency services, Council, and recovery organisations working together through a comprehensive, risk-based approach.

This collaborative model is supported by:

- Regular risk assessments, training, and exercises
- Agreed activation triggers
- Ongoing stakeholder and community engagement
- A strong culture of shared responsibility

Committee membership

The MEMPC is established under Section 59A of the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#), which sets out minimum membership requirements. The Committee includes representatives from core emergency management agencies and has invited additional members with specialised expertise, local knowledge, or community representation to strengthen planning and coordination.

Membership includes representatives from:

- Buloke Shire Council
- Victoria Police (VicPol)
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Ambulance Victoria (AV)
- Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES)
- Department of Health (DH)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
- Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV)
- Australian Red Cross (ARC)
- Community representatives
- Other relevant agencies and organisations as required.

The Committee also welcomes representatives with specific local responsibilities in emergency management and recovery.

The MEMPC does not hold a budget or financial delegation. Buloke Shire Council facilitates meetings and provides limited secretariat support to ensure the effective operation of the Committee.

The Committee's Terms of Reference are available on request.

Sub-committees and working groups

To support the work of the MEMPC, sub-committees or working groups may be established to explore specific issues in more detail, or to assist in the review and updating of the MEMP or its sub-plans.

These groups may include MEMPC members, as well as community representatives or agencies with relevant expertise, influence, or local interest in the topic area.

Sub-committees and working groups are required to report back to the MEMPC on their progress and the outcomes of their work. They may provide recommendations for consideration but cannot make decisions or endorse actions on behalf of the MEMPC.

4. Identifying and assessing risk

Introduction

Understanding the types, likelihood, and consequences of emergency risks that Victoria faces is crucial to determining Victoria's preparedness, including the identification of core capability requirements for the sector and community.

A key component of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) is the identification and assessment of risks that may impact the municipality. This process involves understanding the hazards that are most likely to occur, their potential consequences, and the likelihood of these events affecting people, the environment, infrastructure, and the economy. Through collaboration the Buloke Shire MEMPC can prioritise risks and ensure appropriate mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery arrangements are in place. This risk-based approach supports effective planning and builds community resilience to emergencies.

Systemic risk

Systemic risk is a multifaceted concept encompassing hazard, exposure, vulnerability, and resilience. It's about understanding how interconnected risks across different communities, systems, and networks can lead to cascading effects and potentially devastating outcomes for society.

The MEMPC routinely identifies, assesses, and reviews current and emerging risks using the CERA process. When a risk is deemed complex or significant, a specific sub-plan is developed to detail the control measures needed to manage it effectively. In addition to this, the MEMPC maintains a local risk register to support agencies and the community in planning targeted mitigation activities beyond those covered by the broader CERA framework.

Community emergency risk assessment process

The [Community Emergency Risk Assessment \(CERA\)](#) is an all-hazards risk assessment tool aligned with [ISO 31000](#) Risk Management standards. Facilitated by VICSES Emergency Management Officers, the CERA process supports Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees (MEMPCs) to identify, understand, and prioritise risks relevant to their communities.

CERA helps:

- Identify hazards posing the most significant threat
- Understand community exposure and vulnerability
- Assess consequences, likelihoods, and impacts
- Highlight gaps in mitigation measures and opportunities for improvement
- Inform emergency management planning through collaborative analysis

The process includes facilitated discussions and is supported by **CERA Online**, which generates exportable risk profiles and heat maps for inclusion in emergency management plans. While risks are considered at a municipal scale, CERA also helps identify areas and assets within the community that may be more vulnerable.



Buloke, community emergency risk assessment outcomes

The list below outlines the outcomes of the Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) process for Buloke Shire, highlighting those hazards with a **residual risk rating of High or Extreme**. It identifies key emergency risks to the community, their potential impacts, and areas requiring attention to support effective emergency planning and preparedness.

Region	Municipality	Hazard category	Emergency hazard	Rating confidence	Residual Risk Rating	Date reviewed
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Transport	Transport accident- discontinued, use specific transport risk	High	High	2017-10-03
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Natural Disasters	Flood	Medium	High	2019-08-06
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Biological	Outbreak- discontinued, update to specific outbreak risk	Medium	High	2020-02-25
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Technical	Urban Fire- discontinued- use specific structure fire risk	High	High	2018-11-13
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Transport	Transport Incident- Road	High	High	2017-10-03
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Natural Disasters	Flood	Medium	High	2019-08-06
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Biological	Human disease (pandemic)	High	High	2028-05-13
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Biological	Emergency Plant Pest	Medium	High	2020-02-25
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Technical	Fire- Structural/ Residential fire	High	High	2018-11-13
Loddon Mallee (North West)	Buloke Shire	Human-caused	Mass gathering events	Medium	High	2027-10-07

Hazard specific risk registers

The Buloke Shire MEMPC has developed hazard-specific sub-plans to address key emergency risks within the municipality. A list of these sub-plans is provided in [Appendix C](#) of this Plan.

Flood and storm

Although there is no standalone flood and storm risk register, the [Buloke Flood Emergency Plan](#) outlines local flood and storm risks, including flood history, behavior, and high-risk areas. This is supported by [SES Local Flood Guides](#) for specific townships, providing practical preparedness advice tailored to local communities. Tools such as the North Central Catchment Management Authority's [FloodEye](#) platform further enhance flood preparedness through real-time mapping and intelligence.

