

## **ENDORSEMENT OF DRAFT WYE RIVER & SEPARATION CREEK RESETTLEMENT PLAN**

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### **Purpose**

To seek endorsement in principle by Council of the draft Wye River and Separation Creek Resettlement Plan which has been developed collaboratively between Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), Colac Otway Shire, Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (DEWLP), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Regional Development Victoria (RDV) to provide a consolidated plan for the resettlement of the fire affected communities.

### **Background**

The Wye River-Jamieson Track Fire commenced north of Jamieson Track in the Great Otway National Park, eight kilometres west of Wye River. Fire ignition was due to a lightning strike on 19 December 2015. On Christmas Day 2015, strong northerly winds caused the fire to create spot fires outside containment lines. The Great Ocean Road was closed between Skenes Creek and Lorne and the communities of Separation Creek, Wye River and Kennett River were evacuated. The fire burnt north of Separation Creek burning public land in the Otways National Park and also private dwellings in the coastal townships of Separation Creek and Wye River.

Total Area Burnt 2,520 Ha Public Land Burnt 2,125 Ha Private Land Burnt 395 Ha Dwellings Destroyed 109.

State and local government, namely Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), Colac Otway Shire, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Regional Development Victoria (RDV) have joined together to ensure that the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek are able to access the necessary assistance to aid their recovery and maximise their ability to rebuild and resettle with minimum barriers over the coming weeks, months and years.

All the agencies have been working together to ensure resettlement happens in a way that is safe, timely, efficient, cost effective and respectful of those different needs. Council has a lead role in bushfire recovery, in working with our fire affected communities to ensure their needs and priorities are heard and liaising with all levels of government to assist in the resettlement of Wye River and Separation Creek while ensuring a good long term outcome is achieved for these communities. Council has worked closely with the many state agencies to produce the Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement Plan. The Draft Public Document of April 2016 is attached.

The purpose of the Plan is to present, in a single document, the strategic approach for the delivery of the Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement. The document includes key actions to be taken, identifies responsibility for delivery of each focus area/delivery stream and actions and identifies key partners and their responsibilities. In the weeks following the Wye River & Separation Creek fire, EMV initiated a new recovery management structure.

The new model includes:

- The establishment of a 'Leadership Group' comprising Council's CEO, Sue Wilkinson (as Chair), the Secretary of DELWP, Adam Fennessy, and the Emergency Management Commissioner, Craig Lapsley. Since establishment, this group has met regularly and has a key role of providing direction, resolving issues and ensuring sufficient resourcing supports the successful delivery of the Resettlement Plan.
- The establishment of a 'Program Delivery Office', run by Major Projects Victoria.
- Eight program areas which give focus to recovery actions: 1. Clean-up 2. Planning & Building 3. Community Connection 4. Community Wellbeing 5. Tourism 6. Business 7. Flora Fauna & Beachscape 8. Infrastructure.
- A Community Resilience Committee, which has been appointed comprising the Mayor, CEO, EMV Commissioner and eight community representatives to help identify community priorities and issues and to provide ongoing input into the Resettlement Project Plans.

The Plan continues to develop and evolve and a number of actions in the plan have either commenced or are completed. For example, Grocon was engaged by State Government to undertake a coordinated clean-up of bushfire debris. This is well underway.

The plan provides a snapshot of the resettlement program as at early April and will continue to evolve to respond to emerging issues. Also in some areas, as projects move from one phase to the next and responsibility for delivery and accountability will transition. For example DELWP have had primary responsibility under the Planning & Building topic as they have commissioned technical studies and amended the Planning Scheme to streamline process and facilitate the rebuilding. As this topic progresses Colac Otway Shire will take on the responsibility for the determining planning, building and waste water permit applications. Council's main responsibilities for delivery under the draft Plan are primarily in Planning & Building, Community Connections and Infrastructure areas. In other areas, Council will play key supporting roles, but not necessarily be the lead delivery agency.

### **Council Plan / Other Strategies / Policy Good Governance**

Means we care about and are responsive to the community, encourage democratic participation and involve people in decisions that affect them. We strive for excellence in financial management and council services, and always look for better ways to do things.

### **Our Goal:**

Ensure transparency of governance practices, the capability of our organisation and effective resource management. In late 2015 EMV formally assumed responsibilities for disaster recovery as well as emergency response. Recovery has traditionally focused on the state supporting local government to deliver support at the local level.

The Draft Resettlement Plan has several governance structures to ensure delivery of the resettlement projects via the Program Management Office which coordinates the many projects and agencies, the Leadership Group which facilitates State and Local Government oversight and the establishment of the Community Resilience Committee which ensures close connections between Council and the Wye River Separation Creek communities. Community meetings have been held at least monthly in both Wye River and Melbourne to provide information to the community and to hear their comments and concerns.

The WyeSep portal has been developed which facilitates wide community access to progress on the many aspects of the resettlement including minutes of the Community Resilience Committee meetings.

### **Issues / Options**

The Resettlement Plan has continue to evolve since the fire as Council, the State Government and various other agencies have worked together under a new framework to develop a recovery plan. It must be flexible and agile as new issues arise and new opportunities emerge. It will continue to evolve in response to ongoing consultation on elements of the plan and as further community priorities are identified.