Some areas within Buloke remain unmapped or lack flood modelling, so regular updates to the plan and guides are essential to incorporate new data and maintain accuracy.

Fire

The [Victorian Fire Risk Register - Bushfire \(VFRR-B\)](#) identifies and assesses bushfire risk to key assets across Buloke, including residential areas, critical infrastructure, and culturally significant sites. The process involves collaboration between local government, fire services, land managers, utilities, and community representatives, and records existing treatments such as fuel reduction and community education.

The [Bushfire At-Risk Register \(BARR\)](#), maintained by the Department of Education, identifies educational facilities at highest bushfire risk. As of the latest update, no schools, kindergartens, or childcare services in Buloke are listed on the BARR.

5. Mitigation

Introduction

Emergency mitigation is a critical component of emergency management, as outlined in the [State Emergency Management Plan](#) and the [Victorian Preparedness Framework](#). It involves taking proactive steps to eliminate or reduce the likelihood and consequences of emergencies before they occur.

Mitigation focuses on reducing risk through informed planning, infrastructure improvements, land use controls, and community education. It also supports resilience by ensuring individuals, communities, and agencies understand their risks and can take practical actions to reduce potential impacts.

Roles and responsibilities - Mitigation

Mitigation of emergency risks across Victoria involves a coordinated effort by multiple agencies, each with specific responsibilities outlined in [Table 8 of the State Emergency Management Plan](#). For risks rated as “high” within Buloke, relevant mitigation activities are identified and addressed through targeted strategies and collaborative planning.

Agencies with roles under the SEMP share a collective responsibility to prevent emergencies where possible and to reduce their potential impacts. At the local level, the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) contributes by identifying hazard-prone areas, promoting integrated risk reduction initiatives, and monitoring the implementation of agreed mitigation actions to ensure community safety and resilience.

Enhanced community resilience and education

In Buloke, agencies, organisations, and Council collaborate to enhance community resilience through targeted education and engagement activities. These joint efforts aim to raise public awareness, strengthen preparedness, and empower residents to actively participate in managing emergency risks as,

- Providing support for communities to develop and maintain Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs) that address local priorities and vulnerabilities
- Promotion of the “First 72 Hours” initiative, encouraging households to prepare for self-sufficiency immediately after an emergency
- Educational programs and awareness campaigns covering bushfire safety, flood readiness, storm response, and other emergency topics, delivered in partnership with agencies such as CFA and VICSES
- Tailored support and resources for individuals and communities more vulnerable to emergencies, ensuring inclusive preparedness
- Use of social media platforms to raise emergency awareness, disseminate timely information, and engage effectively with the community
- Encouragement to use trusted information channels like the VicEmergency app for accurate, real-time updates during emergencies



6. Response

Introduction

The [State Emergency Management Plan](#) defines Emergency Response as the actions taken during and in the first period after an emergency to reduce the effects and consequences of the emergency on people, their livelihoods, wellbeing and property; on the environment; and to meet basic human needs.

The SEMP recognises that effective emergency management requires a seamless integration of readiness and relief within the response phase. While the primary focus of response is to protect life, property and the environment, the SEMP acknowledges that successful outcomes depend on pre-established readiness measures and the timely delivery of relief.

The SEMP outlines that readiness, response, and relief are interconnected and often occur simultaneously during an emergency.

Readiness

Readiness increases the ability for timely response with activities immediately before and in anticipation of a potential or actual emergency. Command, control and coordination arrangements must be in place to ensure readiness:

- for major emergencies irrespective of whether a specific emergency is anticipated, occurring or has occurred
- if a major emergency is anticipated (such as a weather forecast that indicates the possibility of a flood)
- if a minor emergency could potentially escalate into a major emergency.

The Victorian Preparedness Framework is the primary planning tool guiding emergency management in Victoria. It identifies five core capability elements—people, resources, governance, systems, and processes—and 21 core capabilities that support activities across all phases of emergency management.

At the local level, preparedness involves proactive planning and coordination by agencies and stakeholders to address identified hazards, such as the High Risk Weather Season.

This includes:

- Coordinated pre-season briefings and reviews of joint-agency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Integrated training and exercises to support seamless transition from readiness to response and recovery
- Emergency Management Awareness and Emergency Management Liaison Officer (EMLO) training for local government and EM stakeholders
- Traffic and Evacuation Management training for local police
- Development of agency readiness and response arrangements
- Local planning to enhance cross-agency support
- Inter-agency and organisational training and education sessions

These activities are complemented by ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships between local agencies, neighbouring municipalities, and regional emergency and support organisations, ensuring a collaborative and well-prepared approach to emergency management.

Regional emergency management team briefings (REMT)

The Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT) in the Loddon Mallee region conducts regular briefings to support situational awareness, coordination, and preparedness across agencies. These briefings are generally held monthly throughout the High Risk Weather Season but may occur more frequently in anticipation of significant weather events or during ongoing emergency response operations.

Participants are provided with up-to-date information on weather forecasts and the current emergency management situation, allowing for shared awareness and informed decision-making. The briefings enable agencies to align priorities, plan resources, and ensure a consistent regional approach to emergency management.

Response

Response is the action taken during and in the first period after an emergency to reduce the effects and consequences of the emergency on people, their livelihoods, wellbeing and property; on the environment; and to meet basic human needs.

The purpose of command, control and coordination arrangements in the response phase is to ensure sufficient resources are deployed, coordinated and responding to an emergency, and that consequences are being managed.

Operational tiers

In Victoria, the response to emergencies operates at three tiers - Incident, Regional & State. Emergencies are managed at the appropriate operational tier, typically commencing at the incident level and escalating as required, depending on the development or scale of the situation. Conversely, as the emergency is brought under control, management is deescalated to a lower operational tier in line with the reduced complexity or severity.

Classification of emergencies

Emergencies in Victoria are classified under the **State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)** to support consistent response coordination, escalation, and resource allocation. These classifications help determine the scale, complexity, and potential consequences of an emergency, guiding appropriate levels of control, support, and governance.

Classifications consider factors such as:

- The severity and spread of the incident
- The level of multi-agency involvement required
- The impact on communities, critical infrastructure, and the environment
- The need for regional or state-level coordination and support

A summary of emergency classifications, including descriptions and key characteristics, is provided in the table below.

Emergency Classification	Description	Characteristics
Non-Major Emergency	A single incident or small-scale impact emergency that can be resolved locally.	
Level One Emergency	A small-scale emergency that can be resolved through local or initial response resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Less than 24 hours duration – Response limited to the incident area – Little to no potential for escalation
Level Two Emergency	Medium scale emergency requiring resources beyond the initial response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Response duration over 24 hours – One or more incident areas – Multiple hazards involved – Potential for escalation
Level Three Emergency	A large-scale emergency with high complexity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Response duration over multiple days – Multiple incident areas – State or Commonwealth significance likely

Command, control and coordination

The traditional emergency and incident management mechanisms of Command, Control and Coordination have been supplemented by the addition of Consequences, Communication and Community Connection. The combination of the ‘six Cs’ is an inclusive and community focused approach led by Emergency Management Victoria with the aim of building safer and more resilient communities.

Term	Definition
Control	The overall direction of response activities in an emergency, operating horizontally across agencies. Control remains the responsibility of the designated control agency, which appoints an Incident Controller.
Command	The direction of personnel and resources within a single agency in performing that agency’s specific roles and tasks. Command operates vertically within the organisation.
Coordination	The bringing together of agencies and resources to support the response to and recovery from emergencies.
Consequences	The management of the effects of emergencies on individuals, communities, infrastructure, and the environment.
Communication	The provision and exchange of timely, accurate, and accessible information across agencies and with the community before, during, and after emergencies.
Community Connection	Understanding and connecting with trusted networks, leaders, and diverse communities to support resilience, inclusion, and informed decision-making.

Roles and responsibilities – Response

The [State Emergency Management Plan](#) (SEMP) outlines the roles and responsibilities of agencies involved in the response to emergencies in Victoria. Each agency with a response role is assigned responsibilities based on their legislated authority, expertise, and capacity to provide support. This includes control agencies, support agencies, emergency services, and departments with specific functional responsibilities.

The SEMP also identifies responsibilities for public information, evacuation management, coordination of resources, and emergency relief during response operations. These arrangements ensure a unified, scalable approach to managing emergencies across all tiers.

Municipal emergency management roles

At the municipal level, response arrangements align with state structures, with key roles legislated under the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#). Victoria Police appoints a Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC) in each district to lead coordination across emergency services, Council, and other agencies.

Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator

Appointed by Victoria Police, the MERC is responsible for:

- Coordinating emergency response activities at the municipal level across all agencies.
- Supporting the Incident Controller by facilitating inter-agency cooperation.
- Ensuring appropriate activation and escalation of response arrangements.
- Liaising with the MEMO, MRM, and Control Agency to ensure integrated support for affected communities.

Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO)

The MEMO is a council-appointed role responsible for:

- Coordinating council's emergency management functions related to response.
- Supporting the MERC and Incident Controller by facilitating the provision of local council resources and logistics.
- Ensuring council obligations under the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) are met.
- Maintaining local emergency management arrangements, contact lists, and resource registers.

Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM)

The MRM is responsible for planning and coordinating recovery activities at the local level, but their involvement often begins during the response phase. Key responsibilities include:

- Supporting relief coordination and participating in response planning where recovery considerations are required early.
- Coordinating the transition from response to recovery in collaboration with the Control Agency and MERC.
- Liaising with Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV), community organisations, and recovery agencies.
- Providing advice on community impacts and emerging recovery needs.

Municipal emergency response arrangements

The majority of incidents that occur within Buloke are classified as Level 1 incidents. These are typically straightforward, localised events where the response is considered routine and managed as part of the control agency's standard operations without the need for regional or state level intervention.

In situations where an incident escalates or is more complex, the [State Emergency Management Plan](#) provides clear procedures for the escalation and de-escalation of control, command, and coordination, including guidance for requesting additional resources from outside the local area.

The response objective of this Municipal Emergency Management Plan is to protect life, property, and the environment during emergencies in Buloke by ensuring the coordinated and timely deployment of resources and services. It seeks to support control agencies such as CFA, VICSES, and Victoria Police through the provision of local knowledge and logistics, while also maintaining essential community services and infrastructure. Additionally, it focuses on delivering relief and accurate information to affected communities and promoting effective communication and situational awareness among all responding organisations and the broader community.

Incident emergency management team (IEMT)

An Incident Emergency Management Team (IEMT) is established to support the management of emergency response at the incident level. The IEMT operates under the control of the Incident Controller and comprises representatives from key agencies and organisations involved in the response.

The purpose of the IEMT is to:

- Provide coordinated input to support the Incident Controller's decision-making.
- Share situational awareness across all agencies.
- Coordinate operational planning and resource allocation.
- Ensure effective communication and collaboration between all agencies at the scene.
- Support the transition between response and relief or recovery.