***While it is not proposed to consult on this particular draft, it is important to note that a number of projects within the document will be individually consulted on.*** Others need to occur to manage public risk or because of statutory responsibilities of various agencies. Many have been completed but are still included in the plan to provide the community with an understanding of the breadth and complexities of works that have occurred to date.

Now that the eight program streams that constitute the Resettlement Plan have been pulled together in a single document, it is important that it be endorsed in principle by Council. This then facilitates the wider release of the Plan under the joint auspices of Colac Otway Shire and the Victorian State Government. To date this partnership between State and Local government has delivered significant benefits to the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek including the state facilitating a coordinated clean up with Grocon, substantial investment in tourism initiatives, investment in community infrastructure and a streamlined rebuild process.

## **Proposal**

*It is recommended that Council endorse in principle the draft Wye River and Separation Creek Resettlement Plan prepared by EMV in partnership with Colac Otway Shire and other agencies involved in the bushfire recovery.* Council is also asked to note that there is targeted engagement occurring under the auspices of the plan in a number of areas and that the Resettlement Plan is a working document and will continue to evolve.

The Resettlement Plan lays out a framework for actions by all recovery partner agencies to occur in a transparent and integrated manner. It can be used to communicate how the recovery process is occurring, and guides the actions of Council and others over time. The plan will keep progressing as the recovery process continues and must be flexible to respond to changing priorities, emerging issues and new opportunities.

Importantly the Resettlement Plan provides the community with a comprehensive view of the work being undertaken by Colac Otway Shire and the State to facilitate the rebuilding of the fire affected communities.

## **Financial and Other Resource Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report as it relates to endorsement of the draft Plan. There are significant costs being incurred by Council in the bushfire recovery process but it is anticipated these will be recouped from the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery (NDRRA) fund (Commonwealth) or from State government support. A number of actions in the plan are already being undertaken on the basis of Council's legislative responsibilities for emergency management, management of risk to public safety or Council's statutory requirements as a Planning Authority. Officers will continue to work with other levels of government to ensure that any financial cost to Council arising from the fires is minimised.

## **Risk Management & Compliance Issues**

Bushfires leave a legacy of risks which are being actively managed by Colac Otway Shire in conjunction with the State Government. The management of many post-bushfire risks has been identified and addressed in the Resettlement Plan. They have been actively managed to minimise risk and ensure public safety.

The Governance structure outlined in the Plan, particularly the Leadership Group, provides an effective tool to help Council manage its risks. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations There are no direct environment or climate change implications arising from the report. Various actions contained with the plan are aimed at addressing environmental risks such as landslip or weed management. These specific issues will continue to be managed by the various agencies through the model that has been developed.

## **Community Engagement**

*The community engagement strategy follows the recommendations of the Colac Otway Shire Council Community Engagement Policy of July 2013, which details five levels of engagement – inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower. The method selected would be 'Inform'.*

**The draft Resettlement Plan will be presented to the Community Resilience Committee (CRC) who will, in accordance with their Terms of Reference, work to help inform the ongoing development of the project plans and “ensure recovery is undertaken in a systematic, effective and timely manner”.**

**To ensure ongoing timely delivery of the Project Plans and the overall Resettlement Plan and in view on the continual evolution of the Resettlement Plan and consultation on relevant elements, it is not proposed to stop delivery to engage broadly with the community. The plan has been put together by the agencies undertaking the various actions, and reflects a point in time.**

The community can continue to inform it through the regular Community Meetings, feedback via the CRC or directly into projects as they are consulted on, such as the extensive engagement that has already been undertaken by DELWP on the restoration of Paddy's Path and development of the new river walk at Wye River.

Feedback received at community meetings and other forums has already influenced a number of actions in the plan, and this will continue to be the case in the future. There has been extensive interaction between agencies involved in the bushfire recovery to collaborate in the development of the Plan, ensuring that it has a high level of ownership by the State. The Plan is a working document and will continue to evolve with actions being modified or added as conditions change.

***The Community Resilience Committee will play a key role in providing feedback to influence changes to the Plan over time. Implementation EMV and other recovery agencies will be advised of Council's resolution relating to endorsement of the Plan.***

Council's Bushfire Recovery staff will continue to implement those actions which are the responsibility of Council under the Plan, and will contribute to ongoing evolution of the Plan. The Resettlement Plan is a dynamic document given the constantly changing environment, and needs to be adjusted as new actions are identified and others are refined as new information comes to hand in responding to community needs. Conclusion

The draft Resettlement Plan has been developed collaboratively with EMV, Colac Otway Shire, DELWP, DHHS, RDV and other agencies over a period of months. Many actions have been undertaken or are in progress, and actions in the Plan will continue to be refined over time with input from the community. The Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement Plan is a working document which reflects the actions of State and Local governments at a point in time.

**Council is asked to endorse in principle this Plan.**

Attachments 1. Wye River and Separation Creek Resettlement Plan - Confidential Draft

**Recommendation:**

***That Council: Endorses in principle the attached draft Wye River and Separation Creek Resettlement Plan noting that a number of actions identified in the Plan will be consulted on and that the Plan will continue to evolve.***