IEMTs may vary in size and composition depending on the nature, scale, and complexity of the emergency. Membership typically includes representatives from control, support, and relief agencies operating at the incident level. Where appropriate, local government may also participate in the IEMT to support coordination of relief and recovery efforts and to provide council-owned or managed resources in support of response operations.

Incident control, coordination and facilities

Agency incident control

A control point is a location in the field where the Incident Controller may operate, typically during the early stages of an emergency or for smaller-scale incidents. If the emergency escalates in size or complexity, an Incident Control Centre (ICC) or/and Regional Control Centre (RCC) will be established to enable enhanced technical support, planning capability, and resource coordination.

Information regarding Incident Control Centres (ICC), Regional Control Centres (RCC), and the State Control Centre (SCC) is outlined in the [State Emergency Management Plan](#) and supporting [SEMP sub-plans](#), as established under the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#)

Municipal emergency control center (MECC)

Under the [Emergency Management Act 2013](#), councils are not legislatively required to establish a Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) during an emergency; however, they may choose to do so where appropriate.

The MECC is a council-managed coordination hub that facilitates the deployment of municipal resources and supports the delivery of both emergency response and essential council services during and after an emergency. Its functions include maintaining situational awareness, coordinating council's operational response, supporting relief and recovery operations.

The MECC may be activated at the direction of the MEMO, MRM or MERC. Administrative and operational support is provided by council staff, with councils responsible for identifying, training, and exercising a surge workforce to maintain operational readiness.

The primary MECC location for Buloke is the Wycheproof Council Office Supper Room, with secondary MECC sites able to be established at Charlton, Donald, or Birchip council offices as needed. If these locations are unavailable, councils may seek support from neighbouring municipalities to host remote or shared MECC operations.

Operating systems

[Crisisworks](#) is an emergency incident operating system used by Council to manage a range of operations prior to during and following emergencies and disasters. It may also be used by control and support agencies during emergencies to communicate and manage resource requirements and allocation. Additionally, it incorporates Secondary Impact Assessments, recovery case management, Vulnerable Persons Registers, Fire Prevention Register and community view.

[EM-COP](#) (Emergency Management – Common Operating Picture) is Victoria's primary emergency information and collaboration platform. It supports decision-making and coordination before, during, and after emergencies by enabling real-time information sharing, situational awareness, mapping, and planning across all levels of emergency management. MEMPC representative can use EM-COP to monitor incidents, share intelligence, and support local planning and response efforts.

Community information and warnings

Victoria has a state-wide approach to emergency information and warnings to ensure communities receive consistent and reliable messaging during emergencies.

Emergency information and warnings in Victoria are coordinated by the control agency and issued through the [VicEmergency](#) platform to provide timely, accurate, and consistent public communication. The platform provides a centralized hub for accessing emergency information, warnings, and preparedness/recovery resources.

Support agencies and organisations represented on the MEMPC, are encouraged to share emergency warnings issued by the control agency without alteration to maintain a single, trusted source of truth. This supports consistent messaging, helps reach communities who may miss official warnings, and aligns with responsibilities under the SEMP.

Evacuation

In Victoria, emergency evacuation is a planned and coordinated process led by the control agency, in accordance with [JSOP 3.12 – Planned Evacuation for Major Emergencies](#). Once the control agency has made the decision to recommend or direct an evacuation, Victoria Police is responsible for coordinating and implementing the withdrawal of affected communities.

Evacuation involves the movement of people from areas of actual or potential danger to safer locations and may include shelter-in-place, partial, or full evacuation strategies. The evacuation process consists of five phases: decision, warning, withdrawal, shelter, and return.

Councils and relevant support agencies assist by establishing and managing emergency relief centres, providing transport and logistical support, and disseminating community information, as outlined in the SEMP and applicable sub-plans.

Cost responsibility in response support

Control agencies are responsible for all costs involved in that agency responding to an emergency. When a Control Agency requests services and supplies on behalf of several supporting agencies, the Control Agency will be responsible for the costs. The provision of a support agency resources may be subject to limits and / or constraints, (e.g. the use of some equipment may be limited to a timeframe due to the expense of operation). Such limits and / or constraints should be reasonable and commensurate to the agencies capacity to provide such resources. Cost and payment should be raised with the requesting agency at the earliest possible time.

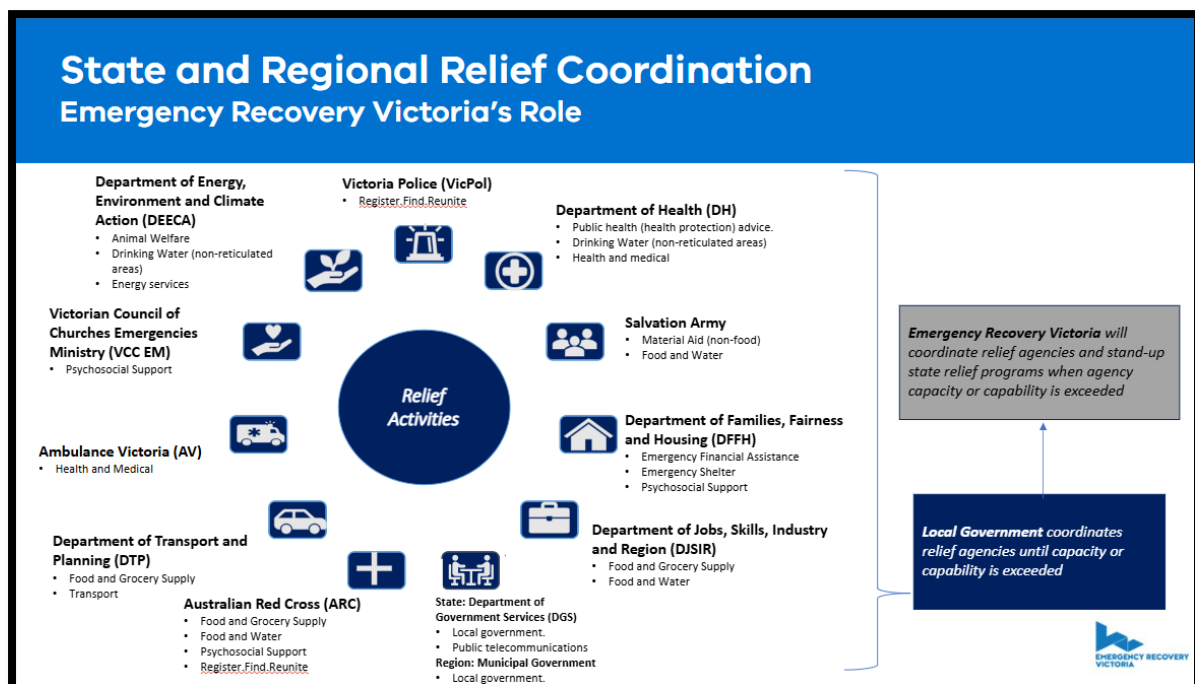
7. Relief

Emergency relief involves the provision of essential needs to individuals, families, and communities in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. The type and extent of relief required depend on the nature, location, and impacts of the incident, and are guided by a needs assessment.

Relief may include community information, emergency shelter, psychosocial support, material aid, food relief, first aid, financial assistance, animal welfare, and legal support. It can be delivered through Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs), outreach programs, virtual services, or other community locations. ERCs also assist with triaging individuals for emergency accommodation when required.

Relief arrangements in Victoria are outlined in the [State Emergency Management Plan](#). At the state and regional levels, Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) leads coordination, supported by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). At the municipal level, councils are responsible for coordinating local relief, working in partnership with the Control Agency, Incident Controller, Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC), Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO), and Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM).

Support agencies include the [Australian Red Cross](#), [Salvation Army](#), [Foodbank Victoria](#), and [Victorian Council of Churches Emergency Ministry \(VCC EM\)](#). Relief coordination may scale with the complexity of the incident, involving ERV as needed.



Emergency Relief Centres

Suitable facilities have been identified throughout the Shire, with five primary and five secondary Emergency Relief Centre (ERC) locations nominated. This list, provided in [Appendix D](#), is flexible; additional ERCs may be established at other locations if necessary.

Councils are responsible for establishing and managing Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs). The decision to activate an ERC is made by the Council, typically in consultation with the Control Agency and the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC), depending on the nature and scale of the emergency

Once an ERC is established, agencies responsible for relief under the SEMP will provide representatives as needed. Relief agencies should be prepared to staff multiple ERCs over extended periods, with appropriately trained surge personnel.

The Incident Controller will issue public information regarding ERC locations as they become operational, which will be disseminated via [VicEmergency](#) and emergency broadcasters. Incident Controllers and Public Information Units must ensure ERC details are kept accurate and up to date.

Victoria Police, supported by the Australian Red Cross, are responsible for coordinating the [Register, Find, Reunite \(RFR\)](#) service to assist displaced individuals and families.

While it is not a legislative requirement for Victoria Police to be stationed at an ERC, it is considered best practice to have a presence where possible to support coordination and safety.

Inclusive and coordinated emergency relief

Emergency relief must consider the wide range of needs across affected populations, including children and young people, elderly individuals, people with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people experiencing homelessness, those with mental health challenges, chronic illnesses or medical needs, pregnant and new mothers, the LGBTIQ+ community, low socioeconomic groups, people with pets or animals, and those experiencing gender-based and family violence.

Recognising this diversity, councils are committed to delivering tailored support and accessible information to mitigate harm and meet unique needs during emergencies. This includes integrating family violence prevention efforts in relief settings, as highlighted in frameworks such as the Victorian [Family Violence Framework for Emergency Management](#) and the [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032](#).

Emergency relief efforts should draw on key capacities, such as community networks and leaders, volunteers and organisations, and technology and communication tools, to enhance responsiveness and coordination across all levels of government and sectors.

Transition to recovery

Although recovery activities commence concurrently with response and relief, the formal transition to recovery should be timely, coordinated, and based on the evolving needs of the community. While relief addresses immediate needs, recovery focuses on restoring and enhancing the social, built, economic, and natural environments. Planning for recovery should begin early in the relief phase to ensure a smooth handover and continuity of support.

During the response phase, a transition plan to recovery will be developed. The Agency Controller, in collaboration with the MRM, leads this process. Once the MRM, control agency and relevant partners agree that the response is complete and the transition plan is in place, the Incident Controller will notify all agencies of the handover to the MRM.

8. Recovery

Introduction

Recovery is the coordinated process of helping individuals and communities restore wellbeing, adapt to changed circumstances, and build long-term resilience after an emergency. It extends beyond returning to pre-emergency conditions and recognises that recovery may take years or remain incomplete for some individuals.

In Buloke, recovery is shaped by the [National Principles for Disaster Recovery](#) and guided by the [State Emergency Management Plan \(SEMP\)](#). Local recovery efforts will be tailored to community needs and capacities, with a strong focus on collaboration, shared responsibility, and community leadership.

Recovery principals and priorities

Recovery in Victoria aligns with the [National Principles for Disaster Recovery](#) which underpin the planning, coordination, and delivery of services. These principles ensure recovery:

- **Understands the context** – Acknowledges the unique characteristics of each community.
- **Recognises complexity** – Responds flexibly to dynamic and evolving situations.
- **Uses community-led approaches** – Empowers local people and supports community-driven recovery.
- **Coordinates all activities** – Integrates efforts across all levels of government, agencies, and partners.
- **Communicates effectively** – Maintains transparent, timely, and two-way communication.
- **Recognises and builds capacity** – Strengthens individual, organisational, and community capabilities.

Recovery is not a linear process or bound to a fixed timeframe. The [Victorian Government's Recovery Outcomes Framework](#) guides delivery across key domains.

Additionally, the [Victorian Government Strategy for Aboriginal Community-led Recovery](#) provides culturally safe guidance to embed Aboriginal leadership, values, and healing practices in recovery. Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) supports this approach through its coordination framework.

Recovery environments

Recovery planning and delivery operate across five recovery environments, which provide a framework for aligning responsibilities, services, and outcomes:

1. **Social environment** – Supporting health, wellbeing, shelter, safety, and psychosocial recovery. [SEMP Table 15 – Social environment](#)
2. **Aboriginal culture and healing environment** - Ensures the voices of Aboriginal Victorians are represented in recovery decision-making and that recovery efforts are culturally safe and appropriate. [Aboriginal community led recovery](#)
3. **Economic environment** – Assisting business recovery, economic renewal, and primary producers. [SEMP Table 16 – Economic environment](#)
4. **Built environment** – Restoring critical infrastructure, housing, utilities, and essential services. [SEMP Table 17 – Built environment](#)
5. **Natural environment** – Rehabilitating natural assets, cultural heritage, and environmental health. [SEMP Table 18 – Natural environment](#)

Recovery must also be inclusive, culturally appropriate, and accessible to all members of the community, including Traditional Owners and vulnerable groups. It involves coordination between local government, state agencies, non-government organisations, businesses, volunteer groups, and private providers.

Roles and responsibilities – Recovery

Recovery in Victoria follows a coordinated, community-led approach guided by the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP). [Recovery roles and responsibilities](#) are structured across the social, economic, built, and natural environments, with Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) coordinating efforts at the regional and state levels.

At the municipal level, the Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM) leads local recovery efforts, coordinating planning and delivery. When local capacity is exceeded, recovery activities may be escalated to involve state or regional support, while retaining local leadership wherever possible.

Impact assessments

Effective recovery starts with early planning and is informed by reliable data on the scale and nature of impacts.

Initial impact assessment (IIA)

Initial Impact Assessments are conducted by the Control Agency within 24–48 hours of safe access. These rapid assessments:

- Identify immediate damage to people, property, infrastructure, and the environment.
- Guide early relief and short-term recovery decisions.
- Are based on visual inspections, agency input, and community reports.

Findings are shared with councils and relevant stakeholders to support prioritisation and planning. They also inform the need for more detailed secondary assessments.

Secondary impact assessment (SIA)

Secondary Impact Assessments are more detailed evaluations conducted ideally within four weeks of the emergency. Councils lead this process as the Recovery Coordinator, supported by:

- Emergency management staff
- Building and environmental health officers
- Planning staff
- Partner agencies such as the Australian Red Cross (ARC) and Victorian Council of Churches Emergency Ministry (VCCEM)

SIA data is recorded by councils and shared (with consent) to support targeted recovery actions—including, but not limited to, applications for Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), emergency accommodation, counselling, financial assistance, infrastructure repairs, and advocacy efforts.

Community led recovery and role of recovery committees

Effective recovery is grounded in local knowledge and leadership. It should be flexible and responsive to the community's evolving needs. Non-government organisations, community groups, faith-based organisations, and businesses all play critical roles in this process.

When the scale or complexity of recovery warrants more formal coordination, a Community Recovery Committee may be established when recovery is complex, helping coordinate agencies and ensure actions reflect community values and priorities.

A Community Recovery Committee may include,

- Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM) and deputies
- Local councillors (particularly from affected wards)
- Relevant government agencies
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations or community health services
- Impacted residents or community leaders
- Local social and community groups (e.g. neighbourhood houses, sports clubs, interfaith networks)
- The Control Agency, particularly in early recovery phases

This collaborative structure promotes inclusive, well-informed recovery that builds on community strengths.

Recovery funding arrangements

[Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements](#) (DRFA) are joint federal-state arrangements that provide financial assistance to help communities recover from eligible natural disasters or terrorist acts. In Victoria, the DRFA is managed by the Department of Transport and Planning and is designed to ease the financial burden on individuals, local councils, businesses, and community organisations following significant emergencies.

Once an event is declared eligible, a range of support measures may be activated under four main categories:

- **Category A:** Emergency relief for individuals, such as temporary accommodation, food, and clothing.
- **Category B:** Assistance to restore essential public infrastructure and support small businesses, primary producers, and non-profits.
- **Category C:** Community recovery packages for severely impacted areas.
- **Category D:** Exceptional assistance in extraordinary circumstances.

Council may submit claims to the state for reimbursement of eligible costs, such as emergency works, community support, and asset restoration. Claims must follow specific guidelines and are assessed for eligibility and compliance.

DRFA funding may also support recovery activities such as community clean-up, public asset repairs, and targeted financial relief, depending on the severity and scale of the event. Importantly, financial support is only available where Commonwealth and state criteria are met, and the event is officially declared under the scheme.

9. Lessons management and continuous improvement

The MEMPC is committed to continuous improvement in emergency management, aligned with the principles of the EM-LEARN Framework (2015). This involves applying a lessons management life cycle that identifies and embeds learnings from assurance and learning activities such as after-action reviews, debriefings, public forums, independent reviews, and system-based evaluations, conducted before, during, and after emergencies. Lessons are documented and shared with relevant agencies and the Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (REMPC) to support broader system improvement.

The MEMPC also prioritises interoperability between all agencies operating within the municipality and across borders. Regular meetings will include interoperability as a standing agenda item, and learnings from exercises and real events will be discussed. Where necessary, interoperability issues will be escalated through agency chains of command and to the REMPC.

While recognising the time and resource constraints faced by many organisations, the MEMPC supports and encourages participation in emergency management exercises, including those at the regional and cross-border level. Control agencies are encouraged to include municipal sub-plan testing within their broader exercise programs. A record of past exercises is maintained in [Appendix D](#) of this Plan.



To further support recovery improvement and evaluation, the MEMPC encourages the use of the [National Recovery Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#). This resource provides examples of outcomes, activities, and indicators used in other post-disaster contexts and supports the evaluation of recovery coordination and programs outside operational environments. Councils and agencies are encouraged to share and upload their evaluations and reports to contribute to collective learning





The development of this MEMP reflects significant changes in Victorian emergency management legislation and marks a shift toward an all-agencies, all-emergencies approach, with community safety at its core. The MEMPC is dedicated to enhancing the Plan by maintaining awareness of existing arrangements across municipal, regional, and cross-border contexts, and by supporting risk identification, hazard-specific planning, and prioritised mitigation strategies.

10. Appendices

The following appendices provide supporting information, detailed data, and reference material to complement the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP). They include locally relevant plans, operational tools, contact structures, and risk data that support emergency planning, response, relief, and recovery arrangements in Buloke Shire

Appendix A – History of emergency events

Event Type	Year(s)	Details / Impact
Flood 	1870, 1889, 1894, 1909, 1915, 1923, 1933, 1939, 1956, 1964, 1973, 1975, 1981, 1983, 1989, 1993, 1995, 1996, 2010,	Multiple major flood events in Buloke Shire history.
	2011	Over 369 properties flooded (270 residences, 15 businesses, a hospital). Charlton and Culgoa heavily impacted; evacuation required while Wycheproof received some impact.
	2016	Localised flash and riverine flooding caused damage to roads and farmland.
	2019	In December 2019, intense rainfall caused severe flash flooding in Birchip, flooding about 20 properties and leading to the evacuation of 10 residents to a local relief centre.
	2022	Widespread flood inundation damaged properties, assets and infrastructure. Communities in Charlton, Donald, Culgoa, were isolated.
Fire 	2016	Six fast-moving grass or stubble fires recorded.
	2018–2024	Fires during harvest caused losses to fencing, crops, and threatened township boundaries.
	Ongoing	Average of 30 structural fires recorded annually across the municipality.
Storms and Wind 	2020–2021	Spring storms caused damage to residential, rural properties and grain storage facilities.
	2024	Intense late summer/autumn storms caused wind, hail, flash flooding in Sea Lake, Charlton, Watchem; power outages, fallen trees, property damage reported.
Road and Transport Emergencies 	2006	Multiple-fatality road accident at Borung Hwy & Donald–Swan Hill Rd intersection; six deaths.
	Ongoing	Numerous truck roll overs have been recorded in the area. Risks due to rural roads, freight routes, and wildlife crossings.

Drought 		
	1944, 1967, 1982	Significant historical droughts.
	2000–2010	Prolonged dry period.
	2018–2020	Dry seasonal conditions led to reduced crop yields, increased mental health concerns, and pressure on rural support services.
Agricultural and Biosecurity 	1977, 1994, 2021	Mouse plagues causing crop damage, stock feed loss, community distress.
	2010	Locust outbreaks causing widespread agricultural damage; ongoing vigilance.
	Ongoing	Risk of livestock disease outbreaks (e.g., foot-and-mouth disease); active participation in regional biosecurity planning.
Pandemic 	2019 - 2022	Death toll recorded in Victoria was 8,494, with nearly 3 million total cases as of late 2023.
Heatwave 	2009, 2014, 2018, 2019 and 2024	Extreme summer temperatures, with around 30 days over 35 °C and several days exceeding 40 °C each

Appendix B – Critical infrastructure

Category	Infrastructure/Service	Details/Locations	Managing Authority
Hospitals 	Sea Lake Hospital	9 aged care beds, 4 acute beds, 1 urgent care bed	Mallee Track Health and Community Service
	Birchip Hospital	8 acute beds, 10 aged care beds	East Wimmera Health Service
	Wycheproof Hospital	6 acute beds, 30 aged care beds	East Wimmera Health Service
	Charlton Hospital	2 acute beds, 13 aged care beds	East Wimmera Health Service
	Donald Hospital	10 acute beds, 12 aged care beds	East Wimmera Health Service
Water 	Urban and Rural Water Supply	Wimmera Mallee Pipeline	GWM Water
	Water Services in Eastern Buloke	Around Loddon River System	Goulburn-Murray Water
Power 	Zone Substations	Charlton, Donald, Birchip, Wycheproof, Sea Lake	Powercor
Road Transport 	Highways and Major Roads	Calder Hwy (A79), Sunraysia Hwy (B220), Borung Hwy, Wimmera Hwy, Birchip–Sea Lake Road	Regional Roads Victoria (DTP)
	Key Bridges	Avoca River (Charlton), Richardson River (Donald), Rail overpass (Wycheproof) Cooner (Coonooer Bridge)	Regional Roads Victoria (DTP)
Rail 	Freight Rail Corridors	Mildura line (Donald, Birchip,); Sea Lake branch (Sea Lake, Nullawil, Culgoa, Wycheproof and Charlton)	VicTrack (owned), V/Line (leased operations)
	Key Rail Infrastructure	Grain terminals, level crossings, rail bridges (esp. Donald, Wycheproof, Charlton)	VicTrack/V/Line
Airports 	Regional Airstrips	Charlton, Donald, Birchip, Wycheproof, Sea Lake	Buloke Shire Council
Telecommunication's 	Telephone Exchanges	Charlton, Donald, Wycheproof, Birchip, Sea Lake, Culgoa	Telstra, Optus, Vodafone (TPG), NBN Co.
	Mobile Base Stations	~30 towers incl. Donald, Charlton, Sea Lake, Mount Jeffcott	Telstra (incl. Black Spot Program), Optus, Vodafone
	NBN Delivery	FTTN (Sea Lake), Fixed Wireless (rural), Satellite (remote)	NBN Co.

Appendix C – List of Buloke Emergency Management Plans

Name	Last Published	Schedule Review	Plan Status	Owner
Municipal Emergency Management Plan	2025	2028	Endorsed by MEMPC on 12 August, 2025.	MEMPC
Buloke Municipal Fire Management Sub- Plan	2017	2026	Plan will be reviewed upon arrival of new state template. VFRR register due to be reviewed in 2025.	MEMPC
Buloke Municipal Flood and Storm Emergency Sub- Plan	2022	2026	Plan to be reviewed upon release of new state template due to arrive in 2025.	MEMPC
Buloke Influenza Pandemic Sub - Plan	2018	2026	Review to be determined by MEMPC.	MEMPC
Buloke Heat Health Sub - Plan	2018	2026	Review to be determined by MEMPC.	MEMPC

Appendix D – Emergency Relief Centre’s

Location	Facility	Map reference
Birchip	Birchip Leisure Centre	2WC6+GM Birchip, Victoria
Charlton	Charlton Park	P9P5+X4 Charlton, Victoria
Donald	Donald Sports Stadium	JXPP+49 Donald, Victoria
Sea Lake	Sea Lake Community Centre	FVR4+47 Sea Lake, Victoria
Wycheproof	Wycheproof Sports Stadium	W6HG+GM Wycheproof, Victoria

The table above outlines the Primary Emergency Relief Centre (ERC) locations. In the event that a primary site is unavailable, Council has a number of documented secondary or backup sites across the Shire. These can be accessed by contacting Council directly.

Appendix E – Exercises

Exercise	Date	Details
	2025	Representatives of the Buloke MEMPC reported that they were unaware of any exercises undertaken by the Committee since 2020.

Appendix F – Map of Buloke Shire Council area



Appendix G - Statement of assurance

Part one - Checklist

Checklist Requirement	Self-assessment	Evidence (MEMP page ref)
The MEMP has been prepared by the MEMPC with required agency membership	Yes	Section 3, pp.17-18
The MEMP is prepared in a collaborative manner and reflects community EM planning principles	Yes	Sections 1 & 3, pp.5-6, 17
Reviewed within three years	Yes	Review Date August 2028 – p.1
Does not conflict/duplicate other EM plans	Yes	Section 1, p.6
Consistent with State and Regional EM Plans	Yes	Sections 1 & 3, pp.6, 14-16
Contains mitigation provisions	Yes	Section 5, pp.23-24
Contains response provisions	Yes	Section 6, pp.25-33
Contains recovery provisions	Yes	Section 8, pp.37-40
Specifies roles and responsibilities	Yes	Sections 5, 6, 8, and Appendix B-G
Collaborated but prepared independently	Yes	Section 1.4 & 3, pp.5-6, 14-18

Consulted with community sectors and agencies	Yes	Sections 2 & 3, pp.7-18
Provides municipal overview and hazard profile	Yes	Sections 2 & 4, pp.7-22
Identifies cross-boundary opportunities	Yes	Section 2.2 & 3, pp.10, 14-16
Conducted risk assessment (CERA)	Yes	Section 4, pp.19-22
Assesses capability & capacity (VPF)	Yes	Section 3.2, pp.12, 14-16
Tested through exercises	Yes	Appendix E, p.46

Part two – Certificate of assurance

I, Gaynor Atkin, Chair of the Buloke Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee, hereby certify that the attached Municipal Emergency Management Plan:

- Complies with the requirements of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*
- Has had regard to all relevant guidelines issued under section 77 of the Act

This Plan was formally endorsed by the Committee on 12 August 2025 and supersedes the previous Plan published in 2017.

Signed:



Name: Gaynor Atkin

Position: Chair, Buloke Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee

Date: 14 August 2